

MINUTES

**GREEN SPACE COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2023
WILLIAM L. PULLEN MUNICIPAL BUILDING MEETING ROOM
ONLINE NON-INTERACTIVE AT TOWN HALL STREAMS
7:00 p.m.**

Committee members present: Josh White, Kathleen Thornton (Chair), Heather Jackson, Clairlynn Rountree, and Don Kleiner

Others present: None.

1. **Meeting called to order:** 7:00 p.m. by Kathleen Thornton.
2. **Reading and approval of minutes for previous meetings:** None.
3. **Public Comment:** None.
4. **Old Business:**
 - a. **Summary of Select Board presentation/meeting – KT and others in attendance**

Kathleen said the committee put together a report and gave a presentation to the select board last night, with details on two options for protecting the property from development and assuring public access. One was a deed restriction and the other a third party or a conservation easement. It is online for everybody to watch.
5. **New Business:**
 - a. **Compile short list of next steps for the GSC**

Don said his one takeaway was the survey, which can be problematic due to stupid responses from other towns. It needs to be done carefully. Eight years ago the data entry price was a quarter a record with an incredible turnaround, so we are not talking about big money. Someone should check.

He added there were four or five legal issues. We need to go back to the select board and say, “Here are the answers we found.”

Josh thought they were some of the things that had been plaguing them. He would not get caught up on the word “survey” and thinks of it more as “outside input,” which there are a lot of ways to get.

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Kathleen mentioned just inviting the public to come talk to the committee.

Don said the DMR model of how they do their rulemaking is nice: they bring their professional people in to explain the situation then they just take suggestions. At some point a rule proposal comes from them as a result of that conversation.

Clairlynn feels we should have some of those legal questions answered before we can draft a survey or whatever, as that may play a role in what we're asking the community.

Kathleen noted these two tasks need to proceed at the same time. Those questions are important, and it may take a while to get the answers.

Heather suggested they all watch the video and take notes on the questions. Don, the secretary, said he would do it; committee members should send him their notes.

Kathleen noted four select board members complimented the committee. Josh appreciated her discretion with CHPA. He didn't want it to look like the committee had put something in that would sway them one way or another.

Don said there's a mechanic's piece: how would you garner public opinion? A public meeting is a good idea. But he thought they were pretty much on to a survey. He suggested google forms and wondered if the town office has the Microsoft equivalent. It will be a small survey, as we have 2,000 residents and a normal return would be 5-8%.

Kathleen said we have to be super careful about the questions. Don concurred. She said maybe we have a survey and a meeting, more than one thing, and noted the data entry part.

Clairlynn liked the idea of a town meeting-type setting to invite people to get their personal questions answered. She wanted to honor what Martha said: we do have a community that is aging and they're not connected to the internet. Heather's suggestion about using the library and other ways of getting that information out is relevant.

Josh said we could put out feelers through email circles about the meeting, or maybe it could be a clickable survey and not a big deal, maybe print it off and bring it in.

Kathleen said we could put a notice in the paper about a meeting.

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In answer to Heather, Josh said he thought the town report was a ways out. Don noted we get a page. Josh doesn't think there's a "too late" in anything we do.

Don cautioned that committee members know all know about this, but there's no broader "oh the Town of Union owns the top of this hill." At this moment it's kind of a closely held little gem, and we need to be cognizant of publicity we do.

Don mentioned CMP's ROW and clearly the poles are not in use. We should ask if CMP is willing to make a gesture and abandon that ROW. Josh concurred.

Kathleen asked what the committee felt would be the next step to get more public input.

Josh said all of them: we need to work toward the legal questions and be putting in the steps so once they're answered things are ready to go – email, circular, ad in the paper, or whatever it is. We need to work toward both at the same time.

Kathleen said we probably need to start working on survey questions.

Heather thought of an informational meeting: get people in here and talking, educate them. She brought up possible cost to the town.

Josh brought up using the town website.

Kathleen noted it's a complex issue. What we can survey people about is what they'd like to see on Coggins Hill. Have you been up there? What about the blueberry management? Many questions that need to go in that management plan may inform whether we go one way or another.

Clairlynn echoed Heather. She is not comfortable creating questions for a survey or whatever without informing the community via town website, Union school bi-weekly emails, group emails, etc. She would like people to have more information about the research the committee has done before creating survey questions, as well as some of the legal questions answered before creating survey questions, though she agreed they need to be doing them almost simultaneously. She also wanted to make sure they are only going to be doing one survey, and it should not be overwhelming. She suggested slowing down: educate the community and get the legal questions answered before we go to the survey.

Heather suggested getting the legal questions clarified first.

Josh said probably a quarter of the questions would be on legal, which leaves room to work on the survey.

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Clairlynn clarified her desire is to give information to the town citizens so they can be well-informed and respond to the survey with a foundation knowledge. Josh thanked her for the clarification, which he noted seemed reasonable.

Kathleen suggested informational material with the survey, as some people may have no clue. The question then becomes what do we give them? The report? How?

Don said we're going to survey on: do you want us to conserve this? What kind of access do you think is appropriate? How do you see yourself using this as a resident of the town? He doesn't think they need to know the nuts and bolts of the committee's work. What are their desires? They are kind of simple questions: conserve it forever, or one generation? Do you want some flexibility, or do you want to be locked in?

Kathleen said it is up to the select board to either pick one option or present both. That decision has not yet been made. She agreed with Don perhaps the legal questions don't need to go in the survey, but rather questions like would you go there? Would you hike there? Would you want a parking lot?

Don reminded the point is to deliver something people want.

Heather understood that Adam wanted input from the voters on what type of situation they would want. Kathleen said they asked us to provide the options not make the decision; they may just let the voters choose from both options.

There was further discussion on possible survey questions, and whether one option or both options would go to the voters.

Clairlynn remembered a question along the lines of "can the select board make a decision that goes against the will of the voters"; she felt there was disagreement on the board.

Josh said they could probably put it up there and have the voters reject it. He posed various scenarios. Kathleen summarized the board was asking if they could vote to put it before voters, which was Clairlynn's assumption as well. Ayer Park was discussed.

Kathleen raised the question if the town voted to put a deed restriction on the property and then sold it, who would have the legal standing to enforce that deed restriction once it was sold?

Clairlynn went back to next steps: watch the video, send notes to Don, then what? How will we get the legal questions answered? Don said hash over the list, vote on it, direct the chair to send it to Jay to send it to the lawyer.

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Kathleen noted we are out of free time with the other lawyer and should use the town lawyer. We should make some progress on the survey meeting. She will ask Jay about having a public informational meeting. Josh and Heather thought a public meeting was expensive, as it has to be posted in advance, etc. Heather raised a question for Jay about a more informal meeting.

Don suggested making a list of organizations that meet in town: get invited to those meetings and do the same content. Kathleen suggested a plea to attend one of the committee's meetings.

Don suggested recording a presentation/making a video of what they would have at that meeting, then put it on youtube, on dvd, and give them out. Kathleen said we have the select board presentation, which Don said was more detailed than we probably need to prime the survey pump. It would be relatively short.

Kathleen said Jay will come to a meeting and discuss cost-effective ways of reaching citizens. Don suggested asking him if there is any latitude for the committee to have a little budget cash. The committee has spent very little money. Don also suggested asking Jay how much lawyer time we might have.

Don said the survey should be short, no more than 20 questions. He asked about putting a pdf of the presentation on the town website. He has done voiceover with PowerPoint then made it a pdf.

Kathleen will put the pdf of the presentation with a link to the livestream up. Don cautioned 40% cannot make google docs work. Clairlynn said if you don't have gmail you can't access google docs.

Kathleen summarized action items: Questions from last night's presentation go to Don who compiles them and brings them to the next meeting. She will compile a list of questions for Jay. They will start informally compiling survey questions. Don will bring minutes. Kathleen will ask Jay about a decision as to whether to try to get this on the ballot for this year or not.

Consensus was the legal questions should be compiled sooner rather than later. Don suggested, per Roberts Rules, compiling that list, at least meet to vote on it, and send it up.

- b. Discussion of future agenda items:** Above.
- c. Set date for next meeting:** Wednesday, February 22.

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6. Adjourn:

Motion by: Don Kleiner

2nd by: Heather Jackson

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Meeting adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sherry Abaldo
Secretary