

Land Acquisition Program Study Committee

Draft Minutes

Meeting: August 25, 2009 _____ 7:30 PM _____ Meeting Room B _____ Town Campus

Agenda

1. Call meeting to order: The meeting was called to order at 7:35 PM. Members present were Bob Dowler, Fillmore McPherson, Gus Horvath, Dave Skelly and Joan O'Neill, Chair. First Selectman, Al Goldberg, stepped in at 8:05 PM.

2. Citizen input: none

3. Discussion item: Guilford's Land Acquisition Program

All expressed approval of the information offered at the last meeting by Carolie Evans of Guilford. Dowler feels we would do well to follow their model and modify it where needed to Madison's financial structure. Skelly indicated that the core issue we face in developing a plan is representation on the proposed land acquisition committee (LAC) so that it can be apolitical. Horvath stated that info we now have from other towns seems to stress inclusion of reps from land use groups. This would give those groups a sense of ownership of the work of the LAC. Consensus indicated that the group should have some long term members to help with the stability of the committee. If a rep was from a town group and his or her term expired, perhaps they could continue as an at-large member. McPherson said that some turnover is important for an infusion of new ideas and energy. O'Neill stated that broad representation would provide many sources for originating and recommending projects.

4. Discussion item: Assignments

a. McPherson: fiscal considerations – Fillmore offered ideas on how local funding could be structured.

In contrast with Guilford, where funding is wrapped into annual bonding, Madison annually pre-funds "lay-away" accounts for anticipated needs. We could convert the current land acquisition fund (LAF), consisting of payments in lieu of open space, to a reserve fund. Our LAF now holds approximately \$300K. The local land trust may be more selective in accepting open space, passing up smaller parcels for larger acquisitions. This could result in an increase in funding for the LAP. However, any increase that might occur could be counteracted by an overall decrease in the level of development.

In Madison, it may work well to add to the reserve fund through the annual budget. He suggested a sum of \$150K the first year, increasing the amount by \$50K each year until the reserve contains e.g. \$500K. The fund could also benefit by wrapping an amount into the bonding authorization for the senior center and ambulance in 2011. He sees Madison following a process that would provide for a steady accrual of funds for modest projects with bonding as needed for larger projects.

b. Dowler: programs in other towns – Bob continues to pursue information from other towns. Joan is helping with a few towns. They are using a spread sheet that will solicit

the same information from each community. This will facilitate comparison of different communities.

5. Discussion item: Endorsements for a plan

O'Neill checked with first selectman, Al Goldberg, to see if he would like our group to solicit endorsements for a proposed plan before bringing it to the selectmen. He indicated that that was not needed.

6. Discussion item: New items

Horvath secured a copy of a town document done in 1993, an *Open Space/Recreation Plan*. This plan contains recommendations regarding preservation of parcels of land. He loaned this folder to O'Neill who will check it for items that could be included in our own plan. O'Neill will begin working on a rough draft of a plan from our group.

- 5. Approval of minutes:** The minutes of Aug. 11th were approved with two corrections – one to show that McPherson attended and a second correction in item 4, last paragraph, which should state that Guilford has spent approximately \$4M of the initial \$5M bonded. McPherson moved acceptance of the minutes, Dowler seconded. The minutes were approved as amended.

6. Discussion item: Items for the next agenda – none

First Selectman, Al Goldberg, stopped by the meeting and was provided a summary of work to date. He requested a mid-term report from the committee for the Selectmen for one of their Sept. meetings, either the 14th or the 28th. Both are evening meetings.

Adjournment: Dowler moved that the meeting be adjourned and McPherson seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 8:12 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan O'Neill