

Proposed amendment to address City Council and Community Preservation Committee request for clarification of process --Amended December 11, 2009 (amended December 17, 2009)

## CITY OF NORTHAMPTON

MASSACHUSETTS

*In City Council,* .....November 19, 2009.....

Upon the recommendation of the Recreation Commission, Agriculture Commission, and Conservation Commission, amended by Councilors Bardsley, LaBarge, and Narkewicz

*Ordered, that*

WHEREAS, The Open Space and Recreation Plan: 2005-2010, adopted by the Conservation Commission, Recreation Commission, Planning Board and City Council, recommends expanding recreation opportunities, preserving farmland, and acquiring riparian land along the Mill River; and

WHEREAS, The city is negotiating to purchase the 45 ± acres "Bean Farm" (Map ID 16C-25); and

WHEREAS, The Recreation Commission has identified valuable recreation potential on the site; and

WHEREAS, The Agriculture Commission has identified valuable prime agricultural soils on the site; and

WHEREAS, The Conservation Commission identified valuable riparian habitat and open space on the site; and

WHEREAS, The Agriculture, Conservation and Recreation, Commissions are jointly submitting an application for Community Preservation funding to protect the property, potentially for agriculture, conservation and recreation uses; and

WHEREAS, The City Council and the Community Preservation Committee have expressed the need for an open, transparent, and inclusive process to determine the use(s) of the Bean Farm, should the City Council decide to acquire it;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED

- 1) That the Northampton City Council establishes a Bean Farm Task Force to oversee a process for determining the use(s) of the property. The Bean Farm Task Force shall be composed as follows, for the reasons given:
  - (a) The interests of each of the three Commissions shall be represented by one person appointed by the Agriculture Commission, one person appointed by the Conservation Commission, and one person appointed by the Recreation Commission, **and one alternate from each Commission (Amended in City Council, December 17, 2009)**. The appointees may but need not be current members of the three Commissions;
  - (b) Since a person with expertise in land use planning and design is important for the Task Force's work, two such persons will be nominated by the Zoning Revisions Committee, and one of these will be elected by the Task Force to serve as a member. The nominees may but need not be members of the Zoning Revisions Committee.
  - (c) To ensure strong neighborhood representation, the Ward Seven City Councilor elect (or City Councilor after the January 2010 inauguration) shall serve as a member of the Task Force and shall also serve as its Chair.
- 2) That the process overseen by the Bean Farm Task Force shall be guided by adherence to the following principles of good process:
  - Good process is educational. It brings everyone to a shared level of information. It elicits information from knowledgeable people who hold different perspectives.
  - Good process explores possibilities. It is visionary. It encourages the exploration of many options for solving the problem at hand. The exploration of options is based upon sound information, not just opinion.
  - Good process is interactive. Information and ideas do not flow in only one direction. Anyone who is interested has the opportunity to contribute information and ideas, to ask questions and receive answers. The process involves active outreach to persons and groups who might have special interest in the outcomes. Opportunities for the exchange of information and ideas are scheduled well in advance of decision-making.
  - Good process is transparent. Information is disseminated widely as it becomes available. Vehicles for dissemination are widely publicized.

- o Good process provides a predictable and trustworthy structure for decision-making.
  - a. Everyone knows from the outset who will make recommendations; who will make decisions;
  - b. Groups responsible for the process include members who are known to be disinterested about outcomes and committed to good practice.

It is critically important for every stakeholder to realize that his or her ideas may not prevail in the end. Including all of the above elements in the process helps to ensure that recommendations and decisions are made in an informed, open, and respectful way and are not controlled by a small number of people committed to a particular outcome. Good process thus makes it easier for stakeholders to accept what they may see as a negative decision, and builds trust instead of resentment going forward.

- 3) That the Bean Farm Task Force shall report to City Council regarding
  - a. the details of the process it used, to include the gathering of facts and expert opinions regarding the suitability of the land for the uses proposed, a study of the impacts, including the mitigation of these impacts, of the proposed uses and their combination, an assessment of the financial considerations resulting from the proposed uses, and a public process including at least three public forums;
  - b. its findings of fact, issues identified by the public, and public comments , and;
  - c. its recommendations, including how much and which parts of the land should be used for which purposes, including its specific reasons for the recommendations.
- 4) The City Council shall determine the ultimate use or mix of uses after a careful consideration of the Bean Farm Task Force recommendations.

In City Council, December 17, 2009  
 Rules suspended, passed two readings and enrolled.

Attest: Mary L. Medina, Clerk of Council

Approved: Mary Clare Higgins, Mayor

A true copy.

Attest: Mary L. Medina, Clerk of Council