**TOWN OF ENFIELD**

**METHODIST HILL PROPERTY USE COMMITTEE**

**(MPUC)**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**August 22, 2023**

**MPUC in Attendance:** Susan Brown, Barbara Jones, Jason Archambeault, Thomas Claus

**MPUC Members Absent:** Ryan Little

**Ex Officio Members in Attendance:** Ed Morris, Town Manager and Kevin Marker, Recreation Director

**Ex Officio Members Absent:** N/A

**Town Staff in Attendance:** N/A

Called to order at 5:30 PM

BUSINESS

Susan Brown Introduced Rob Taylor, the Town’s Land Use Administrator to discuss possible development options for the Town owned Methodist Hill Property.

Rob Taylor explained that this property is in the R5 area which means that, if subdivided, parcels would need to be five acres or more. He also explained the frontage requirements, which state each lot would need to have a minimum of 250 feet of frontage along Methodist Hill Road. Doing some measurements, he found that this parcel could be subdivided into ten parcels.

Susan Brown asked about cluster developments. Rob explained that cluster developments could be an option, along with road development to get more lots. He did warn that wet areas and steep slopes, which he had heard were on the parcel, that he has not actually visited yet, could also be a limiting factor.

Ed Morris stated that there are some steep sections and he thought 4-6 building lots along Methodist hill was more reasonable because of the steep slopes and wet areas. Rob Taylor then stated that a survey would need to be completed if the MPUC wanted to develop the land, and that the surveyor would be able to delineate that. Rob explained that the Town does have a steep slope Ordinance (406.2) which restricts development on slopes greater than 25%. Ed Morris turned the steep slope layer on the GIS map which did not show any land meeting these criteria, but it was explained that the GIS was just a tool to help identify and show land, and that a surveyor would be needed to confirm the data.

Thomas Claus stated he had walked the property and there were taped trees along the boundary. He asked about the ones along the West boundary owned by the Patch farm. Rob stated the neighbors may have had a survey done, but there was not one for the Town owned property to his knowledge. Alan Strickland stood up and stated that he had walked the boundaries of the lot and had placed the flagging tape along the west boundary. He stated the two side boundaries were pinned and fairly easy to walk and find the property line. Along the back of the property there is a stone wall for much of the property line, but near the middle of the back line, it gets difficult to determine for a certain distance before picking up the stone wall again.

After a little more conversation, Alan Strickland came forward to discuss the property as he knows it. He explained that along Methodist Hill Road and especially toward the southern portion of the property was the most buildable location. On and around McCallister Road (Class VI) was the wettest section of the lot. McCallister road is almost impassible and almost always has running water on it.

Alan passed some different pictures he took from his multiple excursions on and around the property. He explained that if the committee wanted to see the property the easiest hike would be to start at the open area on the south side of the property and follow the south property line until it intersects the westerly line. Follow the westerly line all the way across to the easterly line and turn back towards Methodist Hill Road. Follow the easterly property line, to the bottom of the ravine and follow the brook back up through the center of the property. This will bring you back to the parking area south of McCallister Road. He did state that the area around McCallister Road was some of the thickest and hardest walking land on the property.

Mr. Strickland agreed that if any land were going to be developed, it would need to be the portion along Methodist Hill Road with the southern portion of the lot being the most buildable. He did reiterate that there was wildlife that used the area. He also explained that the useable timber had been harvested, but Jim Frohn, a state forester, would come look over the land and provide a report if we wanted to contact him.

Once Mr. Strickland was done speaking, Susan Brown asked Paul Waehler to discuss what he had found out about the history of the property. Paul explained that there was a very definable cellar hole and evidence of a barn just north of McCallister Road next to Methodist Hill Road. In his research he found an article in the Granite State Free Press from January 19, 1883, that discussed the property. The house belonged to N.P. Sargent. It was built by Mr. Sargent’s great grandfather in 1784 and was the first frame house on Methodist Hill. The home can be found on the 1826, 1855, and 1892 maps of the area. The house stood from 1784 until it burned on April 21, 1907.

Paul was surprised to see that this land ended up in a tax deed situation because in his research he found that it stayed in the Sargent/Bosworth family from 1784 to well past the mid 1900’s.

Paul then gave a summary of the Methodist Hill area and explained that it was a populated portion of Town and well known for raising sheep. The area flourished for some time but was all but abandoned after the civil war as we moved into the industrial revolution.

After Paul Waehler, Ed Morris discussed value and tax impacts of development. The current tax value of this property is $165,100. Town Staff looked at the Field Stone Ridge subdivision and another 5 acre developed parcel in the area. The lots all had similar tax values so Ed averaged the values and with the help Of Julie Huntley added the adjustment ratio to determine the real tax value for the properties. The current properties equal an average value of $482,592 with tax income of $12,427. With the adjustment the current real market value of the properties averaged to $606,667 with an estimated tax income of $15,662 which equaled an estimated 1/25th of a cent on the tax rate. Using this data along with the total tax collected by Enfield for (School, County, State, and Municipal government) it would take 25 parcels to reduce the tax rate by one cent. Mr. Morris explained he did not share this information to encourage or discourage development but to make the committee aware of the impact. He explained that this development alone would not make a noticeable impact on the tax rate, but could help with the housing situation, and combined with other smart development could have an overall impact.

Susan Brown stated that these houses could cost more in services, than we bring in. Ed Morris told the committee this was not necessarily the case. He does agree that a few homes where infrastructure would have to be built or in a location that would create new coverage could cost more, but Methodist Hill already has a road that needs to be plowed and maintained, and the emergency services already patrol and respond to this area.

Before adjournment Ed Morris explained that Abutters notices had been sent for the September 19th meeting, and letters had been sent to the Conservation Commission, Recreation Commission, Master Planning Task Force and Upper Valley Land Trust regarding their upcoming meetings.

Meeting adjourned at 6:44

**METHODIST HILL COMMITTEE Upcoming Meetings**

1st and 3rd Tuesdays at 5:30

September 19 - Abutters

October 3 - Conservation and Recreation Commissions

October 17 – Master Planning Task Force and Upper Valley Land Trust

November 7 - (election Day?) (Possibly reschedule a public meeting)

November 21 – Public Meeting

December 5 – Deliberation

December 19 – Review and finalize recommendation.