

Lebanon Conservation Commission
Regular Meeting, 5/10/10
Minutes

Call to order, 4:33 p.m.

Members present:, Marc Lang, David Scata, Jan Fitter, Jon Slate, Emery Gluck, Howard Wayland , Toni Willard (c. 4:40)

Member absent: Alton Blodgett, Keith Laporte

Also present: Town Planner Phil Chester

Correction to agenda: reference for item 3 (appraisal money) is property 09-M, not 09-K.

Jon Slate and Toni Willard were appointed acting alternates.

Motion to approve minutes of 4/5/10 regular meeting seconded and passed unanimously.

No audience present.

Property 09-M has applied to the state PDR program. 09-M was rated at 13 points. Motion to approve use of \$4500 from the ag. grant for one appraisal and \$4500 from the open space fund for a second appraisal, as required by the PDR program; seconded and passed unanimously.

Correspondence items were discussed per agenda. Jan plans to attend the easement monitoring workshop and will inform Joyce Okunuk of the issue of Charter Communications green lights.

Phil has noted preservation interest from property 10-B (not yet rated). Discussion. Phil will contact the owner and Elisabeth Moore regarding a USDA easement.

Discussion of Spaulding Pond breach on Smith Road. Wetlands Commission will visit and take action.

CSA applications: Two were received, each requesting \$500. Applicants are West Green Farm LLC, Steven Preli, and Indigenous Cultural Education Center (non-profit), Paula and John Reed. Particulars are in the applications on file. The Reed application is for a non-profit community garden to benefit seniors and Neighbors Helping Neighbors. It is not a CSA. However, it was agreed that in the absence of other applications, it is an appropriate use for the grant money. A stipulation on all applications will be that grant money may not be used to purchase (for resale) of products produced outside of Lebanon, and that it be used only for tangible goods (e.g., not for labor). Motion to approve grants to the applicants; seconded and passed unanimously. Phil and a ConsCom member will visit the applicants.

Motion to apply for a \$1000 Special Projects Grant for Local Agriculture from the New England Assoc. of RC&D Areas to fund another round of CSA grants; seconded and passed unanimously.

Commons Hill Trail: One nice sign is needed at the start and one at the Town-owned parcel. A sign at the other end of Schalk Road should alert people that the Liberty Hill end is gated (the Town may be able to do this sign.) A motion was made to let Marc obtain the needed signs using money from the operating budget; seconded and passed unanimously.

Outreach efforts: We want to have a draft by the July meeting for a townwide mailer promoting the open space fund and summarizing sites for walking, parks and public-accessible open space, etc. Content to be designed first, then format.

Motion to adjourn at 5:50 p.m., seconded and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Jan Fitter, Sec'y

March 1, 2010

To: Lebanon Board of Finance

From: Lebanon Conservation Commission

The Conservation Commission recommends that the Town make the full contribution of \$100,000 to the Town Open Space Account for fiscal 2010, per the established long-term Capital Plan and the 2000 Plan of Conservation and Development (to also be recommended in the pending Plan update). We make this recommendation for the following reasons:

- An allocation to this account is not an expenditure but an investment.
- Open space in Lebanon requires about \$.17 on the tax dollar for services; residential properties require about \$1.12 (CCS, 2007).
- Investment in the Open Space Fund will return benefits by helping to control the need for other capital and operating expenses.
- It will help control increases in property taxes.
- It will help preserve Lebanon's character as a good and unique place to live.
- 93% of Lebanon's residents believe that preserving open space and farmland in town is important; 77% believe that the Town should fund preservation efforts (Land Conservation Survey, 20008).
- The need for open space funds is subject to unpredictable conditions, and when need arises, it can't be put off until better times. If a parcel important to the Town goes for development it is gone forever, and the Town must absorb service costs.
- There are over 10,000 acres of unprotected land in Lebanon. Owners representing more than 1,000 acres have been in touch expressing interest in preserving their land.
- Outlays to assist in preservation have been steady. With projected commitments, the Open Space Fund could be under \$50,000 by the end of 2010.
- The only way an open space fund can effectively protect the Town is for it to be built up. The planned contribution to this account that began only three years ago has been reduced for two years in a row. The fund is shrinking.
- It took several years and much effort to establish the Town's commitment to maintaining an Open Space Fund. Another year of reduced funding will further undermine that commitment and handcuff the Town in future land protection efforts.

Realizing that the Board of Finance has requested flat budgets for this fiscal year, we do not make this request lightly. It reflects the special nature of an open space fund and the potentially high return on the open space dollar.