Wendell Open Space Minutes

Monday, September 23rd, 2024 6PM

Remote via Zoom

**Attending:** Raymond DiDonato, Daniel Leahy, Adam Porter

**Clerk:** Ashley Penna

**Guests:** Grace Albert (Gate Lane Resident)

*Meeting called to order at 6:04 PM by Dan Leahy.*

**Approval Minutes:**

Adam Porter made a motion to accept the April 29th, 2024 minutes as revised. Seconded by Dan Leahy. Passed unanimously.

Dan Leahy made a motion to accept the May 20th, 2024 minutes as revised. Seconded by Adam Porter. Passed unanimously.

**New Business:**

*Updates: Adam Kohl steps down from OSC, status of Wendell State Forest inholdings on Old Farley Road and West Street, farmland of local importance, status of access to Sibley Swamp off Jennison Road, OSC walks with interested landowners.*

* Adam Kohl has stepped down from the Open Space Committee. Members would like to gain an additional member to help achieve a quorum at each meeting.
* Two Wendell State Forest properties are being considered in holding. The West Street property is experiencing title properties and aims to have the project complete by the end of the calendar year. The second property on Old Farley Road has an appraisal underway. The land owners are receptive to working with the Commonwealth and are interested in conservation. If there was a change, the Open Space Committee can assist with Chapter 61 Right of First Refusal for a conservation partner to acquire the land.
* A property that can possibly be identified as a Farmland of Local Importance is discussed. Dan Leay has sent an email including Ward Smith and Mary Thomas of the Wendell Conservation Commission and Laurel Facey and Linda Hickman of the Wendell Agricultural Commission. If the importance is identified, a local preservation easement can be put forward. Dan Leahy will need to sign off on this as the Chair by Friday, October 11th, 2024.
* Leahy has received an email from Laurie DiDonato and Anna Wetherby in regards to the status of access to Sibley Swamp and the no trespassing signs. Leahy met with a forester from the DCR Office of Watershed Management to do a site visit. The forester believed that the signs were not properly placed and will need to review the deeds and maps to find out if there is a sliver of land owned by the landowner that has the right to put up the no trespassing notice. DCR would like to work with the land owner to make a formal right away across from the small narrow strip of land so DCR can access the property with vehicles if needed. This does not solve the issue for those that want access to Sibley Swamp. Leahy was encouraged to contact Dan Clark at the Quabbin and inform him that the town has interest in preserving the access point that is the trail to the Swamp. Leahy will reach out in October.
* A few landowners have contacted Leahy asking for site visit walks on their property. Leahy will copy all members on correspondence emails.

*40 Gate Lane and Davis Road parcel - discussion*

* The 40 Gate Land and Davis Road parcels are two tax title properties owned by the town. Members would like to coordinate a site visit to the properties.
* Grace Albert is in attendance as a neighbor to the 40 Gate Lane property and is looking for an update, as she has heard multiple different possibilities of what is happening with the property.
* The town has asked for the Selectboard to not put the property to action because there is thought of having conservation value as it abuts water supply protection on one side and a conservation property on the other. Ideas for this property would be to have the building removed and the possibility of a shoulder for parking.
* Albert is concerned about the idea of the parking area as it is on a discontinued road and if there is public access to the property with a parking area, that public road maintenance would be needed. Albert shares her experiences with issues with the road and runoff and has been doing regular maintenance to the road. She is concerned that making it a public space would cause more issues to the road.
* The concern is discussed that if the property goes up for auction, it can be a threat to the neighborhood and tranquility of the space.
* Members agree to schedule a site visit for Monday, October 21st at 4PM at the 40 Gate Lane Property. Members will meet at the Wendell Town Offices at 3:50 PM and drive together to the property. This will be a scheduled Open Space Committee public meeting. Grace Albert and her neighbor will be in attendance at the visit.
* Members will schedule a follow up meeting for the discussion of the visit on a different date.

*Potential impacts of proposed timber harvest on Old Egypt Road - discussion*

* Fred Hayes has filed a forest cutting plan. Leahy attended the site visit with the Conservation Commission agent, Mary Thomas. The issue was raised about repeatedly moving in and out with the logs with heavy machinery and who was going to cover if there was any damage to the road. There is some concern as it is a good place to walk and is a place where people can recreate. Thomas is following up with one of the service foresters from the state that is going to request an update with Hayes’ forest plan to address the stream crossing with the Conservation Commission.
* Dan Leahy will check in with Mike Maury, Forester, to ask for feedback and if there is any protocol he is aware of to ensure that the road is not negatively impacted.

**Next Meeting:** Monday, October 21, 2024 at 4PM 40 Gate Lane, Wendell MA. Members will meet at the Wendell Town Offices at 3:50 PM.

**Adjournment:** A motion to adjourn was made by Ray DiDonato and seconded by Dan Leahy at 7:41 PM