

TOWN CLERK, ROCKLAND  
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Rockland Open Space Committee Meeting 8/14/2023, 6:30 p.m., Rockland High School Lecture Hall

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

Representatives of New England Development/Brookfield including John Twohig, Tim Sullivan, Bob Daylor

Meeting was recorded by Mary Parsons

The meeting opened with a review of the minutes of the 7/31/2023 meeting, moved for approval by Ms. Titus, seconded by Ms. Donnelly, voted unanimously.

Mr. Twohig began the presentation by New England Development of plans for changes at the former South Weymouth Naval Air Station with a discussion of connecting northern and southern open spaces with 100-200' wide areas similar to Commonwealth Avenue in Boston. At present there are 1274 residences at the base. He described perimeter open spaces and notes that open space includes "amenities" where people will live. A map of a large central area of the property deemed "developable" by NED was shown with an explanation that some of that area cannot be developed because it is wildlife habitat. Mr. Twohig stated that the zoning plan was approved by the Southfield Redevelopment Authority. He said that a new proposal has been made to Natural Heritage that would create more restricted areas than the current plan and provide for removal of debris piles. He also said that there is no proposal to open the Union Street gate.

Attorney Sullivan said that 434 acres are subject to a conservation restriction held by the SRA but that has not been finalized. He discussed uses allowed in open space under the NED plan including utilities and storm water drainage. He noted that the SRA can change the redevelopment plan with input from the state but it can't change zoning, only the towns can do that. The building districts issue permits for construction and the SRA issues zoning permits, with certificates going to the towns. NED is in discussion with Natural Heritage about the Comprehensive Management Permit. He noted that Rockland Meadows and Thompson's Pond are not owned by the SRA, the entity with which NED has contracted for control of the land.

Mr. Daylor discussed hydraulic proposals at the base with the creation of areas in greenways capturing runoff in long linear basins with the treated discharge in Tacan Ditch basins. He stated that a lengthy hydraulic analysis of the area has been done and the plan meets storm water standards.

Mr. Twohig noted that there is currently no plan for trails and that further input is needed. In response to questions from Mr. Cann, Mr. Twohig said that there are 884 total open space acres in the NED plan and that some detention basins will be dry and some wet, but not considered wetland.

Mr. Bromberg raised the matters of Natural Heritage proposals particularly with regard to grassland areas approve by NH. Mr. Twohig noted that there was no plan to investigate land off the base for grassland creation. He did not know how many acres of grasslands there would be. Mr. Bromberg stated that those areas are not large enough. Mr. Twohig stated that the developers are not proposing any change to National Park Service lands and they will put that promise in writing. Mr. Bromberg noted

that he first communicated with the developer in February asking to meet but the first opportunity afforded was on 7/31/2023, leaving all inquiries to the last minute before the town is required to act on the developers' proposals. Mr. Bromberg asked about an amenities plan and was advised that there is not one. He raised the matter of smart growth which specifies using land for development that has previously been used for development without destroying forested and open space areas. He noted that there appears to be a large area of forest destroyed near French's Stream. Mr. Twohig said that there is no design for residential, commercial or recreational building at present. He did say that lawns will not be considered open spaces. He did say that the "green" area of the map presented will not change when asked by Mr. Bromberg how many acres of ~~on-site~~<sup>OFF</sup> mitigation there would be.

In response to Ms. Titus' questions, stated that no new access roads were planned, except for emergencies and that a Tacan basin is planned south of Delahunt Parkway. He said that Thompson's Pond is owned by LStar and Rockland Meadows is owned by Endeavor, the lender to LStar.

In response to Ms. Kirby's questions, Mr. Twohig stated that the change in zoning to a central Mixed Use Development District is the major issue for consideration by the town at Town Meeting. When asked how many acres of the base were in the MUDD, neither he nor anyone on the development team present knew. With respect to uses allowed in open spaces, Ms. Kirby said that having man-made structures such as cell towers, solar panels and detention basins in those areas did not comport with the general understanding of "open space." She also noted that the developer created housing at the Pinehills which, after a short time, is experiencing serious building envelope failures costing individual residents thousands of dollars in remediation assessments and that people leaving those homes would have to find other places to live, creating more construction needs, likely to affect open space somewhere.

Mr. Cann stated that he wants "active" and "passive" open spaces defined and what is permitted and prohibited in each spelled out clearly.

Ms. Donnelly inquired about what land within the "developable" area will actually be developed and when the town will be advised of that amount and was told that that had not been determined. Mr. Twohig said that the state MEPA process needs to be completed.

Ms. Parsons made note that the 2009 Division of Fisheries & Wildlife MA ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT permit #008-125 DFW for the base has not been changed and is still in effect. She also noted that the developer's use of the term "may include" certain features in its (document citation needed) is not strong enough and the word "shall" should be substituted.

Mr. Ward asked how much housing would be constructed in Rockland and Mr. Twohig said that the end of Delahunt Parkway in Rockland is best suited for commercial development with less dense housing in the southern portion of the base. He acknowledged that the Rockland sewer system is a major problem. He also noted that only 70 acres of land in Rockland currently is zoned for development. Ms. Parsons noted that the golf course layout is in 335 acres of the "developable" MUDD.

In response to a question from Rockland's Sewer Commissioner, Mr. Heshion, Mr. Twohig said there would be a negligible increase in revenue to Rockland from the developers' plan. Mr. Heshion was emphatic that Rockland is in the middle of planning a sewer upgrade and the commission was afforded one very limited meeting a while ago to discuss this element. He encouraged the developer to contact the commission regarding further planning.

Mr. Twohig stated that the developer needs to have a "working session" with the Open Space Committee, which was agreed by all.