

**TOWN OF NEEDHAM**  
**Weston & Sampson Presentation re: Ridge Hill Reservation/Nike Site Study**  
**MINUTES**  
**Friday, September 28, 2018**

LOCATION: Public Services Administration Building (PSAB), Charles River Room

ATTENDING: Janet Bernardo (CC), Matt Borrelli (BOS), John Bulian (BOS), Kate Fitzpatrick (Town Manager), Jeanne Lukenda (W&S), Dan Matthews (BOS), Rick Merson (DPW), William Murphy (CC), Alison Richardson (CC), Debbie Anderson (Conservation Specialist), Elisa Litchman (Administrative Assistant).

Jeanne Lukenda from Weston & Sampson opened the meeting by distributing information regarding the Ridge Hill/Nike Properties. The task at hand is three-fold: 1) to assess the RH and Nike sites for possible use to be determined down the road, 2) how could there be use of the land based on zoning restrictions of site, and 3) how to improve access to and potentially between the sites.

The RHR and NS make up 223 acres of land. The Board of Selectmen owned property make up 3 acres and includes the Manor house, garage and barn. The assessment of the lands provides information which initiates a discussion as to whether the BOS property can be swapped with 3 acres of Conservation land somewhere else giving the BOS property greater access as well as the potential for a specific use. RHR and NS are entirely in Single Residence A district. The Assessment pages for discussion show how RHR and NS properties finger their way around residential streets on the west side of the property. The BOS property is embedded in RHR.

The early Figure pages of the presentation show various existing conditions such as streams and wetlands, buffer zones, priority habitats, overlay districts, trails, easements, slopes, utilities, and treeline. These attributes are shown so that when assessing these areas we are sensitive to them and conclude that they each either preclude or have some impact on land use. Figure 13 for example shows the limiting aspects of the properties. The BOS house is located in aquifer protection zone in Figure 22 as another example.

Once all the aspects of the properties are reviewed a process of elimination or “Not Recommended for Use” is exhibited on Figure 14. The Figure showing topography and property describes areas with slopes in excess of 15-25% as a limiting factor.

Jeanne also provided the meeting members a Summary of Utilities Information related to the Ridge Hill Reservation and Nike Sites, information which also impacts the decisions made regarding usable land. Figure 15 shows remaining land that could be desirable however, upon further scrutiny Figure 16 shows less desirable sections due to size (less than 3 acre sections) and oddly configured areas (for program use); Figure 17 shows the challenging areas due to access; Figure 18 shows slope average of 10% and higher which make these areas less desirable as well (due to the need for additional work/materials/financing etc. to accomplish.) Figure 19 shows areas that are less than 3 acres in size and location again that are less desirable.

Figure 20 of the Assessment displays which locations rose to the top and helps us understand the potential for site use. The total number of usable acres post elimination totals 62 and is broken down into 5 separate sites. Figure 20 shows each of the five (5) sites and their own acreage. The Figures that follow show more detailed information for each of these five sites with potential for use as well as constraints for use. Figure 22 shows wooded area (Option 1) and meadow (Option 2) each representing a 3 acre area to swap, if that’s decided.

Jeanne stated that there appears to be more potential for the Option 2 area as there are no trees, aquifer protection zone, or trails that would be impacted. Figure 23 The Nike Site (or Site 3) shows two yellow areas each a total of 3 acres. Option 1 on this figure shows existing uses not being impacted by this 3 acre site. The other areas surrounding Option 1 show the Community Farm and the Dog Park (permitted by the BOS). Site 4 on Figure 24 similarly consists of 3 acres. Site 5 on Figure 25 totals 6 acres and shows several existing trails that would be impacted.

The next set of Figures that Jeanne distributed show potential buildout options allowed by right on a generic 3 acres of land within Single Residence A district (which is RHR and NS zoning district). W&S referred to the Needham Zoning Bylaws and based on the uses permitted within this district provided buildout options for 5 different categories (including agricultural, greenhouse operation, place of assembly, community rec center, elderly/hospice care, and department of public works) abiding by the maximum building square footage allowed, minimum parking, and landscaped area requirements. This exercise is to see if any of these options would be eliminated if they don't make sense on 3 acres of land. For instance the place of assembly buildout option allows for the building and has what appears to be extra open area. This use requires a fair bit of parking. Jeanne explained that if you increase the number of people the building can accommodate all other requirements are tipped and the parking and setback requirements cannot be fulfilled within the 3 acres. Figure 29 shows a building (Rec Center) of a total of 31,800 square feet (2 floors) and is limited to this size as the building size drives the parking needs. Figure 31 shows a potential DPW building. The ultimate size of the building, parking and landscape is driven by what is allowed by the zoning. There are several opportunities of development if one stays within the zoning uses allowed.

Jeanne stated that depending on what the town is looking for in terms of use and attributes, there is a significant amount of land that can be used on Charles River Street (with frontage) or deep in the site. There are potentially a wide variety of uses by category and within categories than those examples provided in the assessment. J. Bulian expressed the desire to use more of the town's land for the community's benefit.

Jeanne then explained that the access to the Nike site is very poor due to the access road off of Pine Street (a one-way street) and that you cannot get from one site to the other without leaving the property. One goal would be to create better access. Large wooded areas with canopy the Commission will want to preserve.

The issue of access is a major factor for D. Matthews. He is not necessarily as concerned with what's buildable but more that an internal driveway would provide access. He would like to provide a roadway to link the two properties.

Figure 32 shows existing conditions and no connectivity. Figure 33 Option 1 shows a low impact connectivity of two possible cross connection roads between the BOS and Nike Sites, one northerly and one southerly. The existing access roads would be made two-way, wider and with a turnaround at the endpoints. The connection roads would be for emergency vehicles, bikes, and hikers, not for general vehicle use. Option 2 connection road is a two-way road and cuts through the lower areas and trails within RHR. The existing access roads would be made wider and two-way as well. Option 3 shows a one-way loop which simplifies circulation. W&S admitted that there are many potential options to connecting the two sites but these options consider the most feasible routes, and the paths of least resistance.

A. Richardson mentioned that with the one-way loop there would be less impact on traffic on Pine Street. A more controlled traffic flow would probably be more attractive to the residents on Pine. She also stated that one

acre might have to be used solely for access which reduces the amount of property for building, for example. D. Matthews stated that connecting the two or consolidating the properties has advantages to maintaining conservation land and keeping active-use land more separate; reconfiguring the BOS land could preserve Conservation land better by not having active-use lands in the middle of Conservation land. J. Bulian added that the traffic flow issues to the NS need to consider the Farm and Dog Park.

M. Borrelli asked to review Figure 18 and that for development a 10% slope is not typically a problem. Slopes shouldn't trouble them. He suggested adding the steeper slopes to the potential usable areas and not eliminating them. Though there are more challenges and permitting necessary to using these areas there would also be more opportunities. J. Bernardo stated that from a planning point of view why not use the flatter more level sites.

Some of the items touched on at this meeting included that priority habitat per the state has implications, and cannot be developed. Gas line and Army Corp easements cannot be built on. Most of the site has significant tree canopy. The ease of bringing in utilities should be considered especially with such large areas of canopy.

Jeanne and W&S have done the work requested. At this point the BOS need to discuss the potential needs and uses of town land given the various requests from the community. Based on these needs the BOS and Conservation Commission can move forward reviewing the RHR and NS lands.