

21 June 2017 DAC Minutes

Dogtown Advisory Committee

Minutes, Gloucester City Hall, 3rd floor conference room

June 21, 2017, 7:00 pm

Present: Bill Remsen, Ed Becker, Mark Carlotto, Nick Holland, Dena Enos, Charlie Crowley, Tom Mikus, Herb Stillman, Henry Cooper, Mary Devaney

1. Public business not on the agenda

Water Crossings

Nick had maps and drawings to show locations of proposed sites for repairing waterway crossings, a CATS initiative. As recommended by Henry, who bicycles in Dogtown, improvements are needed on trails with pallets and creosote railroad ties as bridges. Herb's goal is to build three bridges to code, using the state's IBC standards. They need a building permit and will meet with the building inspector, Mr. Seppalo. The Conservation Commission will then agree to the plan, which will include pro bono drawings by a CATS architect. The plan calls for bridges to be built by GHS shop students. This project is ready to start as soon as the building permit is obtained. Herb may apply to the CPC for funds to aid in the project, which, however, would not be available for another year owing to their grant cycle.

Mary noted that something needs to be done about the water crossing below Whale's Jaw, which is too wet and deep in spring. Previous proposals broached to Ken Whittaker have not been acted on.

Decision: The Whale's Jaw crossing is not on the list at this time. We will revisit it after the present projects are completed.

Trail Maps

Linzee Coolige asked about the old DAC Dogtown trail map, which Jim McDougal drew back in 1985. He has cartons of around 500 maps in his basement and would like to pass on the task of supplying the maps to distribution centers. This map is sold at Toad Hall Bookstore, the Bookstore, Visitor's Center, Chamber of Commerce, hotels and inns, and coffee shops such as The Cupboard. The vendors forward cash from sales to Sib Wright, but the status of these arrangements is unknown.

Decisions: Take the maps off Linzee's hands and use them up. Have a subcommittee to work out ways to revise and update the trail map for future. Get information from Sib about arrangements with vendors of the trail map and about the transfer of DAC funds.

Action: Mark will see Linzee and Sib to follow up on this matter.

DAC Money

The question arose as to who has the authority to move money for the DAC? Mark will be the fund manager and in future will sign for invoices to be paid out of DAC funds. Sib has not been responsive to attempts at contact regarding the \$10k to deposit in the

Gloucester Fund. Deposits into the Gloucester Fund can be restrictively earmarked. Sib also has files and maps that he no longer wishes to store.

Action: Mark and Dena will follow up with Sib in person before the next meeting by whatever means necessary.

2. Minutes

Minutes of the last DAC meeting of May 17 were accepted as is and will be posted on the DAC web page on the city's web site.

3. Dogtown Parcel Maps

Charlie repeated his concerns about the accuracy and completeness of maps of the parcels in Dogtown--their history, ownership, jurisdiction, disposition, and conservation status. For example, Gronblats is owned by the Conservation Commission and is protected, but there is no record of what happened to the self-help money. The Gronblat parcel is 2 acres and is now under general license. There is no inspection and there are no requirements regarding its use, so it is not being treated as conservation land.

Charlie says we need to have an outline of all the parcels and their owners. Noel's open space and recreation plan has an inventory but it does not conform to present needs; i.e., it is in the wrong format for compliance with state requirements for inventories. The city through the Conservation Commission is in the process of preparing a revised inventory using the state's categories, many of which are not relevant to Gloucester. The revision is needed so that the new data will go into the state's GIS database. Gloucester outsources its map, which are in MapGeo. Charlie feels this is an adequate tool and the city should also be using GIS.

Mark showed us his computer work using shape files with metadata for all the public parcels in Dogtown. The layers of data on Mark's map provide much of the information Charlie is concerned about. Mark will send everyone the KMZ file, which opens in Google Earth.

Action: Mark will send his KMZ file and everyone will review it for the next meeting.

4. Status of stump dump action

The DPW cleared out the trees and brush on the Stump Dump trail. This is Nick's project that is already all approved. Nick and Mark met with Mike Hale last week with Tim Simmons to generate DPW interest and cooperation in restoration projects in Dogtown. The goal is to get Mike Hale more involved in DAC initiatives. While the DPW removed brush obstructing the trailhead off Dogtown Road, they did not remove the stumps and are continuing to dump stumps there.

Decision: Determine if the DPW can dump stumps elsewhere now or pay to have them removed.

Action: Find out the cost of having the stumps taken away by a commercial service. Nick did this and emailed the price list, which will be discussed at the next meeting.

5.and 6. Val Gilman's initiatives

The ward councilor was not present at the meeting, so we did not learn the status of her letter to the mayor regarding tax-taking of property in the Story Brook area of Dogtown. We also postponed discussion of her proposed ordinance to define Dogtown as a public park or open space and recreation area with rules and regulations.

Charlie pointed out that determining ownership and jurisdiction and mapping the boundaries of Dogtown has to come first before it can be designated as a park and before we can agree on enforceable rules and regulations for its use that all jurisdictions will be able to observe. He also noted that Dogtown boundaries for conservation purposes will overlap with but be different from Dogtown boundaries for cultural purposes, including the map resulting from the FY2017 Survey & Panning grant from the Mass. Historical Commission.

7. Ed Becker on the land acquisition process and land protection.

Ed clarified that it is possible to get a confirmatory deed and conservation protection at the same time as part of the tax taking. With a confirmatory deed the property automatically gets Article 97 protection . (See Article 97 at <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/mepa/about-mepa/eea-policies/eea-article-97-land-disposition-policy.html>). The deed can state that it will be managed by the Conservation Commission (Concom), and will then be placed under a conservation restriction. A blanket conservation restriction can be placed on all Concom land using a “qualified recipient”—a private nonprofit such as Greenbelt or the state’s DCR. In this situation the municipality owns the land but is conveying the deed to an outside party for permanent protection of the land. An example of such a conveyance is Lynn Woods. This process offers the possibility of unifying Dogtown under one jurisdiction with a conservation/preservation restriction. Greenbelt would have a legal responsibility to enforce the terms of the restriction. They would not have an on-site enforcement role but could possibly play a role in management.

Ed pointed out that everything that is municipal property can be protected under Article 97. We should make list of properties through our city council and historical commission. Article 97 does not require a third party and does not guarantee protection, but a conservation restriction does. Municipalities can submit home rule petitions to take back Article 97 to meet new needs. Ed feels it may be a hard sell to get Gloucester to have a conservation restriction on Dogtown. The idea needs a groundswell of public support as well as a build-up of government support. The Friends of Dogtown “Dogtown Days” events over the past 3 years have begun generating that support.

Charlie expressed concern that the city may be able to thwart a conservation restriction as well as Article 97. Gloucester thinks it has the authority to sell watershed, for example. The outside recipient also may not be reliable. Charlie repeated that “we first need to have all our ducks in a row”, starting with a working map and management plan for Dogtown. He suggested we use the old Dogtown Plan from 1985, which was never acted on, as a starting point. It includes Noel’s list of parcels and information about the North

Woods also. (See also references to Dogtown in their plan for 2011-2017 at <http://www.gloucester-ma.gov/index.aspx?nid=271>.)

Decision: Encourage Friends of Dogtown to prepare a “Dogtown Days” event for October 2017. (Mark and Mary Ellen of FOD were present.)

Decision: Invite someone from Friends of Lynn Woods to our next meeting to discuss their process. (This task was not assigned.)

Action: For our next meeting everyone will look at the 1985 open space plan.

Mark will send a pdf of the plan to us as an email attachment for everyone’s review. At the next meeting we will go over plan item by item and develop a revision.

Future Action: Mary Ellen will develop a slide presentation to include the new DAC working map and illustrated landscape restoration plan for Dogtown to show to the Mayor and City Council, other departments and committees, Rockport Selectmen, Chamber of Commerce, etc., and the general public.

8. Review and discussion of DAC website status and content.

Mark and Bill had input on the wording of the DAC mission statement, which Mary Ellen is putting together and will submit to James Pope for a DAC web page, pending approval by Mark and Val, along with the list of member names and contact information. It was agreed to use street addresses and phone numbers for contact, as with other committees, except the liaisons from Rockport did not want to give that information online and opted for email addresses instead.

Action: Mary Ellen to submit copy, get web page activated, and post agendas and minutes to date prior to the next meeting.

Next DAC meeting: July 19, 7pm, 3rd floor City Hall