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By Karen Wilber, Town Clerk's Office at 9:22 am, Oct 08, 2021

TOWN OF NORTHBOROUGH Open Space Committee

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Open Space Committee Zoom Meeting Minutes June 7, 2021

Approved
10/4/2021

Members in attendance (Remotely): John Campbell, Chair; Leslie Harrison; Paul Tagliaferri; Ashley Davies; Anthony Ziton; Dan Clark; Brian Belfer

Members absent: David Putnam; Timothy Kaelin

Others in attendance (Remotely): Mia McDonald, Conservation Agent

The Chair opened the Zoom meeting at 7:00 p.m. and made the announcement that pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 20A, S18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, the meeting of the Northborough Open Space Committee is being conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. Public comment will not be taken.

Vote to consider the Town's Right of First Refusal for 0 Ball Street, Map 25, Parcel 13 upon exit from the MGL Chapter 61A Program - Members of the board discussed the parcel and applicability to any of the board's open space goals to determine its viability for purchase. Ms. McDonald explained that this property is part of the Fawcett Conservation Restriction (CR), displayed the GIS map illustrating the location and other details of the parcel and the abutters. Chairman Campbell voiced his understanding that, if the main parcel is sold, the two remaining parcels are too small to qualify for Chapter 61A. He also asked if the town has received any feedback from abutters. Ms. McDonald indicated that there has not been any to date.

Ms. McDonald mentioned that the parcel to the west is under an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) but she does not believe that the Davidians will ever be interested in this parcel due to soil conditions. Ms. Davies commented that the Davidian parcel is forested so she suspects that they would have expanded there if they ever had a desire to do so.

Chairman Campbell explained that the buyer intends to construct a residence on the land. Ms. McDonald noted that there is a small wetland area on the site that the purchaser will need to address, but noted that she has not yet seen any site plans.

Ms. Harrison voiced her opinion that there is no compelling reason for the town to purchase the property. Members of the board agreed.

Brian Belfer made a motion to recommend to the Board of Selectmen that the town not pursue the parcel. Ashley Davies seconded. Results of the roll call vote: Paul Tagliaferri – aye; Ashley Davies – aye; Leslie Harrison – aye; Dan Clark – aye; Brian Belfer – aye; John Campbell – aye; Anthony Ziton – aye. Motion carries by unanimous vote.

Chairman Campbell suggested that this roll call vote serve to confirm members present on the call since a roll call vote at the start of the meeting was inadvertently overlooked.

Project Updates

432 Whitney Street appraisal – Ms. McDonald advised that the appraiser has done some work and she expects to receive the appraisal in a few weeks. Chairman Campbell voiced his understanding that the parcel is now under agreement. Ms. McDonald confirmed that it is, and that the P&S has been provided to the appraiser. She also mentioned that there are two agreements, one for each parcel (429 and 432 Whitney Street), and they contain permitting contingencies for the development of 100,000 square foot warehouses. In response to a question from Ms. Harrison about recent law enforcement activity, Ms. McDonald indicated that there had been some trespassing and releasing of cows on the property at 429 Whitney Street.

Ms. McDonald recalled that the board had previously agreed not to pursue the parcel at 429 Whitney Street due to a history of dumping activities. She also noted that the parcel has been removed from her jurisdiction and is now under the control of MassDEP.

Ms. McDonald advised that if the board is interested in pursuing the parcel, it will need to meet the price in the P&S (less the value of any contingencies) and asked if the board would consider a purchase price of \$1.8M for the 432 Whitney Street property. Board members discussed the merits of the parcel vs. cost and suggested that it might be difficult to justify. Mr. Belfer voiced his opinion that residents may support purchasing one or both parcels to avoid the potential for development of more warehouses.

Ms. McDonald informed the board that the purchase price for 429 Whitney Street is \$1,500,000 and 432 Whitney Street is \$1,800,000.

615 Howard Street Conservation Restriction: Use of electric bicycles (e-bikes) – Ms. McDonald noted that the board had discussed the matter at their previous meeting and agreed to remain silent on the subject of e-bikes, and the CR will go to the Conservation Commission on June 14th and the Board of Selectmen on June 28th for signature. Chairman Campbell offered to appear before both boards on behalf of the Open Space Committee.

Boston Worcester Airline Trail (BWALT) – Ms. Davies explained that there has been a great deal of social media activity and residents questioning why the town isn't joining this effort, which caused her to reach out to Don Burn, resident of Westborough for an update. She noted that Mr. Burn indicated that there has been no progress because Northborough did not want to do a feasibility study. He also indicated that there has recently been increased interest in Westborough to move it forward provided neighboring towns will get involved. Ms. Davies recalled that Northborough had only looked at a small piece at the corner of Shrewsbury and Westborough and Mr. Burn is suggesting that the portion that runs north from Westborough to Berlin along Bartlett Street and the Aqueduct be included since it would connect the Mass. Central Rail Trail. She also stated that, if the town is interested in doing a feasibility study on these sections, she would be willing to write a Mass. Recreation Trail Grant application and speak with the people in Berlin since it only makes sense for Northborough if they also participate. She suggested that economic development opportunities could be substantial if a real multi-use trail could be developed. Mr. Belfer recalled walking the small segment with Mr. Burn and the trails committee was in favor of the idea conceptually but needed more information about our role in the process. He agreed that residents would likely support a multi-use trail in town.

Members of the board discussed costs and funding sources. When asked, Ms. McDonald stated that Westborough's feasibility study cost \$100,000. Ms. Davies offered to do additional investigation for further discussion at the next meeting. She also agreed to reach out to Hudson and Marlborough for details about when they developed the Assabet Rail Trail including what they have seen in terms of use. Members of the board also expressed a desire to see the

feasibility study that was done by Westborough to have a better understanding of the complexities of the project. Mr. Belfer stated that Westborough's first feasibility study is available online, but that the study was undergoing additional revisions.

Next meeting – Members discussed summer availability and agreed to meet again on August 30th unless an immediate need arises before then.

Minutes of the Meeting of February 22, 2021 - Leslie Harrison made a motion to approve the Minutes of the Meeting of February 22, 2021 as submitted. Dan Clark seconded; roll call vote: Anthony Ziton – aye; Paul Tagliaferri – aye; Ashley Davies – aye; Leslie Harrison – aye; Dan Clark – aye; John Campbell – aye. Motion carries by unanimous vote.

Minutes of the Meeting of March 22, 2021 - Leslie Harrison made a motion to approve the Minutes of the Meeting of March 22, 2021 as submitted. Ashley Davies seconded; roll call vote: Anthony Ziton – aye; Paul Tagliaferri – aye; Ashley Davies – aye; Leslie Harrison – aye; Dan Clark – aye; Brian Belfer – aye; John Campbell – aye. Motion carries by unanimous vote.

In response to a question from Ms. McDonald about whether he will be remaining on the board as a representative of the Planning Board, Mr. Ziton indicated that the matter is still being discussed. Ms. McDonald informed board members that a new representative from the Board of Selectmen will be joining and, as yet, there has been no representative appointed by the Recreation Department.

Leslie Harrison made a motion to adjourn. Paul Tagliaferri seconded; roll call vote: Anthony Ziton – aye; Paul Tagliaferri – aye; Ashley Davies – aye; Leslie Harrison – aye; Dan Clark – aye; Brian Belfer – aye; John Campbell – aye.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Elaine Rowe
Board Secretary