



Manchester-By-The-Sea Meeting Posting

Notice of Public Meeting – (As required by M.G.L.Ch.30A §18-25)

Board/Committee: Open Space & Recreation Committee
Day & Date: Monday, August 21, 2023
Time: 4:00 PM
Location: HYBRID (Zoom Link and Room 7 in Town Hall)
Signature: Sue Croft
Attendees: Steve Gang, Olga Hayes, Helen Bethell, Terry Cowman, Patti Mitchell, Sue Croft, Jeff Bodmer-Turner

MINUTES

- Steve Gang called the meeting to order and welcomed attendees. There were no announcements.
- Current Status of Parking at Newport Park – Letter to MHA Sent 7/18. There has been no response from the MHA as a result of sending the letter. The next step will be for Greg Federspiel or Ann Harrison (SB Chair) and Olga Hayes to meet with the MHA Chair. Sue Croft will talk to Greg about getting a meeting scheduled. The Housing Authority is legally bound to allow public access to the Reservation through Newport Park as a right of way was included in the deed under which Newport Park was created. Management has been uncooperative so far in recognizing this fact.
- Discussion Re: Possible Conversion of Small Portion of Powder House Hill Reservation on Pine St to Affordable Housing – Steve showed attendees a map of the area in question. The possible conversion of a small portion of the Reservation to affordable housing is completely separate from the access and parking issue. There was discussion surrounding donating land to Newport Park to advance their development of affordable housing while preserving the woodland experience along a major Reservation trail. Helen Bethell noted that it is possible to take land out of conservation for something as critical as affordable housing. The Town would have to put into conservation alternative land of greater size and significant need of protection. It was suggested that perhaps the OSRC could deal with Manchester Housing Trust (MHT) as they may be more amenable to discussions on this topic and have them reach out to MHA. Olga noted that the swap options need to be further defined. Steve agreed to reach out to John Feuerbach with MHT. Helen pointed out that the two new proposed buildings in Newport Park appear to interfere with one trail loop in Powder House Hill. The Town has no legal obligation to give up part of the Reservation to affordable housing. If it decides to do so, it will be a good will gesture to help with a major Town need.
- Trail Work in Western Woods and Associated Grant Opportunities – Sue Croft explained that Joe Smith (from Woodsman, Inc. who created the Town’s Forest Stewardship Plan) had sent her an email offering to help with any potential projects the Town might be considering in the Western Woods

(WW). Joe also noted in his email that there were a couple of upcoming grant opportunities that the Town could consider to help fund any work. Jeff Bodmer-Turner explained that both hiking and mountain biking trails (more loosely defined) do currently exist in the Western Woods. Currently, the biggest challenge in the WW is working with private land owners for access where trails cross private property. Sections of a carriage road trail at the end of Crooked Lane that have been damaged by rain run-off were identified as a potential project since sections of the trail have become impassable. This project might be a good candidate for a grant. Olga pointed out that the Town has an agreement with Cape Ann Trail Stewards (CATS) for trail maintenance, but likely this project exceeds their normal efforts. Jeff agreed to work with CATS to get a scope of the project to repair that stretch of trail. He also said he would speak to Patrice Murphy with MECT about the grant opportunities. Sue noted that a scope of work would be required to prepare a grant application.

- Gordon Woods Next Steps – Steve said that he has been looking to find substantive reasons to approach Gordon College and compel them to conserve their excess land rather than sell it for development. He pointed out that at least every 5 years or so he and others have reached out to Gordon with this goal in mind and each time have been unsuccessful in influencing Gordon College in this regard. Steve noted that Gordon might be struggling financially and may be looking to relocate the campus to a more affordable location leaving this land where the current campus is located to be potentially sold to a developer. Steve mentioned that after speaking with Patrice Murphy about this, MECT would like to use this concern as potential leverage for their capital campaign which is currently underway. An additional concern is the potential for another 40B type of proposal. Helen will work on a final draft of the report she presented during our last meeting and adapt it to be a presentation to Boards and Committees. Once she has completed that, she will send it to Sue to share with the OSRC as a whole. During our next meeting we will review this document.
- Next Steps for Strategic Planning on Watershed as a Whole – Steve cited a plan for a Gloucester development that fortunately never happened that would have negatively affected our watershed. Steve noted that these types of projects come up regularly and it's important to stay on top of them. Jeff noted that in the capital investment planning article recently published in the Cricket (an article written by Greg) there was no mention of watershed protection on that list.
- Review maps of Town-owned land to identify next conservation areas on which to focus – It was discussed that the committee should continue to focus on the watershed areas as they have been recently with Gordon College and the WW.
- Review and Approve Minutes from 7/24 Meeting – A motion from Olga to approve the minutes as presented was seconded by Helen and the minutes were approved unanimously.
- It was requested that Sue reach out to Betsy Ware to get an update on the status of Town Counsel's review of the public trailhead access and to follow up on the corrections to the Master Plan provided by Helen.
- The next meeting will be scheduled for Monday 9/18 from 4:00-5:30 PM.
- The meeting was adjourned at 5:10 PM.