

Open Space Committee Meeting
Tuesday, September 29, 2020
Virtual (Zoom) format

Staff from the Department of Planning & Conservation in attendance:

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

Committee members in attendance:

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

Committee members absent:

James Campbell
Jason Hounsell

V. Gingrich called the meeting to order at 6:02pm.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

J. Magaldi made a motion to accept the minutes. K. Campbell seconded. It was voted 4-0-1 to approve the minutes as drafted, with M. McInnis abstaining.

Discussion of Draft Sections 6-9

V. Gingrich said these sections are the bulk of the changes and updates to the plan. She read the community vision, which was updated from 2015 to include more language around providing options for different ages and interests.

Section 7 is the needs analysis, which builds up to the goals and talks about what the Town has done and what they want to do. She discussed resource protection needs. Subdivisions in the southwest of Town (Mill Road, Green Meadow, Murray Hill) have protected open space and trails that link together and with Burlington open space. A goal is to have seamless connections between subdivisions and have folks know how to get around the network. She discussed parcels of land that were donated to the Town and that they have worked on transferring Town-owned land, to the Conservation Commission. V. Gingrich said they added a goal in the draft plan to identify known vernal pools and potential vernal pools over the next 5-10 years. S. Sullivan suggested it could be a great high school project.

V. Gingrich discussed recreation needs and showed the dog park, Yentile Recreation Facility, and playground at Murray Hill, which have all been done since the 2015 plan. There were comments in the survey that people are unaware of the Town's open space and recreation resources. Trails are the #1 thing people care about on surveys, so a goal is to have a program to build consistent signs around Town and put more maps on the website.

V. Gingrich discussed management needs. The Town relies on volunteers like Eagle Scouts and corporate groups. On the survey, 35% said they would be willing to clean and adopt land, and 80% said they would be willing to participate in clean-up activities. V. Gingrich said J. Hounsell suggested adding an increase in staff time for open space in the draft. V. Gingrich said they have a land stewardship program and recently updated handbook. The

program is not as formal as it once was but there are people who clean up trails in their neighborhoods, and it asks residents to chip in, especially with new trails.

V. Gingrich introduced Section 8, goals and objectives, and said Section 9 is a 5-year action plan. She talked about providing more trails and increasing awareness of them. She said they have trails on the GIS maps, and the new trails in Murray Hill and Green Meadow and a recent Eagle Scout project are trail connections that need to be added. The Town website has trail maps to download; some may need updating, and new ones need to be added. Adding parking to the maps was discussed.

V. Gingrich read the action items for trails goals. A long-standing goal of the Town and Middlesex Canal Association is to put a bridge across the Maple Meadow Brook Aqueduct, which would connect Town Park with another long stretch of trail. They will coordinate on a grant application for the bridge. M. McInnis, K. Campbell, and V. Gingrich discussed the idea of working with WCTV to make a podcast, like a site walk or guided tour of the Aqueduct and Sawmill Brook areas. V. Gingrich said the Conservation Commission, Recreation Department, DPW, and others could help provide content for local media sources and educational signage. K. Campbell discussed the mountain biking program at the Mill Road trails. V. Gingrich said an objective is to have more programming at open spaces, and K. Campbell suggested expanding kayaking opportunities.

V. Gingrich said survey respondents highly value existing open space. J. Magaldi said they applied to the Tree City program and they hope to get that award by the end of the year. S. Sullivan discussed creating open space corridors to connect different commercial spaces, planting more trees and adding benches. J. Magaldi suggested a pocket park and mentioned the one in Woburn Center. He suggested that the Town's Community Development Technical Review team look for opportunities to have these with developments. He said Analog has open space, but it's not open to the public. S. Sullivan said it would be good if employees could walk down the road to get lunch and have place to sit outside and eat, and J. Magaldi mentioned Mashpee Commons as an example.

V. Gingrich talked about more localized clean-up days, which could also be educational. M. Fiorello suggested a monthly post or ad in media. The group discussed engaging businesses to participate, promote, and sponsor clean-up efforts in the plan's action items. Adopt-an-island was discussed as a possible effort for a future plan.

V. Gingrich said there is a land stewardship guidebook online and they have an adopt-a-trail program. Staff is working on ADA evaluations of open spaces in Town. She discussed protecting natural resources. The library has great reach and would be good to involve in programming and events. She discussed coming up with a checklist/guide for volunteers to take with them to look for invasive species. J. Magaldi said the DPW Tree Division website has a "beetle watchers club", and he'd like to raise awareness about invasives. V. Gingrich talked about transferring Town-owned parcels to the Conservation Commission to protect them in perpetuity, and 4 were approved at this year's Town Meeting. V. Gingrich and M. Fiorello discussed the idea of the Town acquiring pocket parks versus keeping them private. V. Gingrich and J. Magaldi said they would need more staff for more open space acquisition and maintenance. V. Gingrich discussed the development of 16 new homes at 45 Hopkins Street. It has trails along Lubbers Brook, and the Town will hold a conservation restriction on the land, but the open space will be owned and maintained by the Home Owners' Association and still be open to the public. J. Magaldi said Murray Hill has a new public playground. It'll be good to see how the model works.

V. Gingrich discussed having a database for existing and potential vernal pools as an action item. M. McInnis and S. Sullivan discussed educating the next generation about vernal pools. V. Gingrich said the Town got a \$31,000 grant from the state for the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program and Hazard Mitigation Plan update, and the Committee will be invited to participate in that process. She said members can send her edits for the OSRP draft. She said she and staff will be working on Sections 3-5 to get to them ready for another meeting.

Discussion of Public Outreach

Getting the draft goals and objectives out to the public for comment was discussed, including posting on social media. M. McInnis suggested a new survey to supplement the one from 2019, and there was agreement it would help gauge if they are going in the right direction. S. Sullivan said when open spaces were shut down for COVID-19, people relied on streets to walk and be outside, so there should be some focus on streetscapes. V. Gingrich said they could get feedback on the draft goals and objectives, and later put up a full draft plan for public input. Her office will create a survey for the Committee's feedback before putting it out to the public.

Public Comment

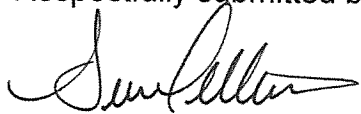
No members of the public were present.

Schedule and Next Steps

All members present agreed to an October 19th Zoom meeting. V. Gingrich will reach out to absent members. She confirmed that although the current plan expires in November, they can submit later without issue, but won't be eligible for grants until the updated plan gets approved. The goal is to get it done by the end of this year.

Next meeting 10/19/20 at 6pm, Virtual (Zoom) format
Meeting adjourned at 7:40 pm

Respectfully submitted by

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

Sierra Pelletier, Assistant Planner