City of South Portland
OSAC Meeting
May 11th, 2021


1. Andrew F. called the meeting to order at 3:31 pm.

2. The committee approved the meeting minutes from the April 13th, 2021 meeting.

3. The list of top property choices was given, in no particular order: Barberry Creek Woods, New York Avenue properties, 845R Highland Avenue, Texas Instruments properties, Petrilik property, and 1125 Broadway.

Questions were raised about the contingency to buy the cemetery along with Barberry Creek Woods, Kathi wondering that if the area is already protected by the city of Portland, does it need to be considered for purchase by OSAC. Dan suggested that we acquire access to the property first, and carve out BCW from the cemetery at a later date. The city of South Portland and the Land Trust are meeting in the coming weeks to discuss the complexities of this entanglement.

It was agreed that the New York Avenue properties are of value to its underserved and densely populated neighborhood. Andrew made the point that the property which has been clear-cut has potential for reforestation, and the case was made for the land abutting Wilkinson Park to be considered “more valuable” if one parcel needed to be chosen over another.

4. The discussion turned from reviewing the “top properties list” to their assessed values and how those numbers do or don’t impact the dollar amount the OSAC will suggest to the City Council for the upcoming bond issue. Dan stressed that we should remove the assessed value from the properties list, keeping in mind as many properties as we see desirable and look for creative ways to acquire them, regardless of what may or may not be available in bond funding.

What is the recommended bond issue amount? Milan reminded the committee that City Council is looking for the number that will allow OSAC to do well the job it has been assigned. Kathi suggested taking a percentage of the top 7-10 properties’ assessed values and ask for that amount in the bond. Jeanne asked to know the impact of a projected $5 million dollar bond on the average household’s taxes: Milan shared that amount to be between $18-$53 annually for households evaluated at $250,000, for bonds ranging from $2.5 to $7.5 million. Valerie, Andrew, and Jeanne expressed the urgency to move forward with the bond process, citing impending development and increased public awareness of climate change/tree loss issues as motivators. Tom, Dan, and Kathi expressed hesitation and doubt about the timing of presenting the community with another financial burden in light of the impending tax re-evaluations.

After a poll of the attending committee members as to a suggested amount for the bond, the figure of $4.5 million was agreed upon. Kathi moved to recommend that amount to the City Council; Dan seconded the motion. Andrew amended the motion to recommend a dollar range to the Council of between $4 and $5 million, a motion which was seconded by Tom, but both these motions were later withdrawn after Karl advised giving the City a single number as a recommendation. After a roll call vote, all members approved the motion by Kathi, that the suggested amount sent to the City Council be $4.5 million based on OSAC’s evaluation of possible properties and the results of the citizen survey.
5. It was agreed unanimously that Andrew will write a letter to this effect, to be sent to the City Council on Wednesday May 12th.

6. **Preparation for the Bond Issue:** Andrew asked the more-experienced members of the committee to point us in the best direction in terms of “next steps.” Tom assessed the most timely needs to be getting ahead of the public’s FAQ’s about the bond, and tapping into groups that can support marketing, advertising, and outreach (i.e. neighborhood groups, environmental groups, the Land Trust, agencies from other communities, etc…) Tom will start a list of these groups which will be reviewed at the next OSAC meeting.

There still is some question as to who/what can “promote” the bond, with a distinction being made *between informing about the bond and opining about its benefits.*

No date has been set for the Council’s decision about whether to go ahead with the bond issue on the November ballot. Karl will investigate this further.

In the meantime, Jeanne will work with the template from the Scarborough Land Trust bond referendum from 2019 to begin putting together a FAQ sheet for the currently proposed bond.

7. **There will be no properties to score for the next meeting.**

8. **A reminder went to the group about the Tree Ordinance which will be discussed at the meeting of the City Council scheduled for Tuesday May 25th at 6:30 pm.**

9. **The next meeting for the OSAC was scheduled for June 1st,** *unless the City Council has not made a bond decision by that date, in which case the meeting will be on June 15th:* 3:30pm – 5:30pm in any case.

10. Andrew F. **adjourned the meeting at 5:30 pm.**