

**Board of Selectmen  
Special Meeting  
Tuesday, February 14, 2017**

**MINUTES**

**Present:** First Selectman Daniel Jerram, Selectman Alesia Kennerson, Selectman Laura Garay, Members of the Public: Tom Buzzi, Bud Butler, Adam Choquette, Jean Cronauer, Bill Michaud, Bud Butler; Member of the Press Kathryn Boughton; Administrative Assistant Christine Hayward.

First Selectman Jerram called the meeting to order at 6:03 PM.

**Discussion and possible action related to the Preservation of the Butler Farm (Blackbridge Road, Michael Butler; owner)**

First Selectman Jerram informed the Board of Selectman that the final survey for the Michael Butler Farm Property located on Blackbridge Road has been completed by the State and forwarded to the Town. Jerram stated that although the Board of Selectmen has conceptually approved the preservation of this farmland in the past, it will be necessary to act formally on the matter in order to present it to the Board of Finance for consideration of funding. He noted that members of the Open Space Preservation Commission were present to be able to answer any questions the Board may have regarding this property.

Open Space Chairman Jean Cronauer informed the Board that the Open Space Preservation Commission enthusiastically supports this acquisition of development rights and formally requests that the Board of Selectmen endorse the project. Mrs. Cronauer stated that the land is composed of prime farmland soils that are valuable. She added that the proposed walking trail would be a community asset.

First Selectman Jerram confirmed that the proposed acquisition was presented to the Planning and Zoning Commission for a 8-24 referral and that it had been approved unanimously by the Commission as it is consistent with the goals outlined in the Plan of Conservation and Development.

Jerram reviewed the financing of the parcel; noting that the Grant will pay \$239,837.50 and the Town's share will be \$237,532.50. A total of 8.1 acres will be granted to the Town for use as a public walking trail. The Town had asked the State not to include the trail portion as part of the

Preservation Project so that there could be community access to the parcel. If the trail is granted as an "easement only" there would be no tax revenue lost to the town; if the trail is owned as 'fee simple' by the Town; there would be a loss of less than \$300 in tax revenue. Jerram noted that the loss is minimal and it would be best to have outright ownership rather than an easement.

Selectman Kennerson questioned the funding aspect of the purchase. She asked if the Open Space Land Acquisition fund would be used for the purchase; asking specifically "would the full \$237,532.50 be a receivable from this fund?" considering that the fund does not have the full amount available at this time.

Town Treasurer Gordon Ross explained that there are options that could be considered for financing. He noted that several years ago, bonding was used to purchase the Jones and Goula open space parcels. Phillips Farm, on the other hand, was financed by creating a receivable against future revenues in the Land Acquisition Fund and was paid out to the landowner in installments. Mr. Ross commented that creating a receivable against future funds "ties the hands" of the Open Space Commission as it limits their ability to pursue other land deals. Mr. Ross opined that the purchase should be seen as a capital investment; noting that the cost is too small of a sum to borrow or bond for. It is his opinion that the town cannot afford NOT to do this; noting that the land could easily be developed. He stated his concern with the potential to "put a lot of houses there; which he felt would have a negative impact on the town and create future costs and expenses for the Town.

First Selectman Jerram explained that at the present time, there is no money in the Land Preservation Fund but noted that there is inventory of approximately \$170,000 value in future lot sales. He noted that it could take a while to pay back the debt to the town. Mrs. Cronauer added that although there are lots for sale, there is no guarantee that those lots are still desirable and there is no guarantee as to when or if sales might occur.

Selectman Garay asked if it would be possible to pay for the property over a period of a couple of years, rather than in lump sum. Selectman Kennerson concurred with Mrs. Garay's concerns regarding the economy and felt that a payment plan over a couple of years would be less of an impact to the General Fund. Both Kennerson and Garay supported the acquisition, but were concerned with other unanticipated expenses that may come up.

Mr. Jerram stated that if the Board feels that the acquisition is in the best interest of the town, it would seem prudent to move it forward for consideration by the people and let them make

the decision. He commented that “not many proposals come with Grant Funds ready in the pipeline.”

Treasurer Ross noted that there have been some positive developments with respect to town finances; noting particularly that the town had authorized a borrowing of \$5.6 million; where in reality there may only be a need to borrow \$4.2 million. This is a savings to the town and it is an example of a liability that has been decreased. He noted that investments are still made even when there are expenses.

Mr. Jerram reiterated that the trail is a good investment and repeated that the “people should have a chance to vote on it.”

**MOTION:** by Kennerson to recommend to the Board of Finance the acquisition of the Butler Farm Conservation Easement and Trail rights for an amount not to exceed \$241,000 with the following recommendations: final approval of all State Grant Funding should be secured and final approval of all municipal approvals required by Inland Wetlands and Planning and Zoning; seconded by Garay.

*Unanimous*

**MOTION:** by Kennerson to adjourn at 6:52; seconded by Garay.

*Unanimous*

*Respectfully Submitted,*

*Christine Hayward, Administrative Assistant*