

TOWN OF BOXBOROUGH
Steele Farm Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes of February 23, 2016

Meeting was called to order by Chair, Ed Whitcomb at 7:00 PM at the Town Hall. Attending were members Jeanne Steele Kangas, Bruce Hager, and new member Jim Moss; and Selectman Bob Stemple, and resident, Owen Neville.

Minutes. The Minutes of our November 24, 2015 were adopted as revised; and the Minutes of the January 19, 2015 meeting were adopted.

Barn restoration project update. Ed Whitcomb reported that a little more work is needed, such as stops on the main doors, and some caulking. Some exterior lights still have to be reinstalled at the two people-doors. The electrical meter is now on the barn exterior; the electrical panel inside at the NW corner next to the door has to have access, but stuff, not ours, is piled up there. Ed will prepare a layout of the barn floor with proposed use areas and present it at our next meeting.

Professional Evaluation of Farmhouse maintenance/restoration. Much discussion ensued regarding the professionals that Committee members have identified. Bob Stemple clarified our task: to recommend three professionals to give to the Board of Selectmen (BOS) to estimate/quote to design the job of estimating the repair and maintenance costs and to restore the farmhouse. Both repair and restore estimates are sought. What will obtaining those estimates cost was discussed. Owen emphasized that the roof has to be replaced, as it was a 15-20 year roof 30 years ago. Jim emphasized that the structural integrity of the farmhouse must be protected, to make it a safe building and maintain the historic features of the building. Can the walls and foundation carry a new roof? Bruce expressed concern about restoration—to what period of time would it be restored, for what purpose and when. Jeanne stated that comprehensive town-wide involvement in those issues will have to be engaged, and that will take time, and it is too early to consider restoration now. Bob Stemple stated that our Committee should ask Gerry Noel, our new Building Commissioner (BC) and Building Inspector (BI) to contact the three professionals we recommend and he would obtain the estimates/quotes. Jeanne made Motion: To have the Building Inspector contact our three professionals to obtain their estimated cost to return the farmhouse to structural integrity and protect it from further deterioration. Seconded by Ed. VOTED unanimously. Ed will try to meet with the BI very soon to discuss the project; and Jim will draft a letter to the BI, describing what we want. Meanwhile, the three professionals we decided to involve will be:

- William Finch of Finch & Rose of Beverly, MA, suggested by both Jim Younger of TTOR, and by Anne Forbes of Acton who helped us obtain registration for the farmhouse on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Karle Packard of Red Hawk Studio of Concord MA, suggested by Anne Forbes.
- Michel Teller of Conservation Solutions, Inc. (CBI) of Boston MA, suggested by Jim Moss after researching through his contacts.

Farmhouse Drainage. The estimated cost was \$3,000 to design and prepare a base plan per the May 21, 2015 letter from X Places Associates, the Town's consulting engineer to the Town's then-BI, Dave Lindberg. The Committee had voted and the BOS approved our spending that

\$3,000 from our Revolving Fund which includes monies from our Xmas tree sales. Our new BI contacted the consulting engineer and learned that Phase I would now cost \$5,050, and another \$1,875 to oversee the bids and construction. The Committee questioned the much higher cost, and our Revolving Fund can't pay for it. Jeanne made Motion to table this on the grounds that the estimate by the professionals we discussed earlier should include consideration of the groundwater/drainage issue; and to release the \$3K from our Revolving fund from allocation for the drainage project. Ed seconded, and it was VOTED unanimously.

Ways to involve the Friends of Steele Farm. Ed stated that we want to use volunteer help wherever we can, with such activities as pulling out invasive plants.

- Grant money. Jeanne stated she had begun looking into obtaining Grant money to help us. There's the MA Dept. Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Partnerships Matching Funds program, which is seeking applicants now for FY 2017 with a project such as clearing invasive plant species from water-ways, the installation of interpretive signage, construction of trail and path enhancements; and planting of trees and other landscape improvements. We could use funding for all of those, and Jeanne knows the head of that program; but the deadline for "conceptual applications" are due by March 19, and that may be too soon for us. Jeanne will follow up.
- Other Grant possibility. Jeanne also mentioned the Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund, which has a new round of Fund Grants available for the acquisition, design, repair, renovation, expansion and construction of municipal cultural facilities and if we'd qualify. She doesn't know the application deadline. She'll follow up.

Letter from the Conway School. Town Administrator Selina Shaw received a letter dated 2/10/16 from Kristin Thomas, their Community Projects Coordinator, requesting what follow-through, if any, has been done on our Conway student design or planning project; and if we want to have a Conway team undertake a second phase of that project. It is basically a solicitation letter. Bruce expressed disapproval of the actual process used versus the promised and stated process that the graduate students who produced our Management Plan gave us, and we concurred. Jeanne offered that we are following up on the Plan, by as obtaining picnic tables (Ed is working on them), and harvesting Xmas trees; but that we have a lot further to go, such as creating a platform to overlook the grassy field for birdwatching or simply enjoying the view. The Committee does not anticipate needing any 'second phase'. Jeanne will draft a polite reply letter.

Eagle Scout Projects. Ed stated that Cheryl Mahoney at Town Hall asked if we have any suitable projects for an Eagle Scout candidate. Jim suggested a project to research, identify, and produce suitable information signs/labels for the different species of trees on the Farm, which would inform visitors. Another project might be to identify and then clear invasive plants from certain areas of the Farm. Ed will speak with Cheryl.

Other Business.

- Committee Processes. Jim asked about our Committee processes, and if we rotate the Chair and Secretary positions among members, stating that he cannot do Secretary stuff. We don't have any particular process, he was relieved to hear.
- Dog Waste. Jim said he's come upon 'way too much dog waste on the trails. It's hard for him to see, and probably for many other walkers; and the dog-walkers should be more responsible. We have bags and a trash container for the dog waste, and very clear

signage about picking up after your dog. Bob Stemple stated it's been a continuing problem, and hard to monitor and penalize. Trail camera were discussed, to encourage more compliance with our policy of picking up after your dog. It would be a shame to forbid dog-walking on the trails, so everyone could enjoy them without fear of stepping into a problem. No decisions were reached.

Next Meeting. TBD.

Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 9:12 PM.

Jeanne Steele Kangas, Clerk

VOTED: March 22, 2016