

TOWN OF AMHERST  
Open Space Advisory Committee

September 7, 2021

**APPROVED**

1 In attendance: Peter Lyon, Arnie Rosenblatt, Rob Clemens, Mike Campbell, Rob Cissel, and  
2 Jamin Warren.

3 Also in attendance: Jared Hardner, and Bill Stoughton.

4 Staff in attendance: Kristan Patenaude – Recording Secretary  
5

6 **1. Roll Call to Order**

7 Peter Lyon called the meeting to order at 6:58pm.  
8

9 Introductions were made. Peter Lyon stated that he is the Chair of the Board of Selectmen. Arnie  
10 Rosenblatt stated that he is the Chair of the Planning Board. Rob Clemens stated that he is the  
11 Chair of the Conservation Commission. Mike Campbell, Jamin Warren, and Rob Cissel  
12 introduced themselves. Jared Hardner stated that he is the Vice Chair of the Conservation  
13 Commission. Bill Stoughton stated that he is an alternate on the Conservation Commission and  
14 Vice Chair of the Planning Board.  
15

16 Arnie Rosenblatt explained that he was one of the members of the original Open Space Advisory  
17 Committee. At that time, there was a \$5.5M bond approved by the voters with no yearly  
18 spending limit. The group identified approximately five properties and brought them before the  
19 Board of Selectmen, but none were ever approved. He stated that he believes the original group  
20 failed to mount a campaign to persuade the Board of Selectmen to vote affirmatively.  
21

22 **2. Organization Discussion**

23 The Committee agreed that Peter Lyon would be Chair, Mike Campbell would be Vice Chair and  
24 Rob Cissel would be Clerk of the Committee.  
25

26 **3. Presentation from Conservation Commission**

27 Jared Hardner made a presentation to the Committee. He explained that the Master Plan Survey  
28 found that the number one conservation priority of respondents is to protect water resources and  
29 the second priority is to preserve the Town's rural aesthetic. Approximately 91% of residents  
30 who responded believe that Amherst needs to protect its open space and natural resources. He  
31 noted that land conservation is essential to protect water quality, quantity, and flow regime.  
32 Warrant Article 22 was passed to allow \$6M for the acquisition of developable land for  
33 conservation. This is not to exceed \$2M/fiscal year. This is to be a less than \$40/year tax impact  
34 on the average priced home. This Warrant Article passed 1,437 – 623.  
35

36 Jared Hardner explained that the acquisition criteria include parcels that are “irreplaceable” and  
37 “vulnerable.” There is a lot of data on irreplaceability, such as habitat conservation priorities,  
38 aquifer information, and natural vegetation for water quality information.  
39

40 In response to a question from Rob Cissel, Jared Hardner stated that he believes the vast amount  
41 of people in Town are on wells (approximately 80%). Mike Campbell added that the Pennichuck  
42 Water Works in Town were mapped during the creation of the Hazardous Mitigation Plan years  
43 ago.  
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Mike Campbell stated that he does not believe on Bon Terrain aquifer gets enough attention. It is still available to local towns as a possible private water supply. Jared Hardner agreed that it has been prioritized in a statewide analysis as one of the most important water sources in the state.

Jared Hardner explained that the selection criteria look to protect irreplaceable natural resources that contribute to Amherst's rural aesthetic and are vulnerable to development. He stated that the group has mapping tools such as the ACC GIS and NRPC MapGeo available to it.

Bill Stoughton noted that confidentiality is an important part of this Committee's process. The Committee's advice is not a mandatory condition for the Board of Selectmen to proceed with a proposed acquisition. The intent is that the Conservation Commission (ACC) will recommend and vote on potential properties. These suggestions will then go before Planning Board for review and will then go before the Board of Selectmen for two public hearings and a potential vote. He noted that 50 registered voters can petition to have the proposed acquisition brought to Town Meeting.

Rob Clemens stated that he believes the members of this Committee will also come up with other ways to determine possible properties in order to broaden the possibilities.

In response to a question from Mike Campbell regarding how the Town is made aware of potential parcels, Jared Hardner explained that the ACC is aware of important properties in Town to conserve and has occasionally spoken with landowners to gain information on these properties. Other properties surprisingly come onto the market and are then noticed.

Mike Campbell spoke of the Carlson Manor property and the fact that the proposal has gone before the new State Housing Board. He stated that the State Housing Board seemed to dismiss the idea of "rural character" for being a reason to deny a development application. He asked if the Town has considered determining a definition for "rural character."

Arnie Rosenblatt explained that the Planning Board originally heard the Carlson Manor property under the Integrated Innovative Housing Ordinance (IIHO). This has since been abolished by the Town. The plan was originally approved for up-to 53 units. The current Planning Board then denied the updated plan, in part because it did not satisfy the vision of rural aesthetic. He noted that the Housing Board has since reversed the Planning Board's decision, in part because the judge did not agree with the concept of rural character for a reason to deny the application. He stated that the Planning Board plans to work on a definition for this term, in hopes of providing some protection to the Town.

Peter Lyon noted that the Committee is not here to stop development, but to preserve open space and water resources. There may be some overlap in these two things.

In response to a question from Peter Lyon regarding the vulnerability criteria, Jared Hardner stated that there are 3-4 sub criteria for this item.

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Danielle Pray suggested the Committee would be identifying any potential conflicts between Committee members and property owners before discussing parcels in Non-Public Session, for transparency.

In response to a question from Rob Cissel, Jared Hardner stated that he believes if there is an excess of the \$2M/year, it will carry over into the next year. Bill Stoughton stated that if nothing is spent it one year though, the Town does not then have \$4M available to spend the next year.

**Peter Lyon moved at 7:40pm that the Open Space Advisory Committee will enter into non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II, (d) *Consideration of the acquisition, sale, or lease of real or personal property which, if discussed in public, would likely benefit a party or parties whose interests are adverse to those of the general community.* Arnie Rosenblatt seconded.**

**Voting: Peter Lyon - aye, Rob Clemens - aye, Arnie Rosenblatt - aye, Jamin Warren - aye, Mike Campbell - aye, and Rob Cissel - aye; motion carried unanimously.**

No motions were made, and no action was taken in this non-public session.

**Rob Clemens moved at 9:36pm to exit non-public session. Arnie Rosenblatt seconded.**

**Voting: Peter Lyon - aye, Rob Clemens - aye, Arnie Rosenblatt - aye, Jamin Warren - aye, Mike Campbell - aye, and Rob Cissel - aye; motion carried unanimously.**

**Rob Clemens moved adjourn the meeting at 9:37pm. Arnie Rosenblatt seconded.**

**Voting: Peter Lyon - aye, Rob Clemens - aye, Arnie Rosenblatt - aye, Jamin Warren - aye, Mike Campbell - aye, and Rob Cissel - aye; motion carried unanimously.**

*Respectfully submitted,  
Kristan Patenaude*

Minutes approved: September 21, 2021