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TOWN OF NORTHBOROUGH Open Space Committee

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Open Space Committee Zoom Meeting Minutes September 25, 2023 Approved December 20, 2023

Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023, An Act Relative to Extending Certain COVID-19 Measures Adopted During the State of Emergency, signed into law on March 29, 2023, this meeting will be conducted via remote participation. No in-person attendance by members or the public will be permitted.

Members in attendance (remotely): John Campbell, Chair; Brian Belfer; Bill Pierce; Dan Clark; Paul Cacciatore, Paul Tagliaferri, Ashley Davies

Members absent: Leslie Harrison

Others in attendance (Remotely): Vincent Vignaly, Conservation Agent

The Chair opened the meeting at 7:25 pm due to technical connection difficulties.

Discussion About Setting Regular Meeting Time as 4th Monday of Odd Months—The Members were in agreement to generally meet on the odd months beginning with this meeting. The next meeting will be on the 4th Monday of November. Mr. Campbell indicated no vote was necessary.

Appointment of New Members to Trails Committee – Mr. Campbell stated that Dennis Lindenberg expressed interest in the Trails Committee. Mr. Vignaly indicated that Mr. Lindenberg sent a letter of interest in response to a notice posted on the Town website of an opening on the Trails Committee. Mr. Vignaly indicated that there is still one position open on the Trails Committee. Current members that may be lagging in their membership duties should be contacted by the Chair to see if they want to continue as members. Mr. Belfer will speak to Mr. Mihalek, the Chair of the Trails Committee. Mr. Vignaly will update the websites as information is provided. A welcome was extended to Mr. Lindenberg.

Mr. Belfer made a motion to nominate Dennis Lindenberg to be a member of the Northborough Trails Committee and it was seconded by Mr. Pierce. Roll Call Vote: Davies-yes; Cacciatore-yes; Clark-yes; Belfer-yes; Pierce-yes; Tagliaferri-yes; Campbell-yes; motion approved.

Election of Officers: Chair and Vice Chair—Mr. Campbell wanted this to be placed on the agenda. He has been acting as Chair for 18 years and there is no formal process for the appointment of Officers. He believes it is a good idea to appoint officers every year and that a Vice Chair be appointed to act in the Chair's absence.

Mr. Belfer made a motion to have Mr. Campbell continue as Chair of the Open Space Committee; seconded by Ms. Davies. Roll Call Vote: Davies-yes; Cacciatore-yes; Clark-yes; Belfer-yes; Pierce-yes; Tagliaferri-yes; Campbell-yes; motion approved.

Mr. Campbell then discussed the appointment of a Vice Chair. The position principally requires that an individual be present to conduct the meetings in the Chair's absence. Mr. Belfer indicated that he would be willing to be Vice Chair of the Open Space Committee and it was seconded by Mr. Cacciatore. Roll Call Vote: Davies-yes; Cacciatore-yes; Clark-yes; Belfer-yes; Pierce-yes; Tagliaferri-yes; Campbell-yes; motion approved.

Mr. Pierce noted that as of the next meeting, he will be stepping down as the Planning Board member of the Open Space Committee and Anthony Ziton will be serving in his place.

Outreach Plan for Northborough Landowners Regarding Conservation: Update list and Options

Ms. Davies mentioned that there are some open space areas between South Street and School Street that could be open for development. She felt it would be worth reaching out to the owners to see if they are interested in conveying the land to the town. Mr. Vignaly presented a spreadsheet showing the status of each property that had been discussed during previous meetings.

142 and 154 School Street This is a golf training center with frontage on School Street. Mr. Vignaly spoke to the owners because they just filed with the Conservation Commission asking for permits to operate the golf training center within the buffer zone to the wetlands. They want to be able to do maintenance on the pond area, mow the lawn and do treatments for the invasive plants. Mr. Vignaly wasn't sure if they were interested in conveying the property to the town.

24 Elmwood Drive –Ms. Davies indicated that this large piece of property is located at the end of Elmwood Drive and is mostly wetlands with a house on it.

141 South Street –This property is owned by the members of the swim club. The back 20 acres of this property are under Chapter 61B. The current access is on South Street, but Ms. Davies indicated that the property could be accessed through Catherine Drive. This would open up potential development on the property if they wanted to expand the road. Ms. Davies felt that it would be worthwhile to send a general letter.

Brigham Street DPW Garages (200 School Street) – There is a significant wooded area along Brigham and School Streets that is owned by the DPW. Vignaly said that the water department offices are there, and the property is about 40 acres.

77 Main Street Ms. Davies suggested property owned by Harvey Holdings, LLC. She thinks this needs a personal email and phone call. Mr. Vignaly indicated that the property was sold to an owner with offices in Texas last spring. Ms. Davies thought it was worth contacting them. This property is referenced directly in the Master Plan. Ms. Davies indicated that if the Committee wants to play any role in the downtown redevelopment, we need to try and get this property under town ownership. Mr. Campbell indicated that a very specific letter should be sent to them since we are very aware of the characteristics of this property. He also indicated that it should be brought before the Master Plan Committee as a short agenda item to ask how they can contact the property owners or whether they think this is premature. The OSC believes this is a very important parcel of land and is part of the downtown core areas.

MBTA Communities Initiative Mr. Pierce indicated that while the Committee is looking at protecting the open space of these properties, they should take into consideration that the Planning Board is reviewing these same properties to address the State MBTA Communities requirements. The Committee should coordinate with the Planning Board. Mr. Vignaly will speak with Ms. Connors, the Planning Director.

16 Gale Street and 11 Monroe Street Mr. Campbell suggested that this be put on the agenda with the Master Plan Committee to address the need for access between the Town Common and Assabet Park. We need to be proactive and coordinated to implement this change. We might want to send something specific from the town. For events hosted on the common, it is important to have a connection to the parking at Assabet Park.

Mr. Campbell summarized that we should have a discussion with the Planning Director regarding desired uses for the properties at 77 Main Street, 35 West Main Street, Gale Street and Monroe Street and to see what the Town has already been considering regarding the development of these properties. Mr. Vignaly will speak with Ms. Connors.

125 Rice Avenue Mr. Belfer has informally spoken to the owner and will send them a formal letter.

0 Indian Meadow Drive: Mr. Campbell needs to follow up with the owners of the golf course property. The frontage is located between 99 and 105 Indian Meadow Drive. He would like to send them a general interest letter indicating that the town would like to discuss all available open space protection options. This is an important parcel to conserve. Mr. Cambell will check his records for who he spoke with earlier and will forward a draft and the information to Mr. Vignaly, who will send the letter. Ms. Davies stated that the name of the owners has changed since the last time.

Mr. Campbell suggested that at the November meeting the Committee should review the letters to update the language and decide if the Committee should do a general inquiry mailing to those on this list. Ms. Davies agreed. Mr. Vignaly asked who should send out the letters, i.e., should they come from the Members on the Committee that are known to prospective parties or should they come from the chair of the Committee? Mr. Vignaly will send out the necessary draft information and letters before the November meeting for comments/edits. Mr. Campbell indicated that the general letter is still appropriate to send. Mr. Cacciatore would like to review the letters to familiarize himself with them.

CPC Coordination Mr. Campbell spoke about using CPC revenue towards purchases in the future. Property may be bought as part of or as an extension of a park or some new recreational development to qualify for CPA funding.

CPC Applications The Committee agreed to put in a funding request for open space acquisition. Mr. Cacciatore indicated that the Parks & Recreation Commission is requesting funding for improvements at Melican Middle School for tennis courts, basketball courts, and the baseball field. Mr. Campbell will write up an application consistent with last year's funding request for any future acquisitions. Based on properties on the Committee's list, Mr. Cacciatore suggested that the request should be based on what properties they would like to purchase in the coming months. Mr. Campbell gave some background to Mr. Cacciatore on past CPC applications. Mr. Campbell will check the current balance of the Committee's funds available for purchases. The committee's goal is to have \$1Million available for acquisition. He will write the application to the Town for \$300,000.00 to keep the acquisition balance at \$1,000,000.00 and include a reminder that the Master Plan, Downtown Development, and Open Space Conservations area are reasons why the CPA got voted into existence in 2004.

Consideration of July 24, 2023, Minutes for Acceptance—The minutes for July 24, 2023, were reviewed. Mr. Campbell had one correction.

Ms. Davis made a motion to approve the minutes, as amended, and it was seconded by Mr. Pierce. Roll Call Vote: Davies-yes; Pierce-yes; Cacciatore-yes; Clark-yes; Belfer-yes; Campbell-yes; motion approved. (Mr. Tagliaferri was absent for this meeting)

Mr. Belfer made a motion to adjourn the meeting and it was seconded by Mr. Pierce. Roll Call Vote: Davies-yes; Cacciatore-yes; Clark-yes; Belfer-yes; Pierce-yes; Tagliaferri-yes; Campbell-yes; motion approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectively Submitted by

Brenda M. DiCeglie

Board Secretary