

JAFFREY



A map produced by the Jaffrey Ad-Hoc Open Space Committee shows areas of agricultural land as dark ovals. Some residents have said the town has considerably more agricultural land than is shown on the map and committee Chair Mark Kresge said more mapping will be needed.

Residents seek permanent open space committee

Select Board wants input from Planning Board, Con. Com.

By PRISCILLA MORRILL
Monadnock Ledger-Transcript

JAFFREY — A recommendation to establish a permanent Open Space Committee, which selectmen have yet to act on, received overwhelming support from residents at a Select Board meeting on Oct. 25.

Mark Kresge, chair of the town's Ad-Hoc Open Space Committee, presented a draft open space plan to selectmen, which includes a proposal for a seven-member open space committee to be appointed by the Select Board with wide-ranging representation in mind. The plan also suggests ways to promote the preservation of open space, which can include lands used for agriculture, forestry, recreation and wildlife conservation.

Selectmen have said they want time to read the plan and consider the options, as well as weigh comments from the Conservation Commission and Planning Board.

Select Board Chair Don MacIsaac said, "One of the fears with this is we're out to take all the land in Jaffrey."

About a half dozen or so residents spoke in favor of establishing the committee, as well as remarked on the ad-hoc committee's progress.

Michael George of Jaffrey said having a town entity devoted to helping property owners with land use planning would be beneficial to him.

"I don't think an Open Space Committee going forward would be a threat to me as a landowner," George said.

Jean Ellston of Jaffrey said the committee should include everyday people who live in the periphery of downtown where the town's open space is. She also voiced concerns that more residents were not informed of the presentation of the draft open space plan

scheduled to take place at the meeting. "You need to find a way to reach them," she said.

Birgit Johanson, owner of Mountain Blue Farm in Jaffrey, said the mapping of Jaffrey farms in the draft plan was limited.

"Some of the most important farms aren't on the map," she said. "These are really important cultural and agricultural assets. There's a lot more work to do."

On Monday, Kresge said he agreed with Johanson's assessment.

"Before we finalize the open space plan I would like to see a more thorough mapping of agricultural lands," he said.

Following a recommendation from former Conservation Commission chair John O. Field that an Open Space Committee be established, the Select Board formed the ad-hoc committee earlier this year to review this possibility.

Beginning last winter, the committee held meetings with focus groups from the community who have ties to the land — such as farmers, foresters, hikers, artists, boaters, cross-country skiers, snowmobile riders — to help map and identify issues associated with open space.

"Each meeting was targeted at quite partisan groups," explained Kresge at the Select Board meeting. "We had people who like to play on the land; we had people who make their living from the land."

The ad-hoc committee then went to work developing criteria for open space of value for the town. Preserving scenic vistas, providing corridors between protected lands and maintaining opportunities for recreational use are three of the criteria listed in the draft plan. The committee identified

three ways to maintain open space: regulation, conservation transactions and sustainable working lands.

According to the recommendations of the draft plan, a permanent Open Space Committee would be tasked with finalizing the town's open space plan, which would serve as a prioritization and education tool when it comes to preserving open space. Other duties would include advising the town's other boards, reporting directly to the Select Board, providing education and outreach to the community, and proposing expenditures from the town's Land Acquisition Capital Reserve Fund.

"This is not a majority report. This is a consensus work," Kresge said of the draft plan. "We actually worked to that end. I think it speaks to the importance of this issue for the people of Jaffrey."

Currently, Kresge said, the Conservation Commission and the Planning Board deal with open space in town, but each may be viewed or perceived by the public as having its own agenda.

"[An Open Space Committee] could be perceived as a more neutral arbiter of the issues," he said.

Education, a key component in promoting an open space plan, requires a lot of time, he noted, and the Planning Board and Conservation Commission already have full agendas.

"I think you would have ongoing conversations between these three boards," Kresge said.

MacIsaac asked where funding for conservation easements would come from. Kresge said that part of the Open Space Committee's role would be to prospect for grants. Warrant article appropriations would be another source, he said, and the town's land use change tax, half of which currently goes to the Conservation Commission, is another potential source.

HANCOCK

Tax rate drops 4.7%

By DAVE ANDERSON
Monadnock Ledger-Transcript

HANCOCK — Many taxpayers will see a lower final tax bill this week, as the 2010 property tax rate has been set at \$17.30 per \$1,000 assessed value, a 4.7 percent decrease from the 2009 rate.

The owners of property assessed at \$200,000 will pay \$3,460 in taxes.

The largest percentage drop was in the town portion of the tax rate, which went from \$4.78 per \$1,000 in 2009 to \$4.31 this year, a 9.8 percent decline.

Select Board Chair John Jordan attributed the decrease to a combination of factors.

"We had a good tight budget," Jordan said on Friday. "No one last year got any raises. ... We have terrific personnel and they really do a great job on keeping costs down."

The town of Hancock's gross appropriation for 2010 was \$1,844,993, considerably less than the \$2,399,214 number for 2009. So even though revenues fell from \$1,143,194 in 2009 to \$702,466 this year, the town's net appropriation

— the amount to be raised by taxation — was \$1,181,192, an 8.8 percent drop.

Jordan said the town also benefited from "about \$3 million in new taxable property," in Hancock. Public Service of New Hampshire renovated and expanded its substation, which resulted in a higher assessment, and there was a fair amount of new construction and home renovations.

The local school portion of the tax rate went from \$10.20 per \$1,000 to \$9.80, a 3.9 percent drop. Jordan said more up-to-date equalized valuation numbers and student attendance numbers were used this year to determine each town's portion of the ConVal budget appropriation, and Hancock benefited from that adjustment.

The state school portion of the tax rate went up 6 cents per \$1,000, an increase largely offset by the county portion, which went down 4 cents per \$1,000.

On Friday, Tax Collector Rennie Timm said tax bills will go out on Wednesday and will be due on Monday, Dec. 6., with the town office open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. that day.

BENNINGTON

State: Abandoned bridge needs sign, barricade

By ROBERT MICHAELSON
Monadnock Ledger-Transcript

BENNINGTON — A report of a state inspection of the closed Bypass Historic Bridge, also known as Thompson's Crossing Bridge, which connects Antrim and Bennington over the Contoocook River, cited a need for improved signage.

Built in 1893, the 96-foot bridge, will need obvious signage so that it will not be mistaken as a passable bridge. The report called for a "bridge closed" sign as well as a barricade for safety.

In a phone interview Monday, Town Administrator Dee French said that the bridge shouldn't look passable, but the inspectors wanted to "err on the side of caution."

French said that the bridge had not been used for more than 30 years because it was no longer advantageous for the town and it was in disrepair.

She also said that there are no plans to re-open the bridge.

The Bypass Historic Bridge was one of two Antrim-Bennington bridges mentioned in the report, which came from an inspection performed in March by the New Hampshire Department of Transportation.

The 77-foot Depot Street Bridge, built in 1946, had guardrails put in last year to improve safety for vehicles crossing the bridge.

According to French, the cost to Bennington to replace the guardrails was around \$10,000 to \$11,000.

Jaffrey Briefs

Burglars hit Main Street residence

Tools, rifles, golf clubs, a snowblower and other gear are among the items reported stolen on Oct. 21 from a Main Street property.

On Oct. 21, a Main Street resident reported that sometime within the last three days his home was entered through a bedroom window, but nothing was taken from inside. Instead, a burglar took the contents of two unlocked sheds on the property, including sports equipment and home improvement equipment.

Police said the resident is in the midst of moving out of the house. Police are investigating.

—by Priscilla Morrill

Fire started by kerosene heater

A fire last Wednesday afternoon at Cliff's Auto Body & Repair on Webster Street was started by some items being left too close to a kerosene-fired heater, according to Jaffrey Fire Chief David Chamberlain.

Monday in an e-mail to the

Ledger-Transcript, Chamberlain wrote that the heater was in use at the time of the fire, which caused minor heat damage to a metal wall inside the building and a bumper cover.

"The estimated cost of the damage caused by the fire is under \$1,500," he noted.

The garage, which is owned by Steven Gauthier, remained open following the fire, Chamberlain wrote. No one was hurt, he added.

Rindge and Peterborough Fire Department crews assisted Jaffrey firefighters at the scene.

—by Priscilla Morrill

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April Bartley, R.N., Certified Case Manager

If you'd rather roll in poison ivy than talk with your parent about self-care....

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April Bartley, R.N., Certified Case Manager (pictured above) visits families in their homes, conducts a comprehensive assessment and develops plans utilizing all of the resources that might be called into play. She will continue to work with you as needed or desired. This service is available on a full fee or a sliding fee basis depending on income and ability to pay.

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Want to know what events are happening?

Check out the Arts & Leisure section every Thursday