

CONSERVATION COMMISSION GREENBELT PLAN

PUBLIC FORUM

CAPE ELIZABETH TOWN HALL

MAY 30, 2013 7:00 p.m.

Garvan Donegan opened the meeting and gave a brief introduction. He said there would be a reasonable time allotted for remarks from the public. This forum will be concerned with the northerly part of the town. He also said the last Greenbelt Plan was done in 2001, so there is a need to update the plan. The first Greenbelt Plan was done in 1977, so the Cape has a long history of such plans.

In 2013 The Conservation Commission has been working on open space in Stonegate, and on wildlife habitat in Winnick Woods. They have also worked on the Highland trail in Broad Cove and put in boardwalks.

Mr. Donegan took this time to thank the many people who have helped the Commission in their work. Specifically, the Boy Scouts, Tim DiNinno and NEMBA for trail maintenance. He also thanked Kelly Strout and the horseback riders, Cape Farm Alliance and Penny Jordan, Mike Duddy and Jessica Sullivan. He gave a further thank you to Maureen O'Meara for all her work on the Greenbelt Plan.

Maureen O'Meara, Town Planner then gave an overview. She said the 2013 Greenbelt Trails Map is the one to use when looking for a trail to walk. She said there are casual trails that exist in various neighborhoods that people use, but are not official and have no deeded rights to use. The Trails Map shows trails that the public has rights to use. They are either owned by the Town or have deeded rights to their use. She urged people to use the legal trails and not to trespass on private property.

Ms. O'Meara said the 2001 greenbelt Plan is the one they are updating now. That plan had five trail priorities, and four of them have been accomplished. There has been a huge increase in the number and length of trails since 2001. They have added over 11 miles of trails, which is almost double what existed in 2001.

She then addressed the reasons to make a plan:

It gives a Town wide perspective,

Provides public input,

Guides limited resources,

Enhances grant applications,

Directs public to public trails/discourages trespassing.

The process for adopting the Plan is that the Conservation Commission proposes a draft and sends it to the Town Council. The Town Council considers adoption of the Plan.

Marti Blair then gave a summary of the goals and vision for the Plan. The Commission anticipates a 10 year lifespan of the Plan.

The number one goal of the plan is maintenance and construction of trails. She talked about the Commission and that they are a hands-on group. They have built boat racks, boardwalks and trails. They have worked with many volunteers on their projects.

There is a Public Works person designated as a trail maintenance person.

The second goal is public education. To this end, they have published the maps online, and have GPS locators for the trails. There are signs along the trails as well. The Future Open Space Planning Committee has expanded responsibility for more information.

The third and most important goal is to expand connectivity. To make connections with other trails and keep people off the main roads.

She noted that the northern portion of Cape Elizabeth is underserved. There are casual trails there, but not many formal trails. They also want to have access to water bodies, such as the ocean, marshes, streams and ponds. It is a goal to serve a diversity of users of the trails, walkers bike riders, horseback riders, dog walkers etc. The Plan will provide opportunities for grants and estate donations. The goal is to avoid roads and provide regional connectivity for long distance trails. This Plan is a guidance document for us.

Mr. Donegan stressed that they want the public to offer feedback.

Mr. Planinsek then gave an overview of the map in the Oakhurst Area of Town, and specifically trails 1, 2, 4, and 5.

Mr. Matzkin reviewed the land north of Scott Dyer Road and trails 6, 7, 10, 11 and a casual use trail now number 12.

Mr. Wacksman reviewed trails 8a, 8b, 12 and the marsh view trail.

The Commission and the public then took a map break to look more closely at the maps and to solicit suggestions and priorities from the public in attendance.

The public comment period was then opened.

Richard Carlson of Eastman Road asked if property owners have been notified that they are a target, prior to the public forum. He thinks they are putting the cart before the horse by putting out these maps.

Ms. O'Meara replied that they only work with willing property owners. The maps show where they would like to have a trail, not necessarily where one will be built. The potential trails are shown in conceptual locations, so, except for 1-2 trails, there are multiple options for where a trail would go and on which property.

Mr. Donegan noted that this is a planning tool, for where they want to go in the future.

Mr. Carlson said they should notify the property owners before the public forum.

Bob Barton of Woods Knoll Drive asked if they would take properties by eminent domain.

Ms. O'Meara said they have not, and do not plan to use eminent domain, and again stressed that they only work with willing property owners. The town has never used eminent domain for open space acquisition. She noted that she cannot tie the hands of future Town Councils.

John Greene, of the Sprague Corporation, asked if the landowner says no to allowing a trail, will it still show on the Greenbelt Map.

Mr. Donegan replied that it is not shown as a trail, and depending on the priority of the location, it may or may not still be shown on the map.

No one else came forward to speak.

Mr. Donegan thanked the audience for coming and urged them to continue to follow up. The meeting was closed at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Hiromi Dolliver