

7/24/10 (13)

Christine Joyce

From: Maya Spies [meadowsong55@gmail.com]
Sent: Friday, July 23, 2010 9:12 AM
To: Lauren Rosenzweig Morton
Cc: Board of Selectmen; Tom Tidman
Subject: MF - Thoughts on key decisions

Hi Lauren,

Thanks for your helpful explanation re the next MF step, and for Mike's list (which came thru just fine). I see that a MF discussion is on your agenda for next Monday night, July 26th.

I'd like to share several thoughts with you re MF decisions. It would be nice to have an actual discussion about these things, but there seems to be no way to do that. Therefore, I resort to email again. Thank you for reading this.

Thought 1 - The "various stakeholders" who make up the new MF committee:

Appointing committee members by "interest" is the approach used when the first MF committee was appointed, and it did not work as one might have expected, because representatives of seemingly well-defined "interests" did not end up representing those presumed "interests".

For example, the Land Stewardship Committee representative did not represent a "land conservation" interest, but instead proposed an organic farm. The Conservation Commission representative did not represent "wetlands protection", as one might expect, nor did the Recreation Commission representative represent "the need for recreation fields" at MF. If these several interests actually had been represented as originally anticipated, and in accordance with BoS Goals, the resulting "2007 MF Reuse Report" would likely have been more useful as an overall MF guide than it has proved to be.

Another worrisome aspect of configuring the committee based on "various stakeholders", is the risk of creating an atmosphere of competition rather than constructive conviviality, particularly if these stakeholders will be made responsible for key choices among conflicting options on Mike's list.

Is it possible, this time 'round, to use an entirely new approach? --- Can your Board appoint a 'MF Implementation Committee' made up of individuals who are qualified to make financial and structural analyses, who have no "stake" in MF whatsoever?

Of course, such an approach would require your Board to make key decisions first, freeing the new committee to focus on feasibility and implementation of specifics.

Thought 2 - A key MF decision has already been made:

The Recreation Department established the community gardens at MF several years ago. In doing so, they made the executive decision to be "organic" in a small-scale manner, because it was quickly feasible and easily served a great many people.

By making this decision, the Rec Dept preempted "large-scale farming" use (CSA) of that acreage, as

7/23/2010

proposed in the 2007 MF Report, putting into question how a CSA can now be configured, if indeed it can (especially as conceived in the 2007 report). As a result, a key decision regarding CSA status must now be made.

Thought 3 - Coexistence as a goal:

Organic farming, as conceived in the 2007 MF Report, cannot be a reality given the fact that the community gardens are where they are and there is a great desire to expand those garden plots. Nonetheless, there is quite a bit of area still available for farm use --- in and by the barn/shed area, and in the flat Upper Meadow surrounding existing community gardens. Planted fruit trees are a current example of this type of use. There is also land available for farming in the Back Meadow, downhill in front of the woods.

If CSA farming were to be OK'd in the Back Meadow, it would disenfranchise the "preserving a meaningful part of the natural meadow" interest, because (presumably) a large part of the natural meadow would disappear under the plow (as it may also disappear in the Lower Meadow under the mower).

If CSA farming were to be OK'd in the Back Meadow, a number of limitations would immediately become apparent. First, the front of Morrison is as far as most people are willing to walk. Second, without deer-proof fencing, deer and groundhogs and other wildlife "pests" would eat crops unhindered; weed growth would require constant tending; foot traffic through tilled areas would need to be managed; and tilled soil would be flushed toward or into Nashoba Brook. Growing foods in the back field in order to sell them by the roadside -- would that be the objective? -- could also be difficult to justify, if it meant that the beautiful views of the untouched grassy meadows were lost, the very symbol of why the MF property was purchased.

Coexistence can prevail. A variety of meaningful organic farming activities can be added to the current repertoire, even if kept to the front of the property. Undisturbed natural meadow grasses and wildflowers can continue to thrive undisturbed in the Back Meadow for common enjoyment, without impinging on other uses.

Thought 4 - Keeping the farm character intact:

MF is farmland, quiet and humming with settled patterns of natural life. Its simplicity and quietude are its chief draws. It would be a great loss to turn this long-established natural setting into a place of frenzied human activity with its associated crushing impact. To retain its unique farm character, MF deserves a contemplative approach and a gentle hand, so that what it becomes is not so different from what inspired us about it in the first place.

Thank you, always, for your time, your patience, and your consideration.

Sincerely,
 Maya Spies
 978-505-0170
meadowsong55@gmail.com

P.S. All the Queen Anne's Lace is in bloom right now in the Back and Lower meadow --- worth a look!