

CHARLESTOWN CONSERVATION COMMISSION

SPECIAL OPEN MEETING

January 8, 2012

- I. CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 50 Bayberry Lane at 1:00 PM by L. Arnold, Chair.
- II. ROLL CALL: Present: L. Arnold, C. Connery, H. Hultgren, G. Klinger, K. Simoneau, F. Safford and R. Thieke.
- III. The Commission members walked the property, formerly the YMCA camp, to determine from a conservation perspective the merits of its acquisition for open space purposes.
 - a. Scoring the property: scale is 0 to 3 and the property scores 11 out of 30 possible points
 - i. Size of property (3) (over 10 acres)
 - ii. Groundwater protection (3) (recharge area)
 - iii. Proximity to other protected land (1) (only by a trail that is the abutting public road)
 - iv. Ecologically significant (1) (average)
 - v. Farmland preservation (0) (no farm)
 - vi. Offset development (1) (1 to 10 houses)
 - vii. Protect rural character ((1) (low)
 - viii. Historic value (0) (minimal)
 - ix. Scenic value (1) (low)
 - x. Price (0) (over \$25k/acre)
 - b. The property is essentially in three parts of which the approximately 5 acres nearest Watchaug Pond are wetlands. The middle portion is heavily developed with buildings, roads, tennis court and septic or cesspool systems which would require a major expenditure of money due to the amount of demolition/remediation work that would need to be done and the need for special precautions to ensure none of the hazardous materials get into the environment. As a result, this open space would be devoid of significant trees or plants unless further expense is incurred to add native vegetation. The eastern most part of the property, except for a challenge course and several small structures, is the most pristine and undisturbed.
 - c. It was noted that the buildings have asbestos and lead in them as well as some mold and that there are a number of septic or cesspool systems all of which would have to be removed by a professional at a considerable expense. Also, except for the water side, the entire property is surrounded by chain-link fencing which should be removed if the space is to truly be open space.
 - d. Since the property is abutted on both the north and south by private residential associations (the southern one quite densely developed), public access would have to be from Prosser Trail which would involve building a parking lot in what is the most pristine part of the property.
 - e. The Town already owns four open space properties and all of them have more interesting topography with little or no visibility of developed areas while the YMCA property has housing virtually at the property line on the southern side and housing visible along almost the entire north and south sides of the property. In addition, all of the four currently Town owned open space properties are contiguous to other protected land.
- IV. The responsibility of the Conservation Commission is to provide to the Town Council an advisory opinion as to the attractiveness of a property from a conservation perspective. Our conclusion on this property is that it does not score well based on recognized conservation criteria and thus does not justify the expenditure of Town funds since large portions are already well developed and would require major expenditures to return to true open space. The conclusion was unanimous.
- V. Motion to adjourn by H. Hultgren. 2nd: G. Klinger. Aye: L. Arnold, C. Connery, H. Hultgren, G. Klinger, F. Safford, K. Simoneau and R. Thieke.

Meeting adjourned at 2:05 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Richard Thieke, Secretary