

Orchard Working Group Minutes - 5/22/2024

Meeting was called to order at 7pm on June 22nd

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

Will Pickard joined at 7:25

Approval of Minutes of 4/10/24

Minor changes were suggested for the minutes.

Amy Tarlow-Lewis made a motion to approve, Sarah-Seaward seconded

Motion carried 6-0

Presentation from Scott and Frank Matheson

Brad Mitchell updated the Working Group that the Matheson's could not attend tonight. Brad Mitchell updated the Working Group following a conversation that he had with the Matheson's

Brad felt that the Working Group is in a difficult situation after Town Meeting, that the Town has a run down orchard with no options

The Mathesons have been farming in Littleton since before there was Littleton. The Matheson's would prefer to purchase the property but would be willing to consider a lease if the Town would remove the trees. The Matheson's will be back at a later date to discuss details. The Matheson's could be interested in a 100 year lease

Discussion of Lease

Brad Mitchell mentioned that the Town Assessor requires that any leasing party pays the property tax rate

Amy Tarlow-Lewis stated that we need to remove the trees, which may cost more than \$250K of the fields will also need to be stumped and divots filled in. Brad Mitchell said that the Matheson's are going to want the house and the barn, and any work necessary will need to be done at prevailing wage

Sarah Seaward said that before we rip out the trees the Working Group should issue an RFP for a lease, as someone might be willing to use the land between the tree lanes and not stump them.

Next Steps for the Orchard Working Group

Sarah Seaward believes that the working group can concurrently issue an RFP to see whether someone wants to lease while we follow up with the Matheson's

The working group asked Karen Morrison how quickly could we streamline an RFP for a lease to get that out, following the group discussed issuing another RFI or RFP

Amy Tarlow-Lewis said that the Working Group has issued an RFP for Lease three times, and got no responses.

Matthew Nordhaus asked what would be different about issuing another RFI? Karen Morrison agreed that it was a real question

Amy Tarlow-Lewis stated that the real issue is that we have a property that is deteriorating every day, and that she felt we should go back to town meeting and get permission to sell.

Discussion of Joint Meeting with Select Board

Matthew Nordhaus suggested that the Working Group should get bids for removing the trees, so that we have a solid number to bring to the Select Board. Also a price for repairing the farm house. Questions were raised around what would it cost to remove the trees from all the fields, and does that price include stumping and hauling the wood? Is it possible for the vendor to chip the wood? Jen Clancy stated that when the Working Group got bids for pruning it did not include removal.

The Working Group agreed to ask the Town Administrator to get prices that do and don't include stumping, and do and don't include chipping and hauling the wood away.

Would also show us as coming into compliance with the APR if we removed the trees

Sarah Seaward asked whether the Working Group can communicate with the RFI respondents to see whether they are interested in a lease.

Brad Mitchel wanted to also ask them what conditions are would consider for leasing? Would they require removing the trees? Fixing up the house?

Karen Morrison suggested that removing the house from the orchard will remove future options for the orchard.

Sarah Seaward asked to reach out to the 15 respondents prior to the SB joint meeting?

Karen Morrison suggested that the Working Group send an email to all of them asking them to respond if they are interested in a lease.

Town Newsletter Article

Jen Clancy asked whether it's possible to write an article for the Town Newsletter. Karen Morrison clarified that the due date was on the 15th of each month. Jen Clancy will write an update for June 15th to be included in the July 1 newsletter.

Orchard Safety and Maintenance

Brad Mitchell visited Orchard abutters the Sullivans, who have trees at risk.

Sarah Seaward has action items after a review with DPW Director Steve Jahnle, and provided the group with immediate issues

- Enclose top shed to mark as off limits
- Structural support for farm stand on lot 102
- Saw Horses at upper barn parking lot
- Fence enclosure at Goose Pond by lower barn
- Mark buildings "No Trespassing"
- Structural issues for the two barns to the list above.

Matthew Nordhaus made a motion to request funds from the Select Board to address the issues listed. Amy Tarlow-Lewis seconded. Motion was approved 7-0

Amy Tarlow-Lewis made a motion to request the Select Board to get bids to remove trees, Matthew Nordhaus seconded. Motion carried 7-0

Other Business

Brad Mitchell announced his resignation from the Working Group, felt that after the Town Meeting vote the mission of the Working Group had been completed

Karen Morrison also announced her resignation from the Working Group, as there was no longer a need for an RFI/RFP.

Adjournment

Matthew Nordhaus moved to adjourn. Amy Tarlow-Lewis seconded.

The motion carried 7-0, the meeting was adjourned at 8:14pm