

**Open Space Committee Meeting
Monday, December 2, 2019
Town Hall – Room 9**

Staff from the Department of Planning & Conservation in attendance:

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

Committee members in attendance:

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

Committee members absent:

James Campbell

V. Gingrich called meeting to order at 6:04pm.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

J. Magaldi made a motion to accept the minutes. K. Campbell seconded. It was unanimously voted to accept the minutes as drafted.

Review of Community Survey Results

V. Gingrich said there were 478 responses. Some highlights included 83% of respondents being willing to do a clean-up day. 62% were unaware of GIS maps. Lower incomes were not as represented as higher incomes, and younger age groups were underrepresented. Respondents were most familiar with playgrounds and the beach, and least familiar with trails and picnic areas. The most used were playgrounds and fields, and least used were pickleball courts and skate parks. Playgrounds and fields were considered in excellent condition and trails in poor condition. Respondents tended to use trails and playgrounds in other towns, and the favorite spaces were also trails and playgrounds. Nearly all said the Town should focus on maintaining existing open spaces, and a large majority wanted to also focus on getting new open space. Increasing awareness of existing open spaces was the highest priority. Trail and path related actions, improving signage, acquiring new spaces were all high priorities.

Discussion of Goals and Action Items

V. Gingrich provided a handout with examples of goals and objectives based on survey results. Increasing awareness of open spaces with signage, mapping, and education was discussed. Websites, workshops, hard copy trail maps, and a guided walk were given as ideas. J. Hounsell and M. Fiorello said that scout troops or retirees may be interested in helping out. M. McInnis discussed the Middlesex Canal walk from Maple Meadow Brook to Patches Pond, which is about 1.5 miles, and some portions of the path can be biked but not all. The need for making better trail connections and people preferring longer trails rather than small, disjointed ones was discussed. J. Magaldi discussed sidewalk installation

and that the Town will be getting a consultant to look at the bigger picture and make connections. J. Hounsell suggested trails connect to parks. M. McInnis talked about residents giving access rights to help make connections, like neighborhoods to schools and fields. V. Gingrich said new subdivisions usually give open space and trails, and some connect to each other like in the Sawmill Brook area, while others do not. She said the trails lack trailhead signs or blazes. S. Sullivan and K. Campbell discussed seeking connections to Burlington and other towns that have great trail systems. J. Magaldi said a goal could be including the trail network in the Department of Public Works' sidewalk network capital plan to develop more connectivity. Potential Eagle Scout projects or help by other volunteers was discussed. V. Gingrich suggested creating sign standards to keep new signs consistent.

V. Gingrich said the vision statement and goals shown on the handout are the same as the last plan. To provide opportunities for mobility locally and regionally for walking and biking trails, there are state trail grants that could be applied for such as a bridge over the aqueduct at Town Park to make connections for long stretches of trail. Next goal, resources should be balanced to meet open space demands and have a variety of amenities for various users. Several people talked about how some places are generally well known, like the dog park and Town Forest, but some people on the survey or those who grew up in Town are not aware of them. Adding information to the Town website; creating brochures; trail maps; and having central documents for parks, recreation areas, and other information could increase awareness. S. Sullivan suggested having an objective to create a longer-term committee to develop a plan, set goals, and implement them afterwards to avoid making plans that sit on a shelf. V. Gingrich discussed some progress made since the last Open Space Plan. It was agreed that many residents want to help but are generally too busy to. M. Fiorello and V. Gingrich discussed having events more often, and having Twitter postings at regular intervals to allow for more people to join as stewards. V. Gingrich discussed a boardwalk that was recently built across wetlands in Town Forest. M. McInnis suggested a walkway from the Middlesex Canal to Floradale to make connection to the train station. J. Magaldi discussed having project ideas ready for Eagle Scouts. V. Gingrich talked about doing observations for what needs improvement or maintenance with parks and playgrounds as part of the requirements of the Plan, which can help with accessibility.

V. Gingrich said the third goal is protecting natural resources to support water protection, flood management, and wildlife habitat is a potential goal. Acquiring natural open spaces is easier than getting recreational ones, which require more resources. She said they are bringing 5 Town-owned parcels to Town Meeting 2020 for transfer to the Conservation Commission, and the plan is to bring a few up every year. J. Magaldi discussed the Property Review Committee, which he is on. Landlocked parcels may not be best for the Town to adopt. V. Gingrich said wetlands are often donated to the Conservation Commission, and new private development may provide open space. J. Hounsell said he likes the idea of creating a committee to help with implementing plans. Boy Scouts could come to committee meetings to seek out projects. J. Magaldi asked how things got implemented from the last plan. V. Gingrich said the Department of Planning & Conservation and Department of Public Works did some work and checked

things off list as they got done. Projects to create trail signage and markings are ongoing, and they are trying to get Scouts involved. M. McInnis suggested having virtual signs in addition to physical signs, which can connect to smart phones. K. Campbell suggested QR codes. V. Gingrich said the Planning & Conservation Department could take over some goals, and working on getting a grant for a sign plan. K. Camp said they set up a course for geocaching but no one showed, but the mountain biking class over the summer was a large draw. She and M. McInnis discussed the need to target younger kids.

V. Gingrich suggested the Committee take home the draft objectives to keep reviewing them and discuss them more at the next meeting. M. McInnis suggested informing people what came of the survey, like putting out a summary in the news. V. Gingrich said a press release could be done to inform people of the survey results. Adding and rewording goals and action items was discussed, and how the 5-year limitation needs to be kept in mind. J. Magaldi discussed trees the town has planted this year. They didn't used to plant trees some years ago, but now planting is ongoing. Several people discussed asking people what the oldest or largest tree in town is, or something similar to get people engaged. J. Hounsell asked if the Textron property would be licensed to the Town. K. Campbell said the Town would not license it, but has expressed interest in owning it. J. Magaldi and K. Campbell said it would take a lot of work to make it safe and accessible and to maintain it, which would not make sense with a license. S. Sullivan suggested keeping the area natural.

Public Comment

No members of the public were present.

Schedule and Next Steps

The next meeting date was discussed. V. Gingrich said she will email the summary sheet of draft goals. It was discussed the Committee could make edits and additions, and think about specific action items. V. Gingrich said the Planning & Conservation Department will also work on action items.

Next meeting 1/6 at 6pm room 9

Meeting adjourned at 7:06pm

Respectfully submitted by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sierra Pelletier".

Sierra Pelletier, Assistant Planner