

**Town of Grantham  
Open Space Initiative Committee**

**MEETING MINUTES - DRAFT  
February 6, 2014**

**Time:** 9:00 a.m. (started at 9:07 a.m.)

**Location:** Jerry Whitney Memorial Room, Grantham Town Hall located at 300 Route 10 South in Grantham, NH

**Members:** Thain Allan  
Susan Buchanan, Grantham Conservation Commission Representative  
Craig McArt  
Al Wilson  
Representative of the Town Planning Board (to be determined)

**Present:** Thain, Sue, Craig, Al  
**Absent:** Planning Board  
**Members of the Public:** None

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Sue Buchanan officially started the meeting at 9:07 a.m. She created a draft agenda which she distributed, and also started taking official meeting notes to the best of her ability; these have formed the basis for the Meeting Minutes.

**Discussion of note taking responsibility**

Al prefers to assign responsibility to a town staff person. He and others do not feel capable of the task themselves, and Sue clarified that while she had agreed to take notes for this initial meeting, she did not want the added responsibility every month.

We all agreed unanimously that we would ask the staff to take on note taking responsibility to

**INTRODUCTIONS**

Thain Allan lives on Stocker Pond, member of (one of two Grantham representatives) Regional Planning Commission for about 5 years, Stocker Pond Association member of the board.

Craig McArt has a background in industrial design. Grantham resident for 8 years. Chair of Woodlands and Wildlife Committee in Eastman—so he has gotten to know Eastman really well. Got to know Dick Hocker and Dave Wood, which led to his involvement in this committee.

Sue Buchanan has lived in Grantham for a year and a half. She joined the Grantham Conservation Commission (GCC) in the spring of 2013, and is the official GCC representative. She has a professional background in environmental consulting and natural resources management.

Al Wilson is a land surveyor and septic designer, degree in wildlife management and conservation economics. Has been in area since 1977. Has been guiding and facilitating

development. Knows Grantham very well and the evolution of Grantham and the surrounding towns.

## **UNDERSTANDING OF PURPOSE**

Sue explained the background of Grantham Open Space Initiative, and how it differs from the charge of this committee.

The group reviewed the Board of Selectmen's charge for the creation of the Open Space Committee (OSC). The *Members*, as defined, would compose a 5-member committee made up of one person from the Conservation Commission, one person from the Planning Board and three people from the general public (must be a resident of Grantham).

Thain expressed concern that Planning Board has chosen to remain aloof from Wetlands Inventory and now from this process. The Planning Board has not made its position known (i.e., acknowledge that the town wants to maintain green space or that it will allow evolution of new growth).

The defined *Purpose* is, "To map, inventory and analyze all open space (undeveloped land) parcels of 10 acres or more. Then prioritize the ones that would be considered most critical to preserving the rural character of Grantham. Guidance may be obtained from the Conservation Commission."

Al: The term "rural character" is confusing. A definition of what "rural character" is and what is needed to maintain it. Where does the rural character get determined from, i.e., is it the vantage point from the land itself, or is it based on the view of the land from the road?

Thain asked: What is meant by Analyze? Prioritize?

Al pointed out the need to distinguish developable vs. undevelopable land. For example, some parcels might be big tracks of land that have a single house on them; others could be large pieces of land with very limited road frontage. Development is migrating toward cluster development with fewer roads. Pieces of land that add to value of land around itself should be identified.

## **APPROACH**

Sue suggested a method of identifying categories of priorities, and assigning weights to them. Then we could objectively rate or score each parcel of land for each category and come up with a quantifiable total score.

Craig pointed out the Swanzev rating sheet (appendix F) from Open Space Initiative, which is essentially what Sue was describing, and has already been reviewed and advocated by the GCC.

Thain pointed out that the scoring system of categories, ratings, weights, is what was done with the wetlands prioritization. It is a slippery slope that can be antagonizing.

Al looked at other towns on internet to see what else was out there. Suggested that we should take stock of the different locally use methods of assessing and prioritizing open space.

Craig suggested that we narrow our objective so as not to be political. Need to be able to demonstrate that it hasn't come off the top of our heads.

Thain suggested that the Zoning Board could be a strong second choice in light of the Planning Board's decision. Al strongly agreed that a Zoning Board (ZBA) member would add a lot. Craig suggested that we insist on not further proceeding without the participation of these bodies, and this sentiment was resounded unanimously. Without the Planning Board's involvement and input into the determination of what ranking system we will use to prioritize properties, we fear an outcome similar to what happened with the prime wetlands (i.e., perceived bias/lack of credibility by the town officials and citizens). Multiple members expressed that they would actually step down from the OSC if the Planning Board did not appoint someone, which would lead to the OSC dissolving.

Participation by the ZBA would only lend additional support toward our work. This should be a tool to help guide where development should occur.

A survey/questionnaire of town constituents has been used commonly by other towns prior to this type of process, possibly to gain input into the list of priorities and ranking system.

New London Conservation Commission developed a simple table as their deliverable for this type of valuation, "Desirable Properties Not Currently Protected."

Scenic views, view from the road, open agricultural lands, open fields.

## **REQUIREMENTS**

- Need maps! Available in GIS. Rachel Ruppel has access to whatever's out there. Thain will see her later this afternoon and will look into the matter.
- Craig found NH Fish & Game's Highest Ranked Wildlife Habitat by Ecological Condition and Wildlife Land Cover. Wildlife corridors and conserved lands are visible.
- Grantham tax maps: available from town.
- Participation of the Planning Board is imperative; participation of the Zoning Board is desired.
- Grantham wetlands map.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

- Al will check online what other towns have done for this type of process.
- Thain will check with Rachel Ruppel on GIS map availability.
- Al will check on layers available for printing on tax maps; will circulate email about options.
- Sue will write up meeting minutes. Contact Melissa regarding appointing; also request that she pursue involvement

## **FUTURE MEETINGS**

Set to recur monthly on the first Thursday of each month going forward at 8:30-10. The next meeting will be March 6, 2014.

What are goals for next meeting?

- Assign a Planning Board member; rounding this committee out is a requirement. Thain said he would seriously review his membership if this doesn't happen. Al agreed.
- Consider the different approaches from other nearby towns
- What methodologies are we going to try to apply to our valuation
- Definition of rural character

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Craig moved to adjourn, Thain seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 10:31 a.m.