

## Pattee Property Public Hearing Minutes

September 17, 2008 7:30 pm

Members of the public signed an attendance log and picked up handouts before being seated. A PowerPoint presentation was projected on a screen at the front of the room. The meeting was opened by Jess Halm who introduced the members of the Conservation Commission and then explained that the purpose of the hearing was to gauge public support in using conservation funds to purchase 10.7 acres of Pattee property. Jess underscored that public input was an important part of the process and that all would have a chance to ask questions/ voice opinions after the presentation. Jane Kellogg then reviewed the purpose and history of the LUCT conservation fund and explained that the fund is now large enough (~\$236,000) to meet some of the town's conservation goals through land purchases. At this point, Lisa Doner, who has been most active in this project took over the presentation. Lisa laid out a two part proposal the first part being the expenditure of \$125,000 from the LUCT fund to purchase 10.7 acres of land but not the Pattee house and the 0.5 acre the house sits on. The second part of the proposal was to establish a working oversight committee the purpose of which would be to manage and make decisions about the land. Lisa presented a series of aerial photos showing that compared to other towns Campton has very little land conserved as open space. She further pointed out that the small amount of land in town that is open space lies within a floodplain.

Next the criteria for consideration of land conservation projects were presented, and are as follows:

- Provides public access point to the Blair State Forest
- Highly visible from Rte. 175 and Blair Road
- Adjacent to other conservation land (Blair State Forest)
- Potential for Tree Farm
- Potential for agricultural use
- Potential habitat for ground nesting birds
- Currently for sale-development likely

Lisa further went on to detail how the Pattee property, specifically, meets these criteria and to list other considerations that were discussed by CC members over the past few weeks. Considerations on the pro or positive side were as follows: Keeping the land open would maintain the rural character of Blair Road. The Blair State Forest is an underutilized resource of the town and public access to it could provide many recreational opportunities. The history of the land is known as it was kept in one family. This has appeal when assessing potential contaminants or hazardous substances. None are known to exist. Lisa explained that she poked a few holes in the land and a soil core revealed a rich organic layer, favorable to agriculture. This is also a unique opportunity for community partnerships to form and a potential future site for town activities. Lastly, if the property was purchased and then not properly utilized, it could always be resold in the future, whereas, not purchasing it poses the risk of it being lost to development.

Considerations for not purchasing the land were presented next. Containing development to one area along already established routes would reduce habitat fragmentation. The land purchase could limit future conservation opportunities until the fund rebuilds. Also, land purchases are a less cost effective means for conservation than conservation easements. The only known water source is on the Pattee house lot, unless the Blanchard lot has water rights. This could potentially require a well to be drilled. Tammy

Kidney a neighbor of the Pattee property stated that her family had deeded water rights to the property in the event that their well goes dry. Finally, the last consideration for not buying the land was the question of who will manage it.

A list of conservation friendly uses was presented as a brainstorming of ideas by the CC. Lisa stressed that the list is by no means complete, and it was at this point that public input was welcome. The list was broken down into potential short and long term uses. Short term uses were land use training workshops, youth group activities, fairs, outdoor concerts and running trails. Lisa pointed out that some of these uses may be restricted to certain times of the year, in the event that the land is managed, say, for nesting birds. Potential long term uses listed were town gardens/nursery/orchards, hayfields, picnic area and trail access for recreation. It was emphasized that all activities must meet the criteria for using conservation funds. The presentation closed with a slide detailing the timeline of the project, sequencing the events and meetings leading up to the current public hearing.

At this point the floor was opened up to questions and discussion from the public. Jess and Jane stood on opposite sides of the room listing questions and points on flip charts. Charlie Brosseau commented that the land could be kept as a hayfield. May Brosseau liked the idea of keeping it as open space since the town has very little of this property type. May also asked whether the commission had spoken to the property owner at this point and whether they were willing to accept our offer of just purchasing the land. Lisa explained that our offer was awaiting the outcome of this public hearing at which time if decided we would enter into a purchase & sale agreement.

Comments were made by Jeff and Lee Kidney attesting to the fact that the land was utilized by deer and moose. Jeff Kidney also said that land wasn't getting any cheaper and that as an abutter, he would just as soon see it stay as it is. Many others expressed approval of buying the land and letting it lie. Lee Kidney questioned the point of imposing a time restriction on certain uses of the land in the event of managing for nesting birds. His point was that birds only nest in the spring and that there were two potential hay cuts for the field. Jess answered that in keeping with state recommended Best Management Practices for managing grasslands, an August 1<sup>st</sup> target take would be considered appropriate for the protection of nesting birds. She went on to say that as stewards of the land we would like to allow for as many activities as possible while at the same time being conservation minded. She used snowmobiling as an example of an acceptable activity as long as there was sufficient snow cover. Lee Kidney stated that the property was a great place for kids to learn how to snowmobile away from roadsides and agreed that sufficient snow cover was important. Jeff Kidney said that the property was already heavily used for snowmobiling, his family included and that he personally has asked people to leave when there was not enough snow.

Tammy Kidney asked if private entities receive profit from say, haying or growing blueberries, how do we justify this and how does the community benefit? Lee Kidney interjected saying that any profit should go directly back into the conservation fund. Jane said that ideally any revenue generated from activities on conservation land would go back into the conservation fund but that the function of the oversight committee would be to work through these issues. Jeff Kidney asked if we can't specifically answer questions about what to do with the land are we just here for approval to buy the land? Yes was the response.

Charlie Wheeler said that if we drag our feet on this and sit on it then we may not have a chance since it will be lost to development. Additionally the investment would not be lost if the town can't decide what to do with the land since it can always be resold. Kelly Bulger

asked for a clarification of the current listing price and number of parcels. Jules explained how we arrived at our figure and gave a summary of the workup he did on comparative properties in the area. Jess said that whether we decide to do something targeted and organized with the land or to just buy it and let it lie, there will still need to be a committee in place to deal with issues as they arise. Several people raised their hands in interest to serve as committee members including George Wright, The Kidney Family, and Arthur Piper. Jess also said that the commission had discussed the idea of keeping the Pattee name somehow associated with the property or committee. This idea was met with enthusiasm.

Lisa said that one thing to keep in mind was the fact that there is still some negotiating to be done with the property owners and that their wish was to sell the whole property as one, including the house which we are not interested in at this time. Marsh Morgan noted that, as a farmer he has looked at the work that initially went into clearing the land, and appreciation for that work is another reason he would like to see it stay open, perhaps mowed periodically as it has been. Pat Barker said that as an avid walker, she would like to see trails through the Blair State Forest. Lisa noted that Ed Pattee had started to make trails through his woodlot area. Jim Aguiar said that he supports what others have said and that the property would be a wise purchase, particularly given the rarity of open fields in the town. His question was whether the four parcels were pre-existing lots or were they created for the purpose of sale. Lisa answered that they were pre-existing lots and as far as we know they have not been surveyed. Jim also asked if we looked into the legalities of selling the house lot. Kelly Bulger remarked that the Conservation Commission had done a good job finding out what the house is worth and comparing it to other properties in town. Pat Barker said that she is on the Quincy Bog Board and knows that there are trail crews willing to do work for free. Tammy Kidney repeated her wish to keep the land open since she has seen dramatic growth in that part of town over the past six years. Someone then said that the house lot would also be worth more if the field were kept as it is rather than developed. A member of the McDougal family noted that the property should remain as open land. At this point Jules asked if anyone knew of any downsides to what we are proposing. Lisa suggested that we take a straw vote and asked how many were in favor of the Pattee property purchase. The vote in favor was unanimous. The meeting was adjourned at 8:45. After members of the public left, Jules made a move to proceed with our Monday 9/22 meeting with the selectmen with the idea that we will be negotiating with the seller to buy the property. Lisa seconded the motion. The motion passes unanimously. Meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm.

### **Pattee Property Public Hearing Attendance Log**

(Note: There were an additional 10-15 people in attendance that did not sign in and two names that were indecipherable)

Jessica Halm	Pat Barker
Melissa Greenawalt-Yelle	Jim Aguiar
Jane Kellogg	Tammy Kidney
Tammy Wooster	Jeff Kidney
Lisa Doner	Kathleen Daugherty
Jules Doner	Kevin Daugherty
Bob Bulkeley	Janet Doner
Marsh Morgan	Carol Lanahan
Diane Valente	Dave McGraw
Charles Wheeler	Paul Yelle
Arthur Piper	
Lee Kidney	
May Brosseau	
Charles Brosseau	
Ann Marie foote	
Shirley McDougall	
Rita Grote	
David Bartholomew	
Laurie Coffin	
George Wright	
Jesse McDougall	
Beverly Seavey	
Forrest Seavey	
Ron Reynolds	