

Open Space Committee Meeting
Monday, November 30, 2020
Virtual (Zoom) format

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TOWN CLERK

Staff from the Department of Planning & Conservation in attendance:

Valerie Gingrich, Director of Planning & Conservation
Sierra Pelletier, Assistant Planner

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TOWN OF WILMINGTON, MA

Committee members in attendance:

Karen Campbell, Recreation Director
Megan Fiorello
Jamie Magaldi, DPW Operations Manager, Tree Warden
Suzanne Sullivan
Michael McInnis
Jason Hounsell

Committee members absent:

James Campbell

V. Gingrich called the meeting to order at 6:03pm.

November 2020 Survey Results

V. Gingrich said there were around 300 responses. Half of respondents use trails in Town, and an overwhelming majority would use trails more if signage were installed. Respondents want to hear more about trails, walking, biking, and parks on the Town's social media. Using Recreation newsletters and social media for getting the draft out was discussed. J. Magaldi said the survey was well advertised, but people willing to take time to do an online survey about open space are more likely to like and use trails, so it is hard to get a more general response from everyone. V. Gingrich said she would send full survey results to the Committee. J. Magaldi said it is hard to get an idea of other interests. For example, there is a need for people using ATVs – though forbidden on Town property and open space – but the surveys didn't include that. M. Fiorello said the first survey asked people about kayaking but there wasn't much response. It was discussed that if you provide facilities for certain activities, people might come and use them.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

J. Magaldi made a motion to accept the minutes. S. Sullivan seconded. It was voted 5-0-1 to approve the minutes as drafted, with J. Hounsell abstaining.

Discussion of Draft Plan Section 3, 6, 7, 8, 9

V. Gingrich said a trail list was added and edits were made to the facility list. Section 6 will get filled in with meeting descriptions later. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) evaluations are being worked on by staff including a list of action items to make facilities more accessible. Section 3 is similar to 2015 but they made updates to the demographic data and edits to make it easier to read. J. Hounsell said the goals seem attainable for a 5-year plan. V. Gingrich said the current plan expires this month, but it's not critical to have the new one in immediately; the Town is just not eligible for grants until an updated plan is approved. A rough timeline is more draft updates in December and January, public outreach around February, and submit to the state for approval in March. The original timeline was pushed back by COVID. They did not use a consultant this time; staff and the Committee know the Town better and can update more easily in the future. She suggested having a meeting to look at the draft in January, then one last meeting to finalize it after hearing from the public again. S. Sullivan asked if the plan should include acquiring more open space. V.

Gingrich discussed the objective for acquiring open space via donation, Conservation Design Subdivisions (CSDs), and transferring several Town-owned parcels to the Conservation Commission every year. M. McInnis said the plan should link to what the Conservation Commission is doing to increase open space. S. Sullivan asked if they want to increase open space in the coming years for fields, parks, etc. J. Magaldi said that creates a big ripple effect for maintenance and infrastructure, and staff is already stretched thin. M. McInnis suggested encouraging collaboration with and incentives for developers. J. Magaldi said the Yentile Committee goal was make a connection point to fields, even if the Town doesn't own them. K. Campbell said Yentile has satisfied a lot of recreation needs, though it is very heavily booked. Youth sports are accommodated, and their numbers are down significantly as people are flocking to higher level, specialized sports and clubs. M. McInnis asked if elderly needs are addressed, especially as Boomers are retiring. K. Campbell said pickle ball is in large demand and walking paths are important for accommodating all ages. J. Magaldi said if he could expand his department or have more volunteers, trail infrastructure is where they'd focus on maintenance, as opposed to fields and playgrounds. There was agreement that the Town should be open to opportunities to increase passive recreation and open space, but that increasing such spaces has effects on the ratio of maintenance personnel to the amount of area. J. Magaldi said CSDs are increasing calls and cost for the Town to take care of fallen trees. V. Gingrich suggested adding a specific goal to increase funding and staffing around open space. J. Magaldi said the plan should consider long-term maintenance. There was discussion about a goal to be alert for acquiring open space, but not forgetting that comes with more maintenance, staff, and budget. J. Magaldi suggested third party maintenance of some parcels as opposed to just increasing staff. M. McInnis said they should have a maintenance plan in place for any open space. V. Gingrich said the Committee can send staff ideas to add to the text. The GIS Coordinator will confirm overall sizes of parcels and outline natural areas.

Remote Participation Policy

V. Gingrich said Board of Selectman is considering the policy, which was developed with Counsel. It outlines how remote participation would work even after COVID. If a board or committee member can't make it to a meeting, they could participate remotely. The Board of Selectman wants comments by January 7th. J. Hounsell said the language "unreasonably difficult" seems vague and should be better defined to make it easier for the person running the meeting to make that determination. M. McInnis said the combined Zoom/in-person meetings can have issues including trouble hearing each other and some people not seeing visuals. V. Gingrich said the Committee can give her comments and she will pass them along.

Public Comment

No members of the public were present.

Schedule and Next Steps

The committee decided to wait until January to set up the next meeting, once more work is done on the draft. The staff's goal is to have complete draft for the next meeting.

Next meeting TBD

Meeting adjourned at 6:58 pm

Respectfully submitted by,



Valerie Gingrich, Director of Planning & Conservation