**TOWN OF ENFIELD**

**METHODIST HILL PROPERTY USE COMMITTEE**

**(MPUC)**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**November 21st, 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

**Ex Officio Members Absent:** Kevin Marker, Recreation Director

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

Called to order at 5:33 PM

**BUSINESS**

Susan Brown started the meeting by asking Jerold Theis if he would come forward and talk with the committee. He came to the table and stated he did not have any comments but was trying to learn what was happening. He asked about how to get a copy of the minutes. Ed Morris showed on the screen how and where to find minutes on the Town Website.

After Jerold Theis Susan Brown opened the meeting to any public in the room that would like to speak. Paul Vianco came to the table and stated he sees three options for the committee to consider:

1. Town Retain the property and make it into a recreation area. (This is his recommendation)
2. Sell a portion of the land and keep a portion for recreation and wildlife purposes.
3. Sell the Property

Reasons he feels the Town should keep the land and develop trails and recreational amenities:

* There are no Town recreational amenities on the West Side of Town near Methodist Hill
* It will help keep and maintain the rural feel and lifestyle that the residents who bought on Methodist Hill want.
* The area has a rich history that should be preserved and if the cellar holes and other historical remains are disturbed, you can never get them back.
* He has ground water concerns with the droughts and other houses in the area. He has noticed that his water quality has gotten worse over the years and he now needs a water softener, where he did not when he moved in.
* He believes development of that land would be slow and unaffordable.

Jean Hinshaw was next to speak and stated that she agreed with Paul’s option to not develop the land. She then stated that in an effort to protect the wildlife (which is abundant), the history, and the diverse fauna and flora, she and her husband would like to purchase the property. Their plan would be to work with the Town to develop public trails and to keep the land open and natural.

Kurt Gotthart said his recommendation was for the Town to keep the [property and to keep it natural as it is. He does not believe we need to spend money developing trails. By maintaining it as it is, it connects to surrounding parcels creating a large open and natural unfragmented land mass, which is important for wildlife. Kurt also discussed the connection to Lebanon trails and Class VI roads. He also asked the committee to ask what the Town will look like 20-50 years into the future if this is kept natural, vs if it is sold for development purposes. He stated there would be costs for the Town to subdivide the land.

Ed Morris explained that the Town could sell the land with the stipulation that it would be subdivided and 3-5 houses would have to be built along Methodist Hill Road. This stipulation would not incur costs for the Town. He also explained a court ruling that if the Town was to keep the land, there would be a cost to the Town because the Town may have to pay the difference between the taxes due and costs associated with the tax deed and the actual value of the land taken by tax deed.

Jean Hinshaw stated that her attorney said there are considerations to be had on both sides of the case, whether the Town would have to pay money to the previous landowner or not, and that perhaps we can talk that through.

Dave Beaufait stated he is very much in support of recreation but is also concerned with the budget and taxes. His question is what makes this property so unique and differentiates it from other recreation parcels the Town Owns. Barbara Jones stated that it is on the west side of Town. Harrison Drinkwater stated that besides being on the west side of Town, it is a beautiful parcel of land that is connected with Lebanon’s class VI roads and the trail system that links to 120.

Susan Brown Closed Public Comment and asked the committee if they had any comments. She directly asked about the site visit on Saturday. Ed Morris explained that he, Jason Archambeault, and Tomas Claus were the only committee attendees, so there was no quorum and no legal meeting.

Thomas Claus stated that it was a pretty property but was tough to walk and impassable in some places. As noted, most of the property is undevelopable, except for the land along Methodist Hill. There are beautiful views once you get down to the boundary of the Patch property.

Susan then asked Ryan Little his opinion on the property. Ryan stated he did not see a lot of upside for selling or subdividing the land. He felt the Town had a good opportunity to develop a trail network that connected with another Town and explained how resources such as a trail network draw people to Enfield. He also stated that the land is not very developable. He reiterated that the Town should keep the land and stated that this keeps the option open in the future for selling the land or subdividing for development but thinks we should not do that right now.

Barbara Jones stated she had some concern about the cost of building trails and asked if volunteers would be used. There was a brief discussion about the trail master. Dave Beaufait weighed in that he volunteers with the Cardigan Mountain Highlanders and that building these trails would not be easy.

Dick Bates asked what the cost for development would be. Ed Morris explained that there would be a cost to subdivide and prepare the lots for building, but that did not necessarily need to be borne by the Town. The Town could sell the land with conditions that the purchaser would have to meet. His idea would be to sell the land with a condition that 3-5 houses would be required to be built and that at least 50 acres would remain open for public use.

Kurt Gotthart stated that trails would not have to be built and that any conditional sale would need to be documented in the deeds not just in a contract.

Susan Brown then redirected the meeting to the October 17th minutes for review and approval. There were a few corrections identified.

Barbara Jones made a motion to accept the minutes as amended, which was seconded by Thomas Claus. Motion passed 6-0-1 (Jason Archambeault abstained because he was absent from the October 17th meeting).

There was a little more brief discussion before adjourning.

Meeting Adjourned at 6:40 pm