

Notes from the Quarry Lane Project Neighborhood Meeting

Memo

To: NCLT Board, QL Project Neighbors, City of Fitchburg Officials

RE: Quarry Lane Project Neighborhood Meeting Notes

Date: September 17, 2019

Location: Fitchburg Public Library

In attendance: Anna Wilkins (NCLT), Jassy Bratko (NCLT), Lisa Adams (NCLT), Emily Merlino (NCLT/Americorps), Carrie Novak (NCLT Board), Richelle Brown (NCLT Board), Maria Paulino (abutter-Harugari St./Owner Busy Bees Preschool), Norma Deloge (neighbor- Harugari St.), Mike Josephson (neighbor- Quarry Ln), Laurie Guilli (neighbor- Quarry Ln), Heidi Kowalski (Fitchburg resident/parent of Busy Bees student), Mike O'Hara (Fitchburg resident/city planner), Cecile Tousignant (Fitchburg resident/former abutter), Henderson Molina (abutter-Quarry Ln).

Thank you to those of us who joined us last Tuesday for the Quarry Lane Project neighborhood meeting. We were very pleased to have a number of direct abutters, neighborhood representatives, a city official and NCLT board members and staff.

Our meeting was held on the same night as the City Council meeting so the Ward and City council members that were invited all sent their regrets. Paul Beuchemin asked that we tell everyone that he would have been there otherwise and has been in regular contact with us here at NCLT.

Jassy Bratko, Director of Land Protection at NCLT, led the meeting and re-capped the project noting that we were so happy to be able to help the neighborhood in preventing the impending development of 5 Quarry Lane thus preserving the peaceful character of the neighborhood. She also was clear that at the stakeholder meeting last year, NCLT heard loud and clear that the neighborhood was not in support of having a public trailhead located there in their neighborhood at this time. NCLT is a private non-profit whose mission it is to save land for the public good and to engage and educate the public about the environment and nature. Jassy presented two program ideas to the group for feedback.

NCLT is planning to:

1. Create a "Nature Loop" path for engaging the kids at the preschool in program activities during the school day. This loop path would be located entirely on the parcel and only utilized for guided walks or supervised programs.
2. Install a neighborhood garden in a small portion of the lot. This garden would be utilized by the preschool for their programming, any neighbor interested, and by NCLT for native plant and pollinator garden.

Abutter and director of the preschool, Maria Paulino, talked about how she uses gardening with the kids and would love to have the neighbors take care of a neighborhood garden space with her and the kids. Because NCLT does not specialize in gardening, they invited Ayn Yeagle, Executive Director for Growing Places, to talk about community gardens and what it could look like.

Growing Places serves north central mass and their mission is to promote healthy eating and access to healthy food. They serve the community through helping communities build gardens, teaching gardening, running farmer's markets, and teaching healthy eating and nutrition to kids and residents. NCLT would be looking to partner with Growing Places in order to successfully set up any gardens in the space. The neighbors would be encouraged to maintain their own garden plot and would be needed to help maintain the space. The idea would be to have the space become a place where neighbors could gather, meet and engage with each other.

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Ayn was clear that the gardens could be whatever the neighborhood had an appetite for. NCLT will proceed with improving a small area for four to six, 4'x6' garden beds for the preschool to use for programming in partnership with Growing Places. As a part of this neighbors will be invited and encouraged to sign up for a garden plot, help prepare the site, and join the Stewardship Committee to help care for and maintain the area alongside NCLT.

The group brought up the following points:

- It would be good to make the space by the road well-maintained and aesthetically pleasing, like the grassy area Mike has been maintaining around the mailboxes.
- Abutters Laurie and Norma liked the idea of having the gardens that the neighbors could maintain and grow vegetables and herbs in, as long as the gardeners were from the neighborhood and people weren't driving and parking to get to the space.
- Some trees may have to be cut to prepare the site for the gardens.
- There may have to be some improvements to the site because of the drainage area that is there now but it could make a nice seasonal water feature.
- Potential to use the water drainage from the hill in the gardens.
- Maria would welcome a program where neighbors and friends could garden with the kids at Busy Bees and have a real sense of community.

Questions:

What is going on with the transfer of land and the messed up lot lines?

5 Quarry lane had boundary line disputes with one of the abutters. There were also three small parcels that had been promised to the abutters during the building of Quarry Lane which made up a portion of an old paper street. NCLT and the abutters are currently waiting on the surveyor to present the plans to the building department. During the legal transfer of the sections of land to the abutters, the paper street will be dissolved. This is in process and will likely be completed in the next few months.

What is the timeline for this work?

NCLT will be starting on the planning of the nature loop this fall and will be working with the preschool on the programming, which could begin in the late fall. The garden could be as soon as the spring but will hinge on funding and participation as well as completion of site work required.

Is the land permanently protected?

For all intents and purposes, yes. NCLT would be violating its charter as a land conservation organization and thus exposing itself to have its non-profit status revoked if it were to sell this land for development. However, theoretically and legally, it *could* be sold again for development. NCLT is interested in having the City of Fitchburg Conservation Commission hold a Conservation Easement on the property which would permanently protect the property from any future development. Preliminary conversations have been had but this process may take a few years.

Next steps:

- Jassy is going to form a neighborhood Stewardship committee to help in the planning for the space and gardens. All who are interested in serving on that committee and helping to develop the neighborhood garden space should sign up for this NCLT volunteer committee.
- Evaluate Site work and come up with a budget and timeline (early November?)

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- Emily Merlino, as a part of her TerraCorps service, will work on developing the Nature Loop and programming with BB

Respectfully submitted,
Anna Wilkins

Enclosure:
Sketch Plan- 5 Quarry Lane

5 QUARRY LANE CONCEPTUAL PLAN

