

TOWN OF CAPE ELIZABETH
FUTURE OPEN SPACE PLANNING COMMITTEE
PUBLIC FORUM

March 7, 2012

7:00 pm Town Hall

The members of the Future Open Space Planning Committee presented an overview of the work they have done to date. They spoke about the committee charge, the draft Range of Tools they have chosen to accomplish the goal of open space preservation and the Open Space Priority Criteria for preservation.

During the public comment period, the first comment came from Tony Owens. He thanked the committee, and praised the process and tonight's presentation. He questioned the lack of priorities for sports fields for organized sports.

Mr. Franklin said they are having a survey, and that will be one of the questions. The committee is looking at open space as a whole and that sports fields are not a priority.

Mr. Governali added that nothing the committee has done precludes sports fields.

Louise Sullivan then asked about the center of Town. She noted that the Town is building a new library and feels it is a good opportunity to look at the redesign of the Town Center. She wants to see the community tie its projects together. She would like to see a Town green in the center of town.

Jessica Sullivan said she likes the concept and feels it could merit consideration.

Mr. Governali said the idea would be part of the Town Center Plan.

Mr. Greene said that the committee could decide to say they support the idea of a Town Center Green.

Mr. Norris said the committee is working on a vision for the Town as a whole.

Penny Jordan noted that agriculture is a priority of the committee. How do they plan to employ the tools in order to preserve this as an agricultural asset?

Mr. Franklin said the tools would allow the Town to be more proactive in preserving open space.

Mr. Greene said they were not going to use restrictive zoning, but would cooperate with the landowner to achieve their goals.

Mr. Governali added that they have tried to develop a process so when an opportunity occurs they will have a method to work with.

Red Sullivan of Two Lights Road spoke about a parcel of open space that he says is a mess. It is state park land. It is filled with dead trees, brambles and bittersweet. It is wasted space. He would like to see some liaison between the Town and the State to survey how to improve the area.

Mr. Greene replied that the management to open spaces is being addressed by Jessica Sullivan's committee.

Jessica Sullivan said the open space management plan addresses property owned by the Town, not the State.

Ms. O'Meara said the Town does reach out to the State on an ad hoc basis, but she will defer to Councilor Governali on this one. She also noted that some of the land in question may be there for wildlife preservation. There is probably some opportunity for partnering with the State and maximizing the uses of that space for humans and wildlife.

Jessica Sullivan said she is willing to look into this, and feels that the logical step is to contact the park ranger and the Conservation Commission.

Tony Owens questioned whether there would be someone in the Planning Office or on the Town Council to manage these criteria proactively. Or is it going to be allocated to the Land Trust?

Mr. Governali feels that is a very good question. He thinks it is the most logical to have a public body that is responsible for being the contact.

Penny Jordan thinks we should engage the Cape Elizabeth Land in collaboration with planning.

Mr. Governali suggested that it be the office of Planning and Open Space Management.

Chris Franklin noted that Falmouth and Scarborough both have a contact person or department for the process. Falmouth even has a volunteer "open space ombudsman".

Sarah Lennon asked how do they see the funding coming for this process.

Chris Franklin said a pre-approved bond seems to be the best way to go. It is essentially a line of credit for the Town to use as the need arises.

Frank Strout commended the committee for its work. He thinks the range of tools needs to be open and he is not in favor of a list of key parcels. He also noted that the Farm Alliance has been approached by some people who are looking to find land to farm. So the committee should look at land as possible to be farmed, not only what is currently being farmed. He is also in favor of bonding as a tool to have money available for open space.

Rich Carlson asked if a list of key parcels has been generated.

John Greene said there was a first cut of a list, not even a draft, and the group has decided that this is not a good path to take. They plan to recommend that the Council amend their charge to eliminate the production of such a list.

Chris Franklin said they started to put the parcels on the map and when they looked at all the priorities, the map took up the majority of the town.

Rich Carlson noted that the tools are zoning by nature. Are we infringing on private property rights.

Carol Anne Jordan said that zoning was not a way they want to go. They want to leave the zoning out of consideration. The tools are more to do with financing, not zoning.

John Greene noted that the charge to the committee was to respect property rights.

Penny Jordan is happy to see that cluster development is part of the range of tools. She is a proponent of bonding because there is a need to have funds available to be proactive. She also thinks the Town would be very progressive if they would adopt the Maine Farmland Trust approach. And she likes the transfer of development rights as an innovative tool. She complimented the committee and thinks they have done an excellent job.

Mr. Governali agrees that bonding is a good idea.

Mr. Norris is concerned that there is a limit to the residents' generosity. For example the library will indicate the Town's willingness to fund a bond.

Mr. Governali noted that there are many demands on the Town priorities.

Louise Sullivan asked about the survey.

Ms. O'Meara replied that it will be a telephone survey.

A discussion about the statistics of the survey and the methodology followed.

Mr. Governali said he did not think they should put too much emphasis on the survey. It is used as a guideline and there will be other opportunities for the residents to comment in forums such as this one.

Jessica Sullivan added that one of the results of this work will be a process for any landowner to contact and work with the Town to preserve open space on their land.

Respectfully submitted,

Hiroshi Dolliver

Meeting secretary