

Town of Harvard Open Space Committee

June 8, 2023 Minutes

Approved 10/12/23

Members present: Paul Cohen, Peter Dorward, Linda Dwight, Jim Lee, Rich Maiore.

Non-voting members present: Liz Allard

Meeting called to order 8:30 AM. Peter volunteered to take minutes.

Old Business

CHP APR

Peter reported that all paperwork has been completed, and Liz indicated a check requisition has been submitted for the Town's contribution from CPA funds. The closing is therefore on track to happen by the end of June.

Littleton County Road Project

Jim reported that Gaining ground – the proposed leasee for the property – has completed their Phase I due diligence which is primarily a records search. They have started Phase II which includes soil and water testing. HCT is working on the CR draft, with the major open issues being allowed agricultural building size and location. Peter indicated that ConCom had approved spending legal fees to review the draft CR based on an estimate Liz obtained from Town Counsel.

OSC Charter and Committee Composition

Rich reported that the Select Board reviewed a memo outlining the current issues with the OSC composition at their 6/20/23 meeting. Rich had asked Peter to prepare the memo based on the discussion at the 4/13/23 and 5/11/23 OSC meetings. Rich indicated he felt the primary issue is obtaining a quorum for OSC meeting as some members have appeared to lose interest in participating, and that the proposed solution was to reduce the OSC membership from 9 to 5 voting members. The Select Board had requested that all current OSC representatives be contacted before any changes were made.

Linda indicated that the School committee felt they should be represented on OSC since acquisition of more playing fields is important, and that they were upset that they were not consulted on the proposed change. Linda suggested one of the School Committee members could file the role of School rep as she has had trouble making OSC meetings, and committed to regular OSC attendance by the rep. Linda asked to see a copy of the memo, which Rich said he would share. Peter indicated that the proposal was discussed at previous OSC meetings, and the memo to the Select Board was a summary of that discussion. Paul was the only active recreation representative present for those discussions.

Peter added that the memo also identified two other issues involving lack of participation by the active recreation representatives. There has been no input from them on the Open Space and Recreation Plan, which has halted work on updating it. And the outreach to owners of potential active recreation sites has made no progress in over a year - except that Jim and Peter contacted several owners with previous conservation ties as agreed by the OSC. Linda said an outreach letter had been drafted and approved by the OSC, and that she had offered administrative help to get it sent out, but that Dan had wanted to do it. Linda also indicated that she, Paul and Dan had met several times to discuss the OSRP, and apologized for not getting back to the committee on it. Paul indicated that Dan had not pursued

the outreach letter as he was told by Capital Planning that he should instead send out an RFP. A discussion of this approach ensued, and OSC concluded that an outreach letter was the appropriate next step. Linda committed to having the outreach letter sent out.

Linda asked if Liz could obtain the addresses and do the mailing. Liz reminded the committee that she does not support OSC. Linda asked what her role was on OSC. Peter replied it was for her extensive knowledge and history of open space in Harvard. He added that it was made very clear to OSC from the beginning that Liz was not support staff for OSC, nor does she have the bandwidth to do so. Linda asked what the requisite steps were in getting the addresses. Liz and Peter said they could be obtained from the assessor's from a list of map and parcel numbers, which were included on the list of potential rec sites to be contacted that the committee had approved last summer. Linda requested a copy of this list, and Peter said he would send it.

Linda indicated that she felt the proposed changes diminished the active recreation piece of the OSC charter. Jim disagreed, indicating there were others not representing active recreation who supported the need for more playing fields. He suggested that Park & Rec needed a stronger voice on OSC. Linda suggested Ann McWaters, the new rec director, as the Park & Rec rep. Linda reinforced that the School Committee wanted representation on OSC. Paul urged that Ann McWaters be asked to join OSC right away, and before she starts in her new position this fall. Paul also commented he wanted it to be clear that he felt his participation on the committee as HAA rep – including attendance – has not been an issue. Peter concurred, indicating he thought Paul probably had the best OSC attendance record.

The revised OSC would have 6 voting members, and eliminate the representation from the Planning Board, HAA, and the member-at-large. This would require a quorum of 4 voting members for meeting. The quorum and potential for tie votes were felt to be workable. Rich will bring the updated proposal back to the Select Board at their next meeting, and will talk to Park & Rec about Ann McWaters being their rep. Peter reminded Rich that the Select Board also needed to appoint Kerri Green as the rep from the Ag Commission.

Linda asked when the new rep from Schools would become part of the committee. Paul said the terms expire June 30th. Jim suggested making the School member “a representative of the School Committee” rather than “a member of the School Committee”. Peter indicated this was how the OSC charter was written. Linda asked if the School rep could change meeting to meeting based on availability. Paul and Peter didn't think this would work as the member needs to be appointed by the Select Board and sworn in. Linda asked if there could be an alternate. Rich said he would check.

Paul thanked the committee for its work, and wished it well in its work moving forward. Jim thanked Paul for his work on the committee and for lending credence and stability to it.

Next meeting was set for 7/13/22 at 8:30 AM.

Motion was made by Paul to adjourn, seconded by Jim, and approved unanimously.

Meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:00 AM.

Submitted by: Peter Dorward