

Minutes of the first meeting of the New Dogtown Advisory Committee

May 17, 2017, 7-9 pm, 3rd floor conference room, City Hall

Attendees

Mark Carlotto, Nick Holland, Val Gilman, Charlie Crowley, Tom Mikus, Dena Enos, Bob McCowan, Mary Ellen Lepionka, Holly Clay, Cindy Dunn, Tim Simmons, Mary Devaney, Noel Mann.

Committee Status and Membership

Mark opened with a question about who wishes to apply for formal membership through mayoral appointment, O&A review, and City Council vote. He, Cindy, Dina, and ? were appointed directly by Mayor Sefatia in 2015.

- Charlie pointed out that a Conservation Commission person needs to be added, such as Ken Whittaker, Ann Joe Jackson, or Rob Gulla. Mary Ellen pointed out that the mayor was concerned about city employees being asked to serve on too many time-consuming committees. Val pointed out that Conservation Commission members could be invited to attend meetings without being formally appointed to our committee, which is being regarded at this time as ad hoc.
- Mary Ellen sent a letter to Mayor Sefatia and Jim Destino requesting official appointments to the DAC and confirmation of official status. There has been no reply to date.
- The DAC is taking action anyway in the belief that this will lead to official recognition. Meanwhile, we have been granted our own page on the city web site, to be accessed through the Historical Commission's passcode. We will appear in the menu of committees and our agendas and minutes will be linked to our page.
- Rockporters Tom Mikus and Mary Devaney asked what their membership status would be since they are not Gloucester residents. We decided to call them Community Liaisons. Likewise, members who are not official appointees will be referred to as liaisons for the groups they come from. For example, Mary Ellen will be a liaison for the Gloucester Historical Commission.
- The DAC will meet on the 3rd Wednesday of each month. At this time, Mary Ellen will develop agendas and Val will book the room and send approved agendas for posting.

To Do: Confirm existence of web page. Mary Ellen will follow up with James Pope.

To Do: Develop a mission statement, to which everyone should submit suggestions before the next meeting.

To Do: Complete member data for the web page. Mark will email all attendees, and Mary Ellen will capture email addresses and member titles to add to the web page.

Stump Dump Clean-Up

Val reported that she and volunteer crews had done cleanups on Dogtown Road and Pole Hill and found that the trail to the Goose Cove Reservoir off Dogtown Road was obstructed with large tree stumps and thick brush, deposited there by the DPW. Mark distributed photographs of the scene.

- On May 5 Mary Ellen sent the photographs to Mayor Sefatia, Jim Destino, and Mike Hale with a letter requesting that the stumps and brush be removed so that volunteers can repair the “boardwalk” and clear the trail in preparation for the season and so that Historical Commission consultants conducting an archaeological survey can have appropriate access. There has been no reply.
- On May 12 (?) Val and Mark revisited the site with Interim Police Chief John McCarthy and the Goodicks, who live nearby and often have to report partying there. The Chief subsequently called Mike Hale to request removal of the stumps and brush so that police can access the party site and the Goose Cove reservoir area for law enforcement purposes. Mike agreed to do this.

To Do: Mark will confirm that the stumps and brush have been removed and report at the next meeting.

Ownership of Parcels in Dogtown

Val reported that she met with Gregg Cadematori in City Planning to discuss implementing the recommendations of the North Gloucester Woods study of 2010, led by Noel Mann. See this study at <http://www.gloucester-ma.gov/index.aspx?nid=592>. Those recommendations included determining ownership of parcels and acquiring parcels. Five parcels were previously purchased through a self-help grant.

Charlie pointed out that there are issues with the five parcels purchased through self-help, which are now owned by the Conservation Commission but are not being treated or posted as a conservation area.

Val has a draft letter of request from the Open Space and Recreation Committee to the mayor to define Dogtown as a public park and to initiate tax-taking by the city, and this letter has been approved by Steve Winslow. The letter requests that the Assessor, legal department, CFO, Open space and recreation committee, community development department, and Land Stewardship Inc. to look into making the North Gloucester Woods a park with a permanent preservation restriction and to taking contiguous parcels around Stony Brook, a total of 75.7 acres. The May 16 draft of this memo is included with these minutes.

Mary Ellen pointed out that determining ownership status will be critical to defining Dogtown as a National Register District. The local historical commission has received an FY2017 Survey and Planning matching grant from the state historical commission for an archaeological survey for the purpose of nominating Dogtown to the National Register of Historic Places.

The tax-taking process involves the city appropriating parcels with undiscoverable ownership on the grounds of nonpayment of taxes. Charlie explained the following process:

- “Order of taking” for failure to pay taxes is initiated by the Assessor, as was done in the case of Dykes Pond.
- The Land Court issues a deed for tax title acquisition. The City then owns the land.

- Land Court then records another deed for Article 97 protection of the land as open space for conservation, which serves as a confirmatory deed. (See Article 97 at <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/mepa/about-mepa/eea-policies/eea-article-97-land-disposition-policy.html>)
- Technically, after one year the mayor can now sell or auction the land, which constitutes a risk. There needs to be some formal agreement that the land would not be disposed of, or the land needs to be put under some other jurisdiction (such as the Conservation Commission or the board overlooking watersheds), or a conservation restriction needs to be written into the confirmatory deed.

Cindy discussed legal aspects of the Land Court process and said that it takes around two years to complete.

To Do: Bring large-scale maps of Dogtown to meetings to aid in our analysis of parcel disposition and ownership. Charlie and Nick will contribute maps.

To Do: Investigate the feasibility of putting the greater Dogtown area, along with the self-help parcels, under the jurisdiction of the Conservation Commission and having a Conservation Restriction on the whole, with the idea that unifying all the parcels under one owner or jurisdiction would be ideal. This task was not assigned.

To Do: Investigate the feasibility of having a Preservation Restriction placed on the greater Dogtown area to be designated as a National Register District, perhaps held by the ECGB or other NGO, and determine how this would relate to having a Conservation Restriction. Mary Ellen will find out.

To Do: Investigate the feasibility of the DAC managing the self-help parcels (and possibly greater Dogtown?), as is done in Magnolia Woods. This task was not assigned.

DAC Mission

The DAC mission or charter is to advocate for the city to acquire and protect properties in Dogtown to keep as a public park. The DAC mission statement should refer to conserving, preserving, and restoring landscapes and natural and cultural resources in Dogtown.

To Do: Agree on the final wording a mission statement to publish on our web page.

Landscape Restoration Plan

Greenbelt has contracted with Tim Simmons to conduct research into areas in Dogtown that would benefit from controlled burning and/or other methods of landscape restoration.

- Tim explained that his recommendations would integrate fire use with the historical, ecological, public safety, and legal factors involved in the practice.
- Blueberries and huckleberries will benefit from controlled burns and famous vistas can be made visible again
- Tim (and Mark Carlotto, Valery Nelson, and Ed Becker of ECGB) spoke at the Landscape Forum at the Cape Ann Museum, which was well attended, but no one from the City was there. They talked about developing a restoration schedule and scope on the ground, zonation, communication plan, and a plan for control of vegetation, especially invasive species.
- The Fire Dept. needs to be involved in planning controlled burns and removing risks, but Tim has not yet spoken with the Fire Dept. Val cautioned that following

the recent Pole Hill fire, Fire Chief Eric Smith expressed a negative view of controlled burning.

- Methods other than controlled burning include the clearing of trees and brush and goat grazing, which also has its challenges, such as requiring fencing and shepherding.
- Eventually Tim will conduct on-the-ground exploration and mapping and prioritizing. His recommendations for a Landscape Restoration Plan will include a map identifying areas for recommended controlled burning or other restoration treatment.
- The Restoration Plan will also include recommended prioritization and a proposed schedule for implementation.

To Do: Learn more about the development process and scope of work in the Landscape Restoration Plan.

Rules and Regulations Plan

Mary Ellen sent Mark and Val the rules for the use of Dogtown that were proposed during the 2015 Dogtown Days event. The city currently does not define Dogtown as a public park and does not post rules and regulations for its use.

- It was pointed out that different stakeholders have their own rules and that it would be difficult to have one consistent set. Mary Ellen suggested that across-the-board potentially enforceable rules could include items such as no littering, no swimming in the reservoirs, no fires or camping, etc.
- There could be a Memorandum of Agreement among stakeholder owners about umbrella enforcement of umbrella rules and regs.
- Val emailed Larry Durkin, the watershed engineer, Mike Hale of the DPW, and the Chief of Police regarding rules and regulations for the use of Dogtown but has not received feedback from them.

To Do: Gather the rules that stakeholders post for their properties, with the aim of developing an overarching set for Dogtown as a whole and/or for the part of Dogtown to be designated as a National Register District.

Enforcement and Maintenance Plan

The mayor asked Mary Ellen to look into having a ranger in Dogtown. Mary Ellen learned that rangers are only available for state and national parks but that municipalities can hire personnel to undertake ranger-type duties, typically as adjuncts to the Police Dept.

- At present the GPD hires two part-time “rangers” during summers to patrol sites in Dogtown in ATVs. They police the quarries and reservoirs and investigate party complaints.
- The environmental police is a state agency that enforces matters pertaining to boats and recreational vehicles and environmental crimes such as wetlands violations and hazardous waste dumping.
- The Lynn Woods ranger is paid for by their Water Dept. because it is their watershed. Would the Conservation Commission be the equivalent for Gloucester?

- Planning for enforcement is complicated by the fact that Dogtown is under several different jurisdictions.

To Do: Gather stakeholders' ideas for how to enforce appropriate use rules and regulations in Dogtown.

To Do: Find out if the DPW and the various other jurisdictions have maintenance plans for their Dogtown properties.

To Do: Find out how other communities and the state police their parks.

To Do: find out if there is grant funding for park enforcement and maintenance.

Other Follow-Ups

- Mark will bring his map of artists' and writers' motifs and sites in Dogtown as the basis for an ad hoc sub-committee and community project.
- Mark will ask Sib for \$10k to deposit in the Gloucester fund
- Mary Ellen will confirm a DAC page on the city web site.

Next DAC meeting, June 21, 7 pm, 3rd floor City Hall.