**TOWN OF ENFIELD**

**METHODIST HILL PROPERTY USE COMMITTEE**

**(MPUC)**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**December 5, 2023**

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

**MPUC Members Absent:** N/A

**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 started the meeting by asking Jerold Theis if he would Bring forward the Conservation Commission (CC) to speak on their thoughts about the property. Jerold Theis stated he wanted each member of the CC to speak and he would go last.

* **Shirley Green**- Asked if a forester ever provided a letter about the property? Ed Morris explained that the Town did receive a letter and it stated that most of the harvestable timber had already been cut and it would be some time before it was worth harvesting again.

Shirley then asked if Upper Valley Land Trust was invited. Ed Morris stated that yes they were invited to attend, and he emailed and spoke with them about the property, and they showed very little interest.

Shirley then stated her opinion that she felt the land should stay natural. She had a concern about storm water runoff from development, since stormwater is already an issue in the area. She feels selling it to one of the willing abutters would be the best approach.

* **Carol Wyman**- Discussed the housing shortage and the need for housing. She stated she was a tree hugger but understands the problem and the need for housing. She recommends selling part of the property for development for no more than 10 houses. The other 50+ acres should remain natural.
* **Ed Rippe**- Asked that before he speak the MPUC explain how the committee was formed. It was answered that there was an application process and the Select Board chose the committee from those applicants. Ed Morris further explained that from the applicant pool the Select Board eliminated those applicants that expressed a strong opinion about the property prior to applying. From the remaining applicants the Select Board chose applicants trying to create a diverse board with differing backgrounds in hopes of creating a board that would work together to come to the best overall recommendation.

Ed Rippe stated he thought the committee process was a good one, and then gave his opinion. He stated the Town should not sell the land and that it should stay in a natural state. He thought it would be good if the abutters had an opportunity to buy it.

* **Lee Davis**- Lee stated that low income housing is what is needed and houses on this property would not be low income. She feels the Town should keep the land in a natural state.
* **Kate Plumley Stewart**- Stated she was attending remotely in a location that would make it difficult to share her opinion and stated she would just listen. She also stated this would come before the Select Board and she could offer an opinion at that time.
* **Jerold Theis** – Stated he thought the Town Should keep the land and name it Bosworth Sargent Park. Jerold then gave a history of the property showing that since 1735 the property was in the Bosworth or Sargent families ownership, and that it did transfer back and forth between the families up to the time the Town acquired it through tax deed. The Bosworths were involved with the Town, with at least one of the owners serving on the Select Board.

After the CC discussion, Susan Brown opened the meeting to public comment.

**Paul Vianco** stated that he had nothing to add except the legal question of whether the Town would need to pay the previous owner if the land was kept should be answered.

**Nate Miller**- Stated he lived on Methodist Hill Road and attended the MPUC hike a couple weeks ago. He stated that he felt the land should be kept as open space. He then stated that he understands there is a small developable space and stated the Town could use 20 acres to develop a few houses and keep the other 80 acres natural for trails and other recreation. If the Town did this he recommends:

1. Keep the Class VI road for access.
2. Possibly use RSA 231A to turn the Class VI Road into a trail.
3. Use the Trail Master and volunteers to create a trail network in the 80 acres.

**Parker Hinshaw** – Stated he is committed to keeping it open land and if purchased would help build and maintain trail system for public use.

**Jean Hinshaw** – Would like to keep it natural to preserve the history, wildlife and flora/fauna. Would like to work with the Town to develop public trails on the property. If the Town keeps the land Jean feels it should be placed in conservation to preserve it.

Susan Brown closed the meeting to public comment and aske the committee to share their opinions after hearing all the comments from the past few months. She feels it is time to start the deliberation and allowing everyone to share their opinions would be a good place to start.

**Susan Brown** started the conversation. Susan is concerned that with the price of land, if the Town sold off up to five building lots and the Town could only recoup the taxes, interest and costs, that they would make the previous owner a lot of money. If the Town decides to keep the property, we may need to pay the previous owner a lot of money. Because of that she feels selling it to an abutter at a reduced rate with conditions that maintain public access may be the best option. She feels the Town should survey the property and recoup those costs in the sale. She is concerned about how much the Town will have to pay because of this property. Ed Morris explained that he believed the Town would only have to pay money if they decided to keep the land. If they sell it the extra proceeds from the sale, if any, would go to the previous owner.

**Thomas Claus** – Wrote a recommendation as if it were coming from the committee to the Select Board, but wanted everyone to know this was just his opinion at this point. He recommends subdividing the property into two lots (80/20) and selling both properties. One 20 acre lot for development and the 80 acre parcel designated for conservation use only with a stipulation that it will remain open to the public. The 80 acres can be used for trail development and feels because of its close proximity to homes, hunting should not be allowed.

**Jason Archambeault** – His opinion was very close to Thomas’s with a primary difference that the Town should subdivide off five building lots to maintain more control of what each lot is like. He stated that even though these would not be affordable housing units the demand for housing is forcing those that can afford more to occupy the affordable housing keeping others from being able to access it. These housing units would be a small adjustment but would add five more houses helping the housing issue.

**Barbara Jones** – Stated she came to the committee thinking the land should be used for affordable housing. After learning more about the property she feels the Town should not develop the property and feels the Town should consider one of the abutters offers to purchase the property. She thinks we should look closely at the Hinshaw’s offer.

**Ryan Little** -he feels the land should be sold. There should be a condition that at least 80% of the land remains open public space. On that open space trails should be built. He proposes this because it is in line with the Master Plan and won’t cost the Town money. He does feel developed lots could make access for the public difficult.

**Kevin Marker** – Feels the land should be kept by the Town and trails should be built on the land. He agrees with the people on that side of Town that all Town amenities and Parks are on the other side of Town and feels there should be something for that area of Town to enjoy. Kevin also feels the Trails should be built by volunteers.

**Ed Morris** – State he thinks the Parcel should be sold with the conditions that 3-5 houses must be developed and that the other land “let’s say 80%” should be maintained in a natural state and open for public access. He agrees most with Jason Archambeault’s opinion but does not feel the Town needs to subdivide the lots.

Before Closing Jean Hinshaw let the committee know that she has had a study of the land completed and should get the report soon. She will forward a copy to the Town for review.

Ryan Little made a motion to approve the minutes from November 21, 2023, with Jean Hinshaw’s comments and amendments seconded by Barbara Jones. Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting Adjourned at 6:58 pm