



CITY OF CONCORD

New Hampshire's Main Street™

REPORT TO THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Carlos P. Baía, Deputy City Manager-Development

DATE: February 10, 2017

SUBJECT: Recommendations from the Gully Hill Committee

Recommendation

Accept this report.

Background

The future of the Gully Hill property was the subject of extensive discussion by City Council as various portions of the property were acquired by the City over the last decade. A committee of Council was empaneled in 2013 to review an easement proposed for the land by the Conservation Commission that would have placed management of the property with the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests (SPNHF) in perpetuity. That committee concluded that Council should not enter into the conservation easement but allow the land to be farmed under the lease in place at the time with Farmer Bartlett. The committee recommended that the future of the land be revisited once Mr. Bartlett stopped farming the land.

Mr. Bartlett's lease was to expire in 2019. In 2016, he informed the City that he was abandoning the lease early. In late 2016, the Mayor reappointed the Gully Hill Council Committee to re-examine the matter of the future use of the land. Under its latest iteration, the committee was comprised of Councilors Bouchard, Coen, Kretovic and Mayor Pro Tem St. Hilaire.

Discussion

The committee met earlier this year on January 10th, 24th and February 2nd. During its deliberations, the committee heard testimony from City staff, representatives of the City's Conservation Commission, local farmers and members of the general public. The value of local farming and the agricultural soils was discussed extensively as well as the desire for possible alternative uses, either exclusively or in co-existence with agriculture. Alternative uses discussed included, but were not necessarily limited to, an eco-park, an amphitheatre/event venue, an active recreation area, a multi-use trail, the terminus of a

pedestrian bridge from downtown, and a location for the launching of fireworks for celebrations such as July 4th.

Recommendations

The committee ultimately recommended that Council allow the Conservation Commission to issue an RFP this year for a new agricultural lease with a maximum term of 3 years with an option to renew for an additional 2 years. Both the lease and renewal should be subject to City Council approval. The committee also recommended that the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests not be involved and that no conservation easement be placed on the land. As to the question of fireworks being launched from the land, the committee recommended that the lease include a preference to allow fireworks if feasible.