

Town of Shelburne Open Space Committee Meeting
Minutes May 27, 2013

Present- Rita Jaros, Larry Flaccus, David Schochet, Gene Butler, John Wheeler, Beth Manning,
Joel Dwight

Meeting called to order at 7:06pm. Joel appointed secretary pro tem.

Gene suggested we check to make sure accepting of minutes and any voting we do would be valid considering we are meeting on a legal holiday.

Ag Commission discussion

Began with Beth Manning joining us from the Ag Commission. She felt between herself and John Herron someone could be with us for every OSC meeting. The Ag commission is working on amending their structure to be able to have more members.

Beth relayed her thoughts about the survey in relation to agriculture in Shelburne. She said the survey showed there was a lot of interest in agriculture but there is a need to be able to make money at farming in order to have a young generation interested in continuing with farming. The Ag commission is interested in developing a list of Shelburne farmers and their products and where they would be available and to have a site accessible through the town website with free listings for Shelburne farmers.

Beth spoke about Christine Dwight discussing the farmers market with them at their last meeting.

Rita wondered if there could be volunteers available to represent farms at the farmers market. David talked about getting information out to the general population to let them know how to help farmers by purchasing their products.

Joel pointed out that the cost of renting the Trinity Church lot is rather expensive.

Cynthia wondered about Gould's Sugar House parking lot for a farmer's market location.

Rita thought a spot to post products available and events coming up would be useful.

Beth thought within a year or so they might be able to do a dinner based around farm products.

Gene wondered how many Ag Commission members are full time farmers.

John pointed out that there are hardly any farms any longer that don't have someone working off the farm to provide extra income and/or benefits.

Gene wondered how much help was available from Umass.

Cynthia asked if the Farm Bureau was ever helpful in any way.

Larry spoke about the National Farmers Union which has a regional office in Shelburne Falls.

Beth also pointed out Shelburne farmers are very busy and don't necessarily enjoy being told what to do.

Gene observed that the people that have the farms get to the end of their careers and the most valuable thing they have is their property to be used for their retirement etc many times by liquidating the property.

David talked about his neighbor Devon and another woman further down the road that are raising vegetables on the old McKinnon property.

Larry suggested using Facebook for advertising which has been successful for him with blueberries and Christmas trees.

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Cynthia questioned if the Shelburne Ag Commission has ever linked up with the larger Massachusetts Ag Commission association to see what others are doing.

Larry noted linking with other farms could be beneficial through cross promotion.

Larry and David talked about agriculture being involved within the school system.

Gene thinks the Ag Commission should look into the reduction of taxes on older farm buildings, reducing taxes after twenty years to a nominal fee because the old buildings are pretty well used up at that time and are difficult to convert into any other use.

Beth wondered if the town has the power to reduce those taxes or if it's something that has to be done at the state level.

Larry suggested Beth could speak with Bruce in the assessor's office.

Cynthia will speak with Pete Westover who coordinates Ag Commissions about the tax thing and more. Beth said he was welcome to come their meeting on June 18th or to another meeting.

Larry said Will Flanders used to be part of a sustainability group in this area and might be an interesting person to speak with.

Rita thought there could be a place for people to become supporting members of the farmers market and that would also put them on an information list.

John and Beth spoke about the state being willing to help with refrigeration and other programs that are available through them.

Rita asked about moving products through local stores and restaurants. John said having their products placed in local stores and restaurants worked well to get their name out there and then many folks would contact them directly. He noted it also depends on what you are producing and how many other people are doing the same thing.

Beth said people are welcome to come to the Ag commissions next meeting on June 18th at 6:30pm in memorial hall.

The group then went on to other business as Beth had to leave at 8:15.

We reviewed the April 22nd minutes and accepted them with two abstentions from Gene and Cynthia.

David reviewed a few projects for this spring. These projects include:

Garlic Mustard pull

Trail Marking, Wooded loop needs to be re-blazed and tree signs need to be put up

Rita asked about trail maintenance and Larry thought we should look into what Ashfield does because they have a lot of interest in their trails with work bees etc.

Rita would like to see a regular oversight schedule to see that the trails are opened and maintained because we are sending people out on the trails with our maps.

Cynthia spoke about a map she saw showing towns that had received funding for trails.

The boy scouts are pulling garlic mustard tomorrow evening May 28th at 6:30pm in the Patten.

Cynthia had reported the repeated Patten pulling is making a difference in the reduction of garlic mustard in that area.

Cynthia said June 15th there will be a state botanist giving a presentation on new and upcoming invasive species and leading a walk at Acadia in East Hampton and that there will be a webinar on the topic at some point as well.

Discussion of OSRP

David wondered about sending survey results and comments to other boards and discussing it with them.

John said he would like to see the survey and comments. He reported the planning board is currently working on small wind then they will take on solar then housing development so they are pretty busy.

David said Tom Miner will give copies to the conservation commission.

Larry thought the groups should have a template to work off of and David will try to put one together.

David said there was a version of the surveys executive summary in the Independent.

The group discussed the next steps to take to further the new OSRP.

Larry thought we should get on the other committees agendas with a representative from the OSC to work through the survey with them.

Larry said Kimberly from FRCOG was supposed to pull out some major goals from the survey to give the process some structure.

John told us the planning board meets the second Wednesday of each month.

Joel suggested a representative from OSC could be at each committee's meeting to help them fill out a template for the needed information. We could then have a general meeting bringing all of that information together.

Larry stated the important of the various committees to have ownership of their related segment of the OSRP.

John thought a list of priority items of planning board purview would be something of a structure they could work with.

Cynthia emphasized her feeling for a need for outreach to the other groups.

Rita thought perhaps Kimberly could put together something in the way of guidelines that an OSC rep. could then take with them to meet with the various committees.

Larry noted the executive summary was attempted by Kimberly but the final one wasn't done by her.

Gene talked about accepted restrictions and regulations which come along and that we need to be able to allow new sources of revenue to come into town to be able to fund the business of the town.

Rita, Joel, David, and Larry volunteered to be able to present to committees and we could have a public meeting perhaps in September.

Miscellaneous matters

Larry followed up with Terry on town website training and Terry will try to coordinate a learning time with group representatives.

Larry met with a person from representative Kuliks' office and said the state is interested in the pothole area and parking. Larry will forward relevant survey material to them.

David told us there is an open space committee conference on Saturday June 8th in Ashburnham, Massachusetts. He will forward a copy of the agenda to each of us.

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The most recent news on the McKinnon field- the family is interested in working with the land trust to sell at the appraised value of 300,000. There are currently 80,000 dollars in pledges of the 150,000 needed to be raised in the 50/50 match to make 300,000.

Meeting adjourned at 9:20.

Prepared and submitted by: Joel Dwight