

Future Open Space Preservation Committee (FOSP)

Introduction

The Cape Elizabeth Town Council has decided that the Recreation and Open Space chapter recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan should be implemented before further implementation of the Land Use Chapter. In order to implement these recommendations using a public process that (1) is consistent with the Town Council Communication Strategy, (2) incorporates the Cape Farm Alliance and the Cape Elizabeth Land Trust and (3) respects private property rights, the Town Council is creating the Future Open Space Preservation Committee (FOSP).

Committee Structure

The Future Open Space Preservation Committee (FOSP) shall consist of ten members. The Town Council, following a recommendation from the Appointments Committee, shall appoint three citizens that shall be broadly representative of the entire community. The Town Council shall designate two Town Councilors and a member of the Ordinance Committee to serve on the committee. The Conservation Commission and Planning Board shall each designate one person representative of their bodies to serve on the committee. The Town Council also requests the Cape Farm Alliance and Cape Elizabeth Land Trust to designate one representative from each of their organizations to serve on the committee. The committee shall appoint its own chair and secretary. The Town Manager shall designate a principal staff person for the committee. It is also anticipated that consultants specializing in public survey and open space funding will be retained by the Town for specific projects that will be used by the committee.

Committee Charge

1. FOSP shall coordinate with the Cape Farm Alliance (CFA) and the Cape Elizabeth Land Trust (CELT) and solicit from them any information, inventories, etc. regarding future open space preservation priorities.
2. FOSP shall supervise a professional, statistically relevant telephone survey of town residents identifying priorities for specific parcels for open space preservation and preferred methods of funding.
3. FOSP shall prepare for the Town Manager's approval a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a consultant to:

Conduct an analysis of the costs and benefits to the town budget of development versus retention of open space. The analysis should draw on state and national resources to conduct this study. The objective is to determine the cost and benefits to taxpayers of housing growth versus the preservation of undeveloped land.

FOSP shall then review and make recommendations regarding the consultant's report.

4. FOSP shall conduct a public workshop with the CFA and CELT focusing on actions that both protect open space and promote sustainable farming, without constraining farmers' opportunities and infringing on private property rights.
5. FOSP shall develop "rural areas" and "open space" definitions for the Town of Cape Elizabeth. The committee shall consider (1) state law, (2) farmers' flexibility in using land on a long term basis, (3) the impact on other significant land owners, and (4) residents' priority in protecting rural areas.
6. FOSP shall identify specific key parcels of land in town that are of the highest priority. A comprehensive review of vacant lands in Cape Elizabeth should be undertaken to determine which areas exhibit the most important habitat features, recreational opportunities and whose preservation would help to ensure the town retains its rural character, including large undeveloped areas, agricultural uses of the land and scenic vistas.
7. FOSP shall develop a range of tools and approaches to preserve/protect/enhance critical parcels. These tools should be expansive and include innovative approaches that have been successfully employed nationwide, including zoning, outright land purchases, elimination of incentives for development in critical parcels, methods by which land can be purchases in private/public partnerships, and any other creative approaches other towns have taken. At the same time, all of the approaches that are considered and recommended have to avoid infringement on personal property rights.
8. FOSP shall prepare, for Town Council discussion, an evaluation of the financial resources necessary to achieve the strategic conservation priorities identified. Financial resources may include, but are not limited to, funding by town taxpayers, individual donations (land or dollars), donations and grants through CELT as well as State and Federal conservation funding programs.
9. FOSP shall prepare a final report summarizing its work and submit it to the Town Council.

Resources

The Town Council authorizes funding of \$25,000 for the cost/benefit/funding consultant and other miscellaneous committee expenses including the cost of the public opinion survey

Completion of FOSP work

All work of the committee shall be completed within 12 months of the first meeting of the committee. A progress report shall be provided to the Town Council six months after the committee begins to meet. In addition, FOSP is encouraged to provide recommendations to the Town Council as individual items are completed.

