

Rockland Open Space Committee Meeting 7/31/2023, Chaffee Meeting Room, 6:30 p.m. Town Hall

Attending: Donald Cann, Chair; Mike Bromberg, Vice-Chair George Anderson, Joanne Donnelly, Pam Titus, Kathy Kirby

Lorraine Pratt, Rockland Conservation Commission

Nicole Emery, Roberta Delaney, Abington Open Space Committee

Tim Sullivan, Esq., Goulston & Storrs, counsel to New England Development; Paul Cincotta, NED representative

Mary Parsons

Mr. Bromberg moved to approve minutes of the 6/12/2023 meeting, seconded by Ms. Titus, approved by unanimous vote.

Mr. Cann made available documents provided by Mr. MacFaden of Wildlands Trust relating to municipal acquisition of Land of Low Value.

Dates for a formal committee meeting with New England Development were discussed. Mr. Cincotta and Mr. Cann will finalize. Mr. Cann and Mr. Bromberg advised that they attended the recent Planning Board meeting with NED, however, very few questions were permitted. One that was answered was that the Southfield Board was the only board to review and approve development plans, including permits, variance and construction reviews. Inspections and some permitting will remain in the towns' purview.

A new map presented shows a Conservation Restriction overlaid a mixed use, developable area. See "A" attached. Ms. Titus asked Attorney Sullivan what steps remain to get to a final map. He replied that each town has to approve zoning, that no plans have changed since initial presentation and that conservation area plans have not changed. Mr. Cann noted that it may become necessary to propose amendments to plans presented at Town Meeting for approval by the voters. Ms. Emery asked for definitions and delineations of just what is planned to be conservation land and what is planned to be open space. Mr. Cann and Mr. Bromberg specified a number of uses the developer proposes to be permitted in open space including roadways, sidewalks, telecom structures, water detention areas and utilities. Mr. Anderson stated that the flow of water at the base is such that it already negatively impacts Rockland. Mr. Bromberg noted that the current NED plan calls for a detention area in Rockland open space the size of a lake and said that developed areas should each have their own detention ponds.

Mr. Bromberg presented some history, with maps, of former SWNAS development plans that have been through three iterations so far. 1007 acres of open space were called for in the initial plan. In 2016, the developer took 78 acres near the base center in exchange for Thompson's Pond and land at 1119 Union Street designated for conservation but foreclosed upon when LStar defaulted on a mortgage given without the towns' knowledge or approval. The land lost has not been returned to open space

designation despite the previous developer's violation of its agreements with the towns. He noted that current development proposals have not included discussion of what is wanted by the towns. Mr. Bromberg presented a written questions dealing with smart growth, placement of detention areas, new perimeter openings, noting that the current map of "developable area" shows possible development down to Spruce Street. Mr. Sullivan said no new entrances or roads were being proposed although they had been approached by Fire services about access. Additional questions about how land can be both developable and subject to a conservation restriction at the same time, what uses are allowed and not allowed in open spaces were raised. Mr. Bromberg raised the possibility of a Memorandum of Understanding regarding developer agreements and Ms. Kirby stated that any such document should be made a covenant and recorded at the Registry of Deeds to run with the land. Ms. Parsons noted that neither NED nor Brookfield owns any land at the former SWNAS and noted that the SRA cannot sell National Park Service land and that there also are rare species in some National Park Service areas. She advised that she has all documents and copies of deeds for base properties. Mr. Sullivan advised that the developer has all such information and does not need anything from Ms. Parsons' documents. Mr. Cann said that there should be no land swaps that involve property not contiguous to the base.

It was agreed that formal meetings with Abington and Rockland Open Space Committees will be in August and that the developer will address all concerns raised. Ms. Kirby moved that a group of no more than three members of Rockland Open Space be designated to communicate with the developer regarding issues to be addressed. Ms. Titus seconded and the motion was unanimously approved. At the close of the discussion of the former SWNAS, the Abington Open Space Committee members were thanked for their participation and left the meeting. The NED representatives also left.

Ms. Parsons said that the developer cannot get a conservation restriction on land subject to the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act.

Mr. Cann advised that the Whitman Select Board seemed to want to keep the former Girl Scout camp in Rockland as open space, but there remains in play a proposal for soccer fields on the property.

Mr. Cann reported on the Mass Walking Tour and noted that the musicians were invited back to the Channing Church for future performance as they were very well received.