

Town of Harwich
Real Estate & Open Space (REOS) Committee
Meeting Minutes
January 17, 2025

Members Present: David Callaghan, Chair, Katherine Green, Elaine Shovlin, Margo Fenn, Carol Porter.
Guests: Amy Usowski, Conservation Agent, Lily Gooding, Assistant Conservation Agent, Art Bodin,

8:34 A.M. Call to Order. Elaine moved to go into Executive Session, seconded, all in favor by roll call vote

9:00 AM Regular meeting called to order

Public Comment: Art Bodin spoke on Community Preservation Committee's help funding the Community Development Partnership who puts on community development workshops. The workshops are not well attended by Harwich residents. Recent presentations were on wastewater and housing. The presentations are very professional and easy to understand. When programs come up Art suggests we take advantage of them. Discussion on how to get the word out followed. Housing coordinator is the first to get notice of workshops. She can make sure the notice goes to REOS chair, Dave Callaghan.

Margo moved to accept September 20, 2024 meeting minutes. Seconded, all in favor.

Elaine moved to accept December 13, 2024 meeting minutes with corrections. Seconded, all in favor.

Old Business:

Review of Open Space and Recreation Plan: Margo reported that the open space and recreation plan is being updated as part of the overall local comprehensive plan and is a stand-alone document. The table of contents outlines the topics it covers. The state provides the template. The most labor-intensive part was the inventory of land owned by the Town of Harwich designated for recreation and open space. The goals and objectives, as well as the proposed management strategies for these areas, are the most critical components of the plan. More editing is still needed. Amy discussed the process for releasing and accepting the plan. The committee hopes to have a final form by February. Members of the REOS (Recreation and Open Space) Committee had several questions. One member inquired about the wastewater plan referenced in the document, noting that it still pertains to the 2016 plan. The response was that this is the only available information for now. Another question raised was about the biggest change since the previous plan. The answer was that the entire plan has undergone significant changes. Dave expressed gratitude to the committee for their hard work on the plan, commending them for their efforts. Moving forward, the REOS Committee should focus on sections of the plan that address real estate and open space, as well as the seven-year action plan. On Wednesday, January 22, 2025, Christine will provide the town with an overview of the plan.

New Business:

Lack of movement on previous recommendations to the Select Board. Dave and Elaine met with Mike MacAskill to discuss the Judah Eldredge property. The town decided not to allocate additional dollars into escrow after reviewing the number of heirs listed. This property was taken by eminent domain in July and now belongs to the Select Board; it is not designated for conservation. They also talked about the issue of the remaining unknown property owners and how, or whether, this can be resolved. They discussed the issues surrounding Little Shaver Lane, which should be prioritized to protect the town's water supply. The ultimate objective is to gain control over development in the area. The next step is for Dave to meet with individuals

who may have information regarding the status of these properties. It remains unclear what the town will do next. It is important to note that tax liens still exist, even though the town has not foreclosed on them.

Review REOS charge from Select Board. REOS is following the committee's plan set forth by the select board. Today REOS reviewed the Open Space and Recreation Plan and plans to review the new LCP at a future meeting.

Storage of REOS minutes and backup material. Not all backup materials are stored with the town clerk. Carol suggested that reports such as appraisals and property maps could be stored on Google Docs and password protected. Currently, individual members are maintaining their own files, which may or may not be passed on to new members. Dave raised the concern that Google Docs exists outside the town's systems. Another issue is determining who would manage the site going forward. Carol will speak with the town clerk and the town planner for information and suggestions on how to store the committee's related materials.

Member Reports:

Kathy Green noted that Harwich Conservation Trust withdrew the CPA fund request for Sutphin property due to tax issues.

Dave Callaghan mentioned that Harwich's Health and Environment Fair is scheduled for April 19, 2025. The committee discussed whether REOS should set up a table at the event but ultimately decided it was not a good fit given their resources. Additionally, Dave received an email from Patrick Otton regarding the protection of trees. Patrick is bringing his proposal back to the town meeting. Margo pointed out that the issue of tree clearance and controls was discussed during LPC meetings. In addition, Patrick requested that REOS keep an eye out for 3-5 acres of land for a swimming pool that a private nonprofit wants to build. This proposal has been presented to the CPC in the past but did not gain much traction.

Margo noted that the select board has agreed to maintain the road leading to the Fratus property in East Harwich. The town will clear it but it will remain a dirt road.

Next REOS meeting scheduled for February 21, 2025 at 8:30.

10:22 Margo made a motion to adjourn meeting. Seconded, all in favor, meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Porter, clerk.