

**DRAFT
FOSP
Information Collection**

Step 1 of the charge from the Town Council to the FOSP Committee is:

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.

The FOSP Committee includes member representatives from the Cape Farm Alliance (Chair John Greene) and the Cape Elizabeth Land Trust (Chris Franklin). FOSP solicited information from both groups. At the April 8, 2011 meeting, Chris Franklin provided a review of the strategic plan from the Cape Elizabeth Land Trust, which included various maps and overlays. John Greene provided an overview of the Cape Farm Alliance, the 2008 Cape Elizabeth Farms Report and CFA's active farm list.

Public Opinion Survey

Step 2 of the charge from the Town Council to the FOSP Committee is:

2. FOSP shall supervise a professional, statistically relevant telephone survey of town residents identifying priorities for open space preservation and preferred methods of funding.

The Town retained the firm Critical Insights to conduct a public opinion survey. Critical Insights had conducted the Comprehensive Plan Survey in 2005 and an opinion survey for the Cape Elizabeth Land Trust.

FOSP established a Survey subcommittee chaired by Jessica Sullivan and including Chris Franklin and Frank Governali, with John Greene attending as an interested member. The subcommittee met four times to discuss the purpose and content of the survey, meet with the consultant, develop and finally recommend a draft survey for the FOSP Committee to approve. The FOSP committee approved the survey on April 25, 2012. The telephone survey was administered to 400 respondents, at least 10% of which are by cell phone. Respondents are also balanced for age and gender.

The survey was released in the field in May, 2012 and results of the survey were reported to the FOSP Committee at the June 27, 2012 meeting. The survey results report is included in the Appendix.

The general conclusions of the survey are as follows:

- Satisfaction. When asked about level of satisfaction with living in Cape Elizabeth, a strong majority (6-10) are “very satisfied.” Satisfaction runs through all aspects of town activities, from a good quality of life and good place for families to the school system, and open space. Residents are overwhelmingly “satisfied” (8-in-10 “satisfied” with 56% “very satisfied”) with the amount of open space in Cape Elizabeth.

- Knowledge of Open Space. Respondents were asked “what percentage of land do you think is legally protected open space.” Not including state and federal lands, 11% is permanently protected. Fifty-nine percent estimated the correct amount or less land is open space.

- Need for More Open Space. Only about a third of the residents surveyed think that Cape Elizabeth needs to protect more open space, compared to almost 6-in-10 who claim that the Town does not need more open space. Among the respondents who would like the Town to have more open space, the most commonly mentioned reasons include wanting to get as much as possible (33%), that it’s important for preserving what is already there (25%), and that unprotected land will be subject to development (22%). Nearly all the respondents who say that there is no need for more protected space indicate that they are satisfied with the amount of open space that is already preserved.

- Types of Open Space. Respondents were also asked the importance of protecting several different types of open space. Fully 6-in-10 rate open space for passive recreation (e.g., hiking, walking), salt/fresh water access and scenic viewpoints as “very important.” A majority rate protecting forests/woodlands, wildlife habitat and farmlands as “very important.” Almost half (48%) rate places of historical/unique value as “very important.”

- Open Space Plan. Most respondents (57%) think it is at least somewhat important to have a plan for preserving open space.

- Open Space Goals. When asked to rate the importance of a series of goals for the Town, a majority claim that it is “very important” to protect farmlands, wetlands/ponds/wooded areas and preserving rural character. Just under one-half (46%) rate school improvements as “very important” and 4-10 cite maintaining the current existing tax rate as “very important.” This question was also asked when preparing the 2007 Comprehensive Plan and the responses parallel the earlier survey responses.

•Future Open Space Preservation Efforts. About one half surveyed agree that in order to preserve open space, the Town should increase the use of current planning and land use regulations; a quarter are neutral to this option and 1-7 disagree. Just over one-third (36%) agree that the Town should incrementally increase spending to land and easements. One third disagree with either an incremental tax increase or shifting funds from any other municipal expenditure to support open space preservation. About one-third is neutral.

•Open Space Funding. One third of respondents said they would be supportive of an incremental property tax increase of \$1 per month, or \$12 annually. Two-thirds were not supportive of any increase. Of those willing to support a tax increase, a majority are willing to pay up to \$8 per month or \$96 annually (which represents about 1-in-5 residents surveyed overall.)

Recommendation: FOSP recommends that a public education effort be undertaken before any open space bond be submitted to voters for approval.