

Town of Harvard Open Space Committee
May 12, 2022 8:00 am
Minutes

Members present: Franklyn Carlson, Paul Cohen, Brian Cook, JoAnne Crystoff, Dan Daly, Peter Dorward, Jim Lee, Rich Maiore
Non-voting members present: Liz Allard, Chris Ryan
Also present: John Lee, CPC member

Meeting called to order 8:10 AM when a quorum was obtained.
Minutes of the 3/10/22, 4/12/22 and 4/19/22 were reviewed. All were approved without change.
Next meeting was set for 6/9/22 at 8:00 AM.

New Business

ATM

Two CPC articles for CPA grants are included in the ATM warrant to be held on 5/14/22. The first is to support an APR for the Community Harvest Project orchard on Prospect Hill. The second is to support the purchase of a 23 Acre parcel off Willard Lane which has been named Still River Woods.

CHP APR

Peter passed the chair to Paul as he has a Conflict of Interest being an abutter.

Jim shared a proposed statement of support to be read at the ATM if needed. The committee thought the statement should be the shortened version to read:

“The Open Space Committee (OSC) voted unanimously to support the preservation of the Prospect Hill Community Orchard (PHCO), by contributing to purchase the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR). This APR will ensure that this 72-acre parcel will be protected for Agricultural use in perpetuity.

This parcel ranked very highly on the OSC's priority list of open space to protect because it preserves important ag land, and creates permanent linkages and corridors between already protected lands.”

The committee voted 6 in favor, 1 against. Peter did not participate in the vote. Jim agreed to present the statement of support at ATM.

Peter resumed the chair.

Still River Woods

Peter cautioned that any discussions of offer amounts would require the committee to go into executive session. Jim then explained the history of the project, and the decision by the Harvard Conservation Trust to consider the project unlikely to be completed because of the recently increased asking price.

Peter then shared a discussion he had with the CPC chair, Didi Chadron, on what to do about the CPC warrant article. Didi suggested 3 options:

1. Do nothing, although this was a misleading to Town meeting as the article was written in support of Still River Woods.
2. Pull the article.
3. Ask that the \$50K be placed into the CPA Conservation Fund to be used for open space protection.

Dan supported #3, as did Paul so the funds would be available if the project was resurrected. Jim explained that the Town funds from capital that were voted on several Town meetings ago would expire at the end of June 2022. JoAnn also supported asking Town meeting to change the article to place the money in the CPA Conservation Fund as it was originally earmarked for open space protection, and she concurred that not informing Town meeting about the project's status would be disingenuous.

Dan asked that OSC discuss at a future meeting how to broaden CPC's definition of open space to include active recreation, and to create a fund that can be used for active recreation facilities. John indicated that State regulations restrict where CPA funds can be deposited, and that the only two he was aware of are Conservation and Affordable Housing funds. Paul reiterated that facilities for active recreation are a permitted use of CPA funds, and suggested we take up the discussion at a later time.

Jim asked if Peter would be willing to ask CPC to accept a friendly amendment at ATM, and he agreed. Jim moved to make a friendly amendment at ATM to put the funds allocated for Still River Woods into the CPA Conservation Fund to be used for open space protection. Paul seconded. The committee voted unanimously in favor.

Executive Session

This was skipped as there was no further information needed that would require an executive session.

Old Business

Select Board Update

Peter explained that the Select Board update had been on the OSC agenda for 4/14/22, but had been deferred as the Select Board OSC rep, Rich Maiore, was unable to attend the meeting, and that there was nothing new in the material that had not already been reviewed by the OSC. But in discussion with Rich after the 4/12/22 meeting, he realized that one of the topics – changing the OSC from an ad hoc to standing committee – needed to be discussed with the Select Board before the May OSC meeting as the current appointments run out in June and the Select Board needed to act quickly.

Peter shared a memo with the OSC which detailed the two questions that were left outstanding from the February Select Board update – the OSC's charter, and the capital plans for open space protection and active recreation. Peter then recounted what transpired at the Select Board meeting that Rich and Dan also attended.

The Select Board voted to make OSC a standing committee with 3 year staggered terms. No feedback was received on the capital plan for open space protection or what else the Select Board wanted to see in the active recreation capital plan. Comments on the funding source for active recreation included: get in the capital request queue (typically a 4 year cycle) so the Town can get comfortable with the large dollar ask, investigate non-Town funding sources such as grants – especially for early development work, use the \$50K included in the CPIC article, fund raise, user fees, establish Town funds for donations such as was done for the skateboard park. Rich suggested returning to the Select Board in a couple of months to revisit what is needed for the active recreation capital plan, and for more thoughts and support for raising funds for an athletic complex. Dan indicated he was extremely disappointed with the Select Board's inputs, and that the issue had again been punted down the road. He also indicated that he thought the need for more playing fields was the Town's problem, and not solely that of HAA.

Paul said he was surprised and disappointed that an email alerting the OSC of the Select Board meeting had not been sent out so that other members could attend. Peter apologized, and said it was his fault as he had forgotten to do so. Paul also expressed HAA's disappointment with the Select Board suggestions, and indicated HAA did not support the CPIC article for \$50K in the ATM warrant. Rich again suggested going back to the Select Board after the new members are on board. Paul reiterated the lack of credibility in the Town makes it difficult to get started, including drafting a letter to landowners of potential sites that Paul and Dan could not do. Paul indicated he did not consider the \$50K in the CPIC article was a good start as the \$50K was targeted for "design", but that \$50K placed in a fund for land acquisition for an athletic complex would be. Paul also indicated that a statement of support from the Select Board was needed. Rich, Paul and Brian suggested making a friendly amendment at ATM to include "land acquisition" to "planning and study". Peter asked who should make the friendly amendment. The sense of the OSC was that Park & Rec would be the most appropriate body, or for it to come from a citizen.

Open Space & Recreation Plan Survey Questions

A kickoff meeting with MRPC was held on 4/19/22. The first task is creating the survey, and OSC members were asked to provide feedback on the draft survey questions to Liz by 5/1/22. Liz and Peter took those comments and created a second pass which was distributed to the OSC.

Peter described a concern with terminology that might cause survey respondents to be confused about the differences between open space, active recreation and passive recreation. The proposed solution was to break the survey into two parts – the first a broader look at open space, and the second specifically addressing recreation facilities. The committee agreed with this approach.

Several questions were discussed in detail, and the edits recorded for forwarding to MRPC. Paul suggested phrasing questions to gauge the respondent's appetite for paying for open space acquisition. This resulted in rephrasing several questions to include the financial impact.

Paul made a motion to adjourn. Jim seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 AM by unanimous vote.

Submitted by: Peter Dorward