

Orchard Working Group Minutes - 4/5/2024

Meeting was called to order at 4pm on March 5th.

Present: Matthew Nordhaus, Karen Morrison, Brad Mitchell, Amy Tarlow Lewis, Jen Clancy

Absent: Sarah Seaward, Will Pickard

Warrant Article for May 5th Town meeting

Brad Mitchell outlined his understanding of the process of going before Town meeting and selling the property. The group will follow a two-step process for the sale: first, they will seek permission from Town Meeting to sell the orchard, and then they will issue a request for proposals (RFP) to find a buyer. The vendor and their plans will be presented at a subsequent town meeting in the fall. The sale will not remove the property from the Agriculture category.

Karen Morrison clarified that once the article is approved at the town meeting in May, it would authorize the select board to move forward with the sale, and there would be no need to go back to the town meeting after the article is passed. The working group would advise and recommend suitable offers to the select board, which would ultimately make the decision in an open public meeting.

After further discussion about the timing of the approval process, it was clarified that the May town meeting will only authorize the select board to move forward with the sale once an acceptable bid has been received. Karen Morrison also clarified that the sale would be subject to the purchaser meeting the criteria in the RFP.

Matthew Nordhaus made a motion that the working group recommend the warrant article as written. Karen Morrison seconded. Motion passed 5-0

RFP Criteria

Matthew Nordhaus began a discussion around the decision-making process for suitable offers on the sale. The working group is responsible for advising the Select Board, who ultimately make the decision in an open public meeting. Karen Morrison reiterated that the RFP will outline restrictions and requirements, and public input will be taken into account when drafting those restrictions. The community is encouraged to provide input at a meeting on April 25th

APR and Historical Restriction

Brad Mitchell stated that the Mass Department of Agricultural Resources had verbally committed to adding the upper barn and surrounding property to the APR. Sarah Seaward updated the group on the plan to explore adding a historical restriction on the house and.

The working group discussed the limits of a historical restriction. Matthew Nordhaus stated that a historical restriction primarily governs the exterior of the house to maintain its aesthetic appearance and would not significantly limit the owner from making it into a two-family home. Brad Mitchell said that there are some restrictions to consider, such as the size of the house and the addition of floors or expansions.

Public Listening Session

Amy Tarlow Lewis updated the group on the plan to hold a community meeting on April 25th to discuss the sale of the orchard, and gather input on potential additions to the RFP.

Other Business

Matthew Nordhaus stated that he was going to create a simplified map of the property to be included in the Town Meeting Warrant. He asked the group to determine the accuracy of various maps and settle on one. Brad Mitchell stated that the maps created for the most recent appraisal is the best and most recent option

Next Meeting

The working group set their next meeting for the 10th of April. Agenda items include the clean out and inventory of the upper barn, and the presentation for the town meeting.

Matthew Nordhaus made a motion to adjourn, Jen Clancy seconded. Motion passed 5-0. Meeting was adjourned at 4:16