

Meeting Summary for Town Council Zoom Meeting

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Quick recap

The meeting focused on the Restoration plan for the Washington Grove Meadow Conservation Park, with discussions on the history, significance, and proposed improvements. Concerns were raised about the lack of transparency and input from residents in the decision-making process, with suggestions for a more collaborative approach. The conversation ended with the proposal for the involved groups to work together to develop a compromise plan for the meadow's restoration and maintenance.

Next steps

1. Meadow Committee and concerned residents to meet on November 20th to discuss tree selection and develop a compromise plan.
2. Bruce to follow up with Ryan Colleton about getting more detailed information on tree coverage percentage.
3. Bruce to discuss with Ryan the possibility of addressing other woody species and potential use of herbicides.
4. Town Council to consider providing guidance on meadow restoration goals at the November 11th meeting.
5. Rob to potentially serve as referee/facilitator for discussions between Meadow Committee and concerned residents.
6. Town Council to consult town attorney for review of legal responsibilities regarding meadow management.
7. Meadow Committee to consider incorporating noise reduction as a factor in tree selection.
8. Bruce to inquire with Ryan about possibility of swapping some damaged trees for removal instead of healthy ones.
9. Meadow Committee to develop more detailed long-term maintenance plan for the meadow.
10. Bruce to follow up on getting Weed Warrior supervisor status for additional town residents.
11. Meadow Committee to consider Tom's suggestion of developing a more comprehensive meadow restoration and management plan with Parks.
12. Meadow Committee to discuss with Parks the possibility of moving some large canopy trees.
13. Bruce to clarify with Parks their willingness to compromise on tree selection.
14. Town Council to consider how to maintain cooperative relationship with Parks while addressing resident concerns.
15. Meadow Committee to organize another meadow walk with Ryan and concerned residents to review tree selection before removal begins.

Summary

Special Council Meeting on Restoration

This Special Council Meeting was convened to provide an informational session for the council and residents about the Restoration plan. John emphasized the importance of having a definitive set of facts and understanding about the meadow and the proposal between the Meadow Committee and Parks. The meeting included presentations by residents, one of which was a group with their view on the proposed Restoration plan, and a presentation by Tom Land suggesting improvements to the Restoration plan. The council approved the meeting agenda, despite some concerns about its length. The meeting aimed to ensure all council members and residents had the same set of facts and understanding about the meadow and the Restoration plan.

Washington Grove Meadow Conservation Park

John and Georgette discussed the history and significance of the Washington Grove Meadow Conservation Park. The conversation began with John presenting a timeline of significant events related to the park, which he will share for future reference. Georgette then took over, providing a detailed account of the park's history, starting from 2000 when a developer proposed dense development on the Casey property. The town declined the proposal, and in 2001, the mayor and HPC suggested that the 13-acre field along Ridge Road could qualify for inclusion in the county's legacy open space program. Many in the town worked on a presentation to save the field, and the Legacy Open Space Staff was impressed by the property and its impact on Washington Grove. In 2002, the staff recommended adding the 13-acre plan to the legacy open space functional plan. In 2004, the planning staff recommended the addition of the 13-acre open field as legacy open space, citing its historical significance and role in maintaining the town's rural character. The town initiated condemnation proceedings in 2005, leading to a lengthy legal battle that culminated in the town purchasing the land in 2010. In 2011, Mayor Anderson formed a legacy field committee to maintain the meadow and work with park staff to formulate an operation and use plan. The operation and use plan was presented to the Town Council in October 2012 and approved.

Meadow Conservation Park Discussion

Georgette discussed the history of the Meadow Conservation Park, highlighting the compromise wording that retained the largest native trees and the subsequent mowing that left all native trees, including smaller ones, untouched. She expressed concern about the potential vulnerability of the town's eastern border if the county decided to use the land for other projects. Mary Warfield raised questions about the terminology used and the ownership of the land, while Peter asked about potential uses of the land if the county decided to use it. Betsy brought up the possibility of the land being used for school recreation with lighting. Ernie was set to discuss the Meadow Original Legacy open Field committee's interaction.

Legacy Open Space and Meadow Restoration

Ernie discussed the history of the legacy open space, the establishment of a committee to work with Montgomery Park, and the development of a maintenance schedule. He also mentioned the creation of native meadow habitat to support native species and the provision for resource-based recreational opportunities. Bruce then presented the ecological reasons for restoring the meadow, highlighting the importance of maintaining open vistas, increasing biodiversity, and enhancing meadow aesthetics. He also discussed the Meadow Management and Restoration program at Montgomery Parks and the proposed two-phase reduction of red cedars. Deborah and her team presented their views on the proposed restoration, emphasizing that they do not want a forest but a meadow, and that the current tree cover is within the 25% threshold that Parks uses to define a meadow. They also discussed the 2013 Operation Use Plan and its implications for the management of the property.

Cedars' Impact on Sound Debated

Marida presented evidence that contradicts the Meadow Committee's claim that the Cedars have no impact on sound. She shared the results of decibel counts conducted around the Meadow, which showed that the trees significantly lower noise levels. Deborah pointed out that many Cedars in the Meadow were not selected for removal despite being densely packed and questioned the prioritization of views over noise reduction. Barbara detailed the timeline of the Meadow Committee's process and the concerns raised by residents, which were not adequately addressed. The team emphasized the need for transparency and a well-informed decision-making process.

Meadow Tree Removal Concerns Discussed

Barbara Leng's, Deborah Tarasevich, and Marida expressed concerns about the lack of transparency and input from residents in the decision-making process regarding the removal of trees in the meadow. They suggested a collaborative process between town residents, the committee, and town decision makers to determine which trees should be removed and the town's long-term goals for the meadow. They also expressed frustration over their concerns not being adequately considered and their views being diminished. The group also discussed the importance of supporting pollinators and the need for a more open meadow space. Bruce clarified that the tree selection was based on opening up the center of the meadow and not micromanaging what Parks wants to do. The group agreed to have a conversation about tree selection and to work with the Meadows Committee to discuss the trees that have been proposed for removal.

Meadow Restoration and Tree Selection

The meeting involved discussions about the restoration of the meadows in the town, with a focus on the selection of trees to be cut. The participants, including the council members and representatives from the Meadows Committee and the Dev group, expressed their concerns and suggestions. Robert suggested that the Meadows Committee and the Dev group should come up with a compromise plan to present to the Town Council. The participants also discussed the need for better communication and collaboration between

the groups involved. The conversation ended with the decision to proceed with the presentations from Tom and Bob.

Meadow Preservation and Development Plans

Bob discussed the significance of the meadow from a historical and preservation standpoint, highlighting its inclusion in the historic district and the efforts made to mitigate the impacts of a planned development. He emphasized the importance of consistency in preserving the historic integrity of the district and the trust in the town's word. Tom proposed the development of a detailed plan with the Park service to protect the town's long-term interests, referencing the objectives stated in the Operations and Use Plan. He also mentioned an email exchange with Bruce and Ryan's submission of a plan to the town.

Meadow Restoration Plan Critique

Tom expressed concerns about the proposed plan for the Meadow Restoration, stating that it doesn't address all the issues facing the meadow and its future maintenance. He criticized the selection of trees to be cut, suggesting that it was based on an aerial photo rather than a thorough walk-through of the meadow. Tom also highlighted the proliferation of non-native species such as wisteria and persimmons, which he believes need to be addressed through herbicide use. He suggested the need for a more comprehensive and detailed plan for the meadow's restoration and maintenance, and offered to work with the Meadow Committee and others to develop this plan. John then opened the floor for questions and comments.

Meadow Management and Legal Responsibilities

Betsy expressed concern about the removal of native persimmons in a meadow, which she believed were valuable and should not have been suppressed. Mary asked Bruce about the possibility of being more prescriptive in their plan for the meadow, given their good relationship with Ryan from Parks. Bruce agreed and mentioned that Ryan was amenable to discussing their plan. Bruce also noted that Parks had previously used herbicide on the meadow, but Ryan had not expressed a need for it. John suggested that there were other ways to maintain cooperation and ensure the meadow's success, such as an annual report. Mary questioned the legal responsibilities regarding the meadow, and Robert suggested consulting the town attorney for a legally privileged opinion. John clarified that the town has substantial rights to any proposed change in the meadow's use, but limited rights to enforce those changes.

Meadow Maintenance and Management Discussion

The meeting involved discussions about the maintenance and management of the meadow in the town. Deborah Chambers expressed her support for maintaining the meadow and raised questions about the tree selection process and the possibility of joining the ad hoc Meadow Committee. Bruce clarified the tree selection process and the possibility of joining the committee. Paula suggested adding another phase to the process, involving a walk around before trees are removed and a simple written agreement for

future meetings. Marida expressed concerns about the changing goals of the committee and the impact of noise on the town's historic nature. John suggested that the Council could provide guidance to the committee to improve the decision-making process.

Meadow Promotion and Collaboration Discussion

In the meeting, John emphasized the importance of understanding the original rationale for maintaining the field and the connection to rural heritage. He suggested that the council should provide guidance on what sort of meadow they want to promote, considering factors like noise reduction, pollinator support, and meadow habitat. Peter and Robert agreed that collaboration between the involved groups would be more effective than council guidance. They proposed that the committee, including Deb, Barb, and Merida, should work together to come up with a compromise plan. Kriss suggested setting a date for the groups to meet and move forward with the plan. The conversation ended with a motion to adjourn.