

Meeting Minutes

Date: May 10, 2011

Time: 7:30 p.m.

Location: Nashua River Watershed Association

Attendees:

Commissioners: Mike Roberts, Chris Christie, Maria Harris, Carl Canner, Leo Laverdure, Lisa Wiesner

Commissioners absent: Carl Flowers

Liasons: Mark Archambault

Minutes taken by: Stephanie Strickland

Agenda:

1. **Helene's stables**
2. **Conference debrief**
3. **Facebook discussion**
4. **Review of minutes**
5. **Meeting schedule/location**
6. **Discuss GELD and other energy issues**
7. **Community gardens and farming discussion**
8. **Master Plan/ Sustainability Plan discussion**
9. **Adjourn**

Agenda Item #1: Helene's Stables

Discussion:

- Helen: In 1994 I purchased the horse farm, which was already in operation. I own five horses and I give children horseback lessons. I have a neighbor who isn't in favor of the noises and smells which she expressed both to the town and the board of health. The neighbor moved in 2000 and began complaining in 2006. I don't have a manure pile on the premises because the horses don't generate enough. I spread the fecal matter or pick it up and put it in a bucket in the shed. When the neighbor complained I decided not to put the horses in the front and put a garden there instead. My neighbor still doesn't approve of that because I use manure on the garden. Last spring I started gardening and I was yelled at by the neighbor in front of parents and students about how it smelled and was against the law. There is a Zoning Board meeting on June 1st because they are sick of hearing complaints. The Zoning Board, Board of Health, and Agricultural Committee have all visited and didn't notice anything wrong. I was wondering if someone from your committee could visit the premises and write a letter of approval.
- Mike: Helen asked someone to visit and Maria already has.
- Maria: The property is very well maintained. The animals are well kept but the neighbors that don't approve are very close.

- Helen: She has called the police several times, forged documents, and is taking pictures of me every day.
- Mike: I'm going to ask for comments.
- Chris: You have a business? Zoned properly?
- Helen: Yes, everything is legal.
- Chris: I know I have a big pile of manure and it doesn't smell.
- Helen: It shouldn't matter if it smells or not because I stopped keeping it in the front.
- Carl: This is obviously an unfortunate situation and it sounds to me like she's being unreasonable.
- Helen: Another factor I didn't mention is the neighbor doesn't have a backyard or a job so she's always in my business.
- Leo: Sounds like the Agricultural commission is the main median.
- Helen: According to the Right to Farm Law I meet many of the standards under the definition of farming.
- Mark: Somebody on the legal board might say the manure might have to be removed, instead of spreading it.
- Lisa: The grange had a meeting on legal matters on farming. I'm in support of backing up with writing, because it does apply to sustainability.
- Maria: I don't think your neighbor has any jurisdiction and I fully support you.
- Chris: I live in West Groton and I've seen people move in and out and Blood farms smells but they have to deal with it.
- Lisa: Do you have legal support?
- Helen: We did a couple years ago with the neighbor.
- Mike: I think we should write a letter of support for Helen. I will draft a letter.
- Leo: I second the motion.
- Unanimous agreement.

Action Item

- Mike to draft a letter of support for Helen.

Agenda Item #2: Conference debrief

Discussion:

- Mike: Since Leo and I have not put up our notes, I think we should wait on this item.

Agenda Item #3: Facebook discussion

Discussion:

- Mike: My idea was that liaisons could update the Facebook page because they're not members. We can discuss at meetings.
- Lisa: I'm not on Facebook and don't see the need to put all our energy into one. We could send bi-weekly newsletters, have two meetings monthly, and meet at the town hall. Social networking is a good idea but we have to do it face to face, the old fashioned way as well.

- Mike: We have been working on the Master Plan, which took up most of our energy.
- Lisa: I'm not detracting from prior work; I'm just talking about how to move forward. Is Facebook worthy?
- Chris: I thought there were legal issues with us having a Facebook page.
- Carl: Facebook is not my thing.
- Leo: What about blogging?
- Mark: I agree with Leo. Blogging wouldn't have to violate open meeting law.
- Maria: I believe you need to Twitter, Facebook, and blog to get yourself out there.
- Lisa: Is a blog going to have legal problems?
- Mike: No because it's one way.
- Lisa: I like it because you can link it to different things.
- Maria: Facebook links everything.
- Mike: We need to re-constitute our communications sub-committee. Now that we're done working on the Master Plan we can find more ways to reach out the community. I think we should explore the blog and an agenda item should be to regroup communications sub-committee.

Agenda Item #4: Review Minutes

Discussion

- Mike: Did anyone find any mistakes that needed to be corrected in the minutes?
- Maria: I already read them over and didn't find anything.

Motion

- Mike: I move that the minutes be accepted as corrected.
- Carl: I second
- Unanimous agreement

Agenda Item #5: Meeting schedule/location

Discussion

- Mike: We have a hard time getting a quorum together once a month. We should keep it at one meeting a month until the end of summer at least.
- Lisa: I think just being in the town hall allows for visibility and has import. I think it has benefit over never going. I also think an opportunity to televise would have immediate gratification. It's important to come to meetings, regardless of who can come because we'll lose momentum when they are cancelled. We can still put up the notes for those who missed it. I think it would be best to have more public meetings. It feels more separate here. I don't see how we could be denied entry into the town hall seeing as we are a town entity. I don't think we can always expect to be out of here at nine o'clock either. Other commissions don't cancel and they stay as long as it takes to complete the agenda.
- Chris: I agree that we should meet, no matter who can attend or not. We should be flexible but there should be some sort of time restriction.

- Carl: I think this place is a much better venue than town hall. There are no problems getting in and out and it's quiet.
- Leo: I'm not concerned as much with where we meet. I don't know if there's enough interest for televising. I think we could have a specific meeting that will gain interest televised.
- Mark: I see some of Lisa's points. There's something more official about the town hall, but for this type of commission it's not detrimental.
- Lisa: I'm happy to be here, if the town hall is more stressed atmosphere. We could propose a second meeting a month for an important event.
- Maria: I like this location, but I do believe we need a goal and have to be proactive. I don't want to talk anymore, I want to do.
- Lisa: I do want to say that I do appreciate what you have done and wish I could have been a part of it.
- Mike: We're not in a rut; we're going to be changing.
- Maria: We should implement goals sooner than later.
- Mike: I'm going to keep the schedule going as is, the second Tuesday of every month. It will be subject to change depending on what we're doing. We should sit down and write a sustainability five-year plan. Think about it between now and next meeting and then we can talk about it.
- Maria: So we can meet with other members outside a meeting, if there is no quorum?
- Mike: Yes you can sit down with another member. Also, it's critical to get information to me in time to put it in the agenda.

Agenda Item #6: Discuss GELD and other energy issues

Discussion

- Lisa: My intention is for us to explore and understand GELD and understand where we get our energy.
- Leo: That information is actually right in the Master Plan.
- Mike: The context for discussion is how can Groton become a green community?
- Lisa: What I would like to do assess energy alone, not trying to meet any quota or how it relates to green community.
- Chris: You're taking a big issue because there are so many complicated issues around energy and so many factors. GELD issued an annual income statement, which you should read. They issue it every year, and it will probably answer many or your questions. For example the Green Community Act has a lot of issues.
- Lisa: Explain the Green Community Act.
- Chris: The Green Community Act is fairly new but consists of many factors (buildings, cars, jobs, etc.). It has to go before a public meeting, and it was voted down for many reasons. The sustainability commission could help by getting more information on a green community and then educate the community. Brody Mountain is an example of a renewable energy project. GELD is a partner/co-op. It's been difficult but we made a big effort to gain renewable energy, which we finally did. Cost was more than initially predicted.

- Carl: There was a document signed by the selectmen that agreed that any of these sales would be decided by town meeting. This Brody project wasn't run through the town like it should have been.
- Chris: The Brody project was an attempt to get away from fossil fuels. Wind and solar are not 100%, fossil fuels are more consistent which is what people want.
- Carl: Are there any other power sales agreements like Brody Mountain?
- Chris: We're always looking at any new possibilities.
- Lisa: What I want to do is apply incentives to the town. GELD is only one entity; there are many groups who want to see wind turbines and solar panels.
- Chris: The best approach to solving energy problems are conservation and efficiency. We need to encourage the town to conserve and be more efficient. We promote a lot but most people don't want to spend more money.
- Lisa: I believe people would care more if they knew where their energy was coming from.
- Mike: This is an important conversation that isn't going to end tonight. What I would like to suggest is that Lisa, you study GELD and write an article for the newspaper about energy. I would like you to report your findings at the next meeting. Will you take that charge?
- Lisa: I do.