

**TOWN OF EASTON  
South Park Advisory Committee  
Minutes of Regular Meeting of May 3, 2021**

**Location: Virtual Meeting via Zoom – access as follows:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/MuR7ueDnPgsm9YSFI5v4RUVoheDxnse40sDt0sGEJ4lEiw9nY5mAKvBGL4Gufu8.vGJE1KXk-vt0g3ez> Passcode: 2WsCC.QB

Meeting ID: 827 6028 8757

Password: SPAC0503

**Total attendees – members: 9, public 5**

1. Call to order 7:01 by John Cunningham, thanking people for being at the meeting on time.
2. Committee Members present: John Cunningham, Tara Sanft, Ross Ogden, Jeff Becker, Elliot Leonard, Andy Kachele, Dwight Senior, Bob Schrage and Brian Williams.  
Members of the public present: Grant Monsarrat, Grif Conti, John Meyer, Nathalie Taranto, Dierdre Andreoli.
3. Discuss and approve Minutes of Meeting of April 5, 2021. Motion to approve by Elliot Leonard, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Tara Sanft

Unanimously approved.

4. Public Comment  
No comment at this time.
5. Discussion of communication received

John C., asked Andy K to send email he has received to members about Ag interest.

6. Old Business:

Updates from Committee Members re investigations

1. Solar Farm – Nothing new about the solar farm
2. Ag application – (re hemp farming) J. Becker and G. Conti both say that the hemp farm is a great idea for the town and that there is little risk in the project. John C will send copy of the lease around and if there is interest call a special meeting within 48 hrs. J Becker reported he has presented this opportunity at a Board of selectman meeting. John C. expressed his opinion that the project is a risk to the town and the lease as drafted is a concern.

Further concern there is risk to property and the surrounding area if farming is not performed in a well controlled manner; in addition John C. points out there is concern about derailing or negatively branding the property.

E. Leonard reminds the Committee about the significant odor problem associated with hemp.

Dwight S states that the proposal is for a 5 month pilot program and he does not understand John C concern about risk. Dwight points out that at the last meeting Elliot L reported that many commercial firms are reluctant to plan projects with Easton. Additionally noted that Aspetuck Land Trust grant was only approved for \$185,000 not the expected \$450,000.00, and that Citizens For Easton updated financials show that the Town cost of the bond used to purchase the South Park Property is \$330,000/year and the bond should be paid off in 8 years so Preserve and Protect is the cheapest solution. In the absence of viable alternatives without any risk, Dwight urges approval of the pilot hemp farming program.

Elliot points out that concerning commercial developers that their decision process can take time and that during this extraordinary time, they have yet to have enough time to make developmental decisions.

About circulating a copy of the proposed lease, Jeff B says that the proposal would employ an edited version the same lease used by the Town for the lease of farm property at SSES. Jeff B and John C are going to send out the proposal and lease to everyone and hold a special Committee meeting. Tara S., asks who is going to buy the seeds, and pay the other expenses involved in the pilot project. Jeff B says that the entity Easton Grows is the farmer and will be responsible for the farming costs; G. Conti mentions the need for a state license. Not clear when the tenant entity will be formed to do business with the town. The new entity will work with the State of CT and register to do this business. The town will not be the grower.

Andy K asks if the lease provides for restoring the property at the end of the pilot. Unclear if the proposed lease addresses that aspect of the project.

Members were polled re their availability to attend a SPECIAL Committee meeting Thursday May 6<sup>th</sup> at 6:30. Meeting will be posted for that date and time to get a sense of the Committee's view on recommending the project to the Selectmen.

3. Educational Nature Center – Nothing new to report
  4. Preserve and Protect – Dwight Senior – discussion by Dwight of clean- up cost creates need to know where the property line for ALT is located. Discussion with the Director Public Works implied that the transfer to ALT was completed, but it hasn't been done yet. Dwight talked about the continuing increase in prices for Easton real estate, which he says increases north of the Merritt because of access to open space and so Easton and Weston are the most desirable.
  5. Residential development – Ross O., has a guest Dierdre Andreoli who is a realtor with 15 years' experience in Easton. She reports that inventory of available properties is down and demand is up. In preparation for this meeting, she identified properties that were 3 acres and above. She says that in the last year 8 parcels sold and 1 is under contract. The average list price of \$205,000 per acre that sold for average of \$179,000.00. Discussion with Dwight S about where are the best comps. Ms. Andreoli also talked about estate properties, i.e., large properties. Question whether selling at prices she mentions are appropriate comparable re the pricing of South Park property. Andy K notes that any sale of the property requires full payment of outstanding bond principle. Therefore, any purchase price less than \$3 million would require the Town to finance the shortfall. Dwight S says he is shocked the numbers are so low. He thought Mr. Ogden had said \$450,000/acre. Mr. Ogden says, "no."
- Ms. Andreoli used figures that are 1 year old, but pointed out that now things are different and could ask more for the land. She says houses currently listed at \$799,000 are selling in the \$900,000's
6. Commercial Development – Mr. Cunningham and Mr. Leonard talked with Sacred Heart. A senior person at Sacred Heart is looking at South Park again and expects to get back to them within 30 days about interest. The

interest would likely be for faculty and graduate student housing, not for athletic facilities or a swimming pool.

7. Modified Blaze proposal – Andy K reports nothing new.

7. New Business:

- a. Dwight S. would like a copy of the ALT proposal and Mr. Ogden will try to get it for him. John C. raises question about % of bond to be retired and “protection” for the town. He also points out the town has not protected the property and the river as the owner of the land and the Land Trust brings a dedicated level of protection for the property. Dwight S discussed use of surrounding property by students as place to drink beer. He says there are cans and airplane whiskey bottles all over.

8. Public comment

- a. Grant M., says that he did not hear any discussion of communications about Bill Kupinse Memorial Park or the CFE communication about that.
- b. John Meyer, when the committee provides a report he suggests we include prospective projects that were reviewed but rejected. Also indicates that he agrees that a farm pilot should be considered.
- c. Discussion of time for special meeting after J. Becker distributes copies of lease and proposal to members was finalized.

9. Plan for next period: SPECIAL Meeting for Thursday May 6<sup>th</sup>.

10. Adjournment Motion by Robert S, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Jeff B. Unanimous at 8:49.