

Open Space Committee Meeting
Monday, October 7, 2019
Town Hall – Room 9

Staff from the Department of Planning & Conservation in attendance:

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

Committee members in attendance:

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

V. Gingrich called the meeting to order at 6:00pm and introductions were made.

Overview of Process

V. Gingrich said the current plan expires next November and outlined a series of meetings and topics.

Review 2015 Plan Goals and Progress

V. Gingrich reviewed the goals from the 2015 Open Space Plan and the progress made on them. She said they did pretty well on the goals and covered a lot, but there is still some to do. Some unfinished goals can be moved into the new Open Space Plan if the Committee agrees.

J. Magaldi asked if all trail networks are mapped. V. Gingrich and R. Hale discussed progress on this and said some Town Forest trails need to be revisited and Town Park isn't mapped yet. R. Hale said that many people do not know the trails exist, so mapping them and having more signage and parking would help. M. McInnis asked if the town distinguished between walking and biking trails. V. Gingrich said they are all included. R. Hale said no ATVs are allowed. He said Town Forest is tough to access from Ballardvale. J. Hounsell said some trails would be tough for bikes if they are rocky. K. Campbell said there was a mountain biking class for kids over the summer, and they loved it. V. Gingrich described the trail network off of Green Meadow, Mill Road, and up to Murray Hill.

Community Survey

V. Gingrich discussed the online survey used for the 2015 Open Space Plan. She presented a list of potential survey questions for the new Plan, including some from the 2015 survey and some new potential questions. She said terms will be defined upfront for more clarity. The survey is to help get at what should be the priorities over the next five years. She went through the draft survey questions. In 2015 when people answered the question about what open spaces and activities they use in other towns, trails was highest on the list. J. Magaldi asked the number of

responses. V. Gingrich said about 400 over the two to three weeks that the survey ran.

M. McInnis asked about reaching out to businesses in town for contributions, to see if they would get involved. J. Magaldi said it would be beneficial for adopting and maintaining trails. V. Gingrich and R. Hale said sometimes they hear from companies who want to do a short-term activity like cleanup days.

V. Gingrich asked what questions could be taken off to shorten the survey. M. Fiorello said the question about how the town is investing in open spaces is similar to the question about how the town is doing in providing spaces. J. Magaldi said the investment question has value from a maintenance perspective. R. Hale said people may want new courts but when they learn how much it costs, they may favor maintaining existing ones. There was agreement that the question regarding acquiring new open spaces and maintaining existing ones should be separated into two. V. Gingrich asked if it is helpful to know what spaces people use most and like most. J. Magaldi said you might take kids to a ballfield so it is the one you use most, but your favorite may be a different place. S. Sullivan and K. Campbell suggested getting rid of the question about which spaces people use in town. J. Magaldi said a question about awareness of GIS maps should be added. M. Fiorello suggested adding an option for respondents to provide their email to be on a mailing list for open space.

V. Gingrich showed a list of short-term and long-term actions to include in the survey. There was agreement that new playgrounds are a lower priority since the town has a dozen existing. V. Gingrich asked if there are things that come up a lot that they want to ask about. K. Campbell said she hears people asking about kayak access. There was agreement that waterway access should be included in the goals. J. Hounsell said there should be more advertisement and promotion.

K. Campbell said the Middlesex Canal path should stay on, and others agreed. R. Hale discussed how some trails are overgrown or need to be mapped properly. V. Gingrich said picnic and sitting areas were popular on the survey. There was agreement that picnic areas may not be as needed, but some open spaces could use benches for viewing the scenery. J. Magaldi asked how everyone feels about constructing new fields or courts. He and K. Campbell discussed some fields in town. K. Campbell said youth sports are decreasing and the town is pretty built out for sports fields, and J. Hounsell agreed. M. McInnis said Yentile is good because there are many activities: trails, basketball court, and playground. Getting to Yentile by walking and biking was discussed. J. Magaldi and V. Gingrich discussed future improvements to the Butters Row Bridge area that will facilitate travel.

S. Sullivan discussed including wildlife protection and education in the goals. Doing a course or informational session, planting events, or nature walk was discussed. J. Magaldi said there is some educational signage at Yentile. S. Sullivan said some younger parents want their kids to be more interested in the outdoors.

V. Gingrich asked if there is ever talk about community gardens, which had previously come up with Yentile. The Committee discussed the required maintenance with community gardens. V. Gingrich said having them at a future

senior center might be good. The Committee agreed to revisit the topic if it showed up on the survey with write-ins.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Schedule and Next Steps

V. Gingrich said the survey would be finalized and then will go live and run for two to three weeks. Then there will be a meeting after results are in to go over them and think about action items. She said the survey will be advertised in the Wilmington Apple, Twitter, Town Crier, and WCTV. Having paper copies available at the library, senior center, and Manager's Office was discussed. M. McInnis and J. Hounsell suggested sending it to schools to get kids involved and having a flier sent home to parents. J. Hounsell and K. Campbell discussed reaching out to community organizations like soccer and baseball. V. Gingrich said survey results will be sent out to the Committee before the next meeting so they can look them over in advance.

Next meeting 12/2 6:00pm room 9

Meeting adjourned at 8:00pm

Respectfully submitted by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sierra Pelletier", written in a cursive style.

Sierra Pelletier, Assistant Planner