



TOWN OF IPSWICH OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

MEMORANDUM

TO: Toni Mooradd, Chair, Ipswich Planning Board

FROM: Andrew Brengle & Wayne Castonguay, Chairs, Open Space Committee

SUBJECT: 55 Waldingfield Road Great Estates Preservation Development

DATE: September 1, 2022

CC: Ipswich Planning Board; Molly Shea, Open Space Manager; Beth O'Connor, Open Space Steward; Ethan Parsons, Director of Planning and Development; Andrea Bates, Town Planner

On Monday August 22, 2022, the Open Space Committee took two votes relative to the Great Estate Preservation Development (GEPD) proposal by Ora Inc. at 55 Waldingfield Road.

1. The Open Space Committee recommends that the Town not hold the conservation restriction associated with the pending (GEPD) permit for Ora Inc.

Motion made by Ralph Williams, Second by Andy Brengle. Unanimous vote.

2. The Open Space Committee's support for Ora Inc.'s proposed project at 55 Waldingfield Road is contingent on our recommendations being required by the Planning Board.

Motion made by Katie Hone, seconded by Monty Montgomery. Unanimous vote.

As the Planning Board nears making a decision on Ora Inc.'s GEPD permit, the Open Space Committee notes that there has been little discussion on the critical open space concerns we raised in late 2021 and early 2022 and that citizen observers have seconded in the intervening months.

Our two votes taken on Monday August 22, 2022 are in the spirit of reminding the Planning Board of points our committee made in four separate memos submitted on October 20, 2021; November 8, 2021; November 29, 2021; and March 4, 2022, and to clarify our advocacy for a conservation organization to hold the conservation restriction (CR).

Re. vote 1, The vote adds further emphasis to a point on page 2 in our October 20, 2021 memo in bold font recommending the Conservation Restriction (CR) be granted to "a qualified land conservation organization." We make this recommendation because of the complexities of this particular project (e.g. designed landscape, historic preservation requirement, complex public access issues, potential for use conflicts, agricultural uses of the property, etc.) in addition to limited capacity of Town Staff. We believe it makes the most sense from a management and monitoring perspective to have an organization with the relevant expertise and capacity to hold and manage this conservation restriction. As stated in the GEPD Bylaw Section 5(c)(iv): "*A minimum 40% of the land owned by the applicant shall [be]: **Made subject to a conservation restriction ... running in favor of either the Town or, upon the approval of the Planning Board, a non-profit corporation, the principal purpose of which is the conservation of open space.***" In order to alleviate uncertainty about whom the CR should go to, we feel that the Planning Board should make this issue of granting the CR to a qualified land conservation organization a fundamental condition of its permitting approval and not a decision to be worked out later.

Re. vote 2, We still believe that the open space currently proposed for preservation does not satisfy the protection of important open space functions and values as referenced in the GEPD bylaw, as it is largely made up of land that is required to be protected by other provisions in the bylaw and town zoning. Some of the proposed open space areas include new project impacts or specific long-term maintenance responsibilities (e.g. rain garden, driveways, parking, formal gardens), which affect their functionality and value as open space. The committee recommends that the Board call for the up to 10% additional open space area as outlined in the bylaw to account for these impact areas and to help achieve the purpose of conserving other valuable open space. **Specifically,** the OSC feels strongly that both paddocks need to be protected to meet the provisions of the bylaw. As we understand, the important eastern paddock remains outside and unprotected by the Conservation Restriction drawn in the current proposal. This, along with the other listed recommendations made on pages 2 and 3 of the October 21st memo, and issues raised by Open Space Staff in their July 20th letter, are key to our committee giving its support for this permit.