

Minutes
Dracut Open Space Committee Meeting
April 10, 2014

IN ATTENDANCE:

Colleen Barclay, Marianne Blanchet, Bruce Cote, Emile Demers, Karen Merrill and Dave Sutherland.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

--Bruce opened the April meeting of the Dracut Open Space Committee at 6:30PM in the Meeting Room of the Dracut Historic Society.

--Bruce also announced that committee member, John Hire, has resigned his position on our committee. Bruce read the resignation letter which John also sent to the Selectmen. Committee members expressed their appreciation to John for his years of service as committee member and past chairperson. Bruce agrees to take on the responsibility of reserving our meeting rooms and posting our meetings at town hall. Bruce will also learn the process for recruiting new members and will update our member list on our Open Space web page.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

There were no members of the community present at this time in the meeting.

REVIEW OF MARCH 20th MINUTES:

--The committee reviewed the minutes of March 20, 2014. The committee suggested some corrections and Dave moved to accept the minutes as amended. Karen seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Proprietors' Way

Bruce made a presentation to the Selectmen about the committee's work and he announced the committee's plans for this property. Research indicates that there is no need to notify the abutters of our intentions as we had previously been told. The Selectmen offered no concerns and were supportive. Bruce also read emails from member Bill Greenwood who was unable to attend tonight's meeting. Bill spoke to Mike Buxton who believes it will be at least two weeks before it is dry enough to use the necessary equipment at that site. Bill will do a walk-through with Mike to show Mr. Buxton what we want done. Mike also agreed to notify us when the work will be starting so that Bob and Gay Corey can record some of the work. Bill also wrote that he spoke to Bill Morin from the DWSD who asked if the commissioners could meet with any available committee members on April 12th at 8AM at the Betty Ann Lane water tower. Bill agreed to give them a tour through the part of Proprietor's Way adjacent to the DWSD property. Some of the members present agree to meet with them on Saturday.

Massachusetts Land Conservation Conference Trip Report

--Bruce reports that the 33rd Massachusetts Land Conservation Conference was held at the Worcester Technical High School. This conference is the largest land management conference in the country with several workshops and about 35 vendors and environmental groups with information booths. Bruce provided a brief report on the 5 workshops attended. He noted that a new theme of the conference was a focus on creating new ways to talk about climate change. They recommend shifting from an approach of fear, or doom and gloom, to one showing the potential medical benefits humans can derive from studying nature and what loss of plant and animal species can mean to medical research. The presenter gave some examples such as how hibernating bears do not suffer bone loss or kidney failure as seen in humans, or how a Cone Snail found in Coral Reefs can produce several thousand different toxins, most of which are as yet unstudied.

One workshop by the Nature Conservancy of Massachusetts presented an overview of the 5th generation study on the loss of resilient landscapes on the Commonwealth. Since 2005, we have lost almost 25,000 acres of forest and this loss impacts both the resilience of land to climate change, as well as a loss to biodiversity. One observation is the increase in the tick population. Loss of forested land results in loss of animal diversity which then leads to loss of 'incompetent hosts' who help control ticks. The maps generated from this study show there are no resilient landscapes identified in Dracut. One presentation was by Attorney Ray Lyon from the NE Forestry Foundation who represented the NEFF in a landmark lawsuit from Hawley, MA. At the time of the conference, this case was still under review by the Mass Supreme Judicial Court and could have implications for all private conservation trusts in Massachusetts.

Proprietors' Way Videographers

--Karen reports that she spoke to Gay who reports that they are ready to go whenever we need them. Gay also reports that they have found old footage of Proprietors' Way that they will incorporate with our footage. Karen said that there are also pictures that Helen Dunlap has that can be incorporated into the video.

SITE VISITS

--Marianne reports that she walked the Long Pond property which is still very wet and difficult to traverse. Bruce reports that he will follow up with the Conservation Commission about Long Pond.
--We discussed a past visit to McNamara Way when a large amount of bittersweet was removed. We were told that there is a clean up scheduled for Marjorie Dunlap Day (Earth Day). The committee considered joining that clean up to look at what the bittersweet looks like and possibly removing more of that.

NEW BUSINESS

Proposed Tennessee Gas Pipeline Northern Expansion Project

Community member Rich Cowan arrived during our meeting, requesting to be heard regarding this project. Although he was not available for the Public Comments section, the committee felt it would be appropriate to give him an opportunity to talk to our group. Rich gave an overview of the proposal stating that it includes 250 miles of connections ending in MA. Kinder-Morgan are making initial plans, and they plan to file with the government in either late 2014 or early 2015. Rich reports that he is attempting to create a community awareness group to analyze and make recommendations to the town about the economic, safety and ecological impact of this proposal. He states that he hopes a member of our committee will be willing to join his group.

MEETING SCHEDULE

The upcoming meetings of the Dracut Open Space committee have been scheduled at the Historical Society on:

May 8, 2014

June 12, 2014

ADJOURNMENT

Emile made a motion to adjourn the April 2014 Open Space meeting at 8:00PM. Colleen seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

**THE DRACUT
OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE**

Signature Page

May 9, 2014



Bruce Cote, Chairperson



Colleen Barclay



Marianne Blanchet



Emile Demers



Bill Greenwood



Karen Merrill

Dave Sutherland