Open Space Planning Committee Minutes December 10, 2008

Meeting at Town Hall convened at 8:30 a.m. in the lower level. Members present: Betsey Harris, Jack Lewis, Joe Cavanaugh, Anne Anable, Bruce Simpson, Ed Germain and Sue Yarger. Absent: Henry James, Bill Barker. The minutes of November 12 were approved with edits. Ed will take care of who, in the OSPC, needs to be sworn in.

Anne and Jack reported out on the Land Conservation Leadership Training, “Conservation Planning and Project Evaluation and Selection” session that they attended. Ryan Owens presented – had good structure and interaction. A good project plan requires a formal evaluation process – need to set expectations and goals. One key piece to remember is not to give out any tax advice but to encourage them to speak with their own tax advisor.

Should we reset/refine our priorities to our separate criteria areas; for all parts of the town or for certain parts/areas? We must have a real, weighted, evaluation process. We have to realize that we must also use judgment. We should take priorities that we have and list them in order.

Our next session should be a working session to set priorities and a communications/public relationship plan and a course of action. During a recent budget meeting, the OSPC group was questioned; it was confirmed that the OSPC budget comes out of the DCC. We need to communicate our goals and objectives to the public and other town committees. We should ask to be added to an upcoming Selectmen’s meeting. We should meet with the Selectmen once a quarter; we need to be more “in their faces”

We need a critical path; where do we want to be in 6 months. We need to take our priority areas, pick the priorities that important to our goals. Should we start with Mud Pond/Stanley Brook?

Jack agreed to make a 1 page recipe on how to attack the issue; take on an area and will come up with a process on what steps we need to take to get there.

Do we need a sub committee? Joe and Jack to head one up?

Bruce and Jack reported out on the Land Conservation Leadership training that they attended on December 3 “Stewardship: Caring for the Land you Protect”. Ken Stearn presented on how legal work for the Forest Society is handled. He went through the mechanics around stewardship; mainly regarding yearly checks on what is going on with the properties and how issues are handled and rules are enforced after problems are found. The group activity involved easement documents with several scenarios with properties in violation.

Steve Roberge, the Cheshire County Forester, reported on how much and what should be harvested. The Chesterfield Conservation Commission talked on how to get communities involved.

Sign up for the last session “Land Conservation Summit Funding” needs to be in by the 16th of January. We discussed on scheduling a Town Forum to get the word out about the OSPC; perhaps after the Town Meeting. A formal motion was brought to the OSPC regarding Ox Bow Road to change it from a Class 6 Rd to a Class A Trail, which supports recreation but does not allow for any motorized wheeled vehicles. 6 approved; 0 nay; 1 abstained (Bruce Simpson). The motion carried.

Upcoming sessions of Land Conservation Leadership Training. Initial preferences are: January 31, 2009: Land Conservation Summit Funding; Ed, Joe and possibly more (a $20 fee applies here)

All OSPC meetings will be on a Wednesday at 8:30 a.m. The future meeting schedule:

The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Sue Yarger
Secretary