

Open Space Committee Meeting
Monday, January 6, 2020
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:
James Campbell
Karen Campbell, Recreation Director
Megan Fiorello
Jason Hounsell
Jamie Magaldi, DPW Operations Manager, Tree Warden
Suzanne Sullivan

Committee members absent:
Michael McInnis

V. Gingrich called the 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.

Discussion of Goals, Objectives, and Action Items

V. Gingrich presented the handout with suggestions for action items. The goals were kept the same as in 2015 and are general. She asked if anyone had wording change suggestions. K. Campbell said for the first goal, to include “open space appreciation and environment-friendly”. J. Campbell said he visited the boardwalk over wetlands in Town Forest that was recently done by an Eagle Scout. V. Gingrich and J. Magaldi discussed needing an engineer for the bridge over Maple Meadow Brook aqueduct, but Eagle Scouts could still help. V. Gingrich said the Middlesex Canal used to run on top of the stone abutments. Town Park is on one side, and on the other there is a trail that leads up to Patch’s Pond, so a bridge would provide a longer path and trail connection. She said the Middlesex Canal groups support having a bridge there, there could be educational signage, and it would promote awareness of the Canal. Ideally a state grant would be used for funding. She and S. Sullivan discussed possibly using historic fund money and fundraising in addition. J. Magaldi, V. Gingrich, and J. Campbell discussed developing a project management checklist so Eagle Scouts and other volunteers could be guided through the process. S. Sullivan suggested creating a wish list of potential projects. K. Campbell and M. Fiorello discussed putting past projects that need maintenance on the wish list and adding maintenance plans to the project management checklist. J. Magaldi said they need groups to maintain trails – trash pickup, pruning, and grooming. He and M. Fiorello suggested maintenance training. S. Sullivan said there could be college internship opportunities. V. Gingrich said the Land Stewardship Handbook could be used as a resource.

There was discussion about having more frequent, localized neighborhood cleanup days in addition to Town cleanup days, and having them at different days and times to accommodate people’s varying availabilities. People may want to participate more if they continuously hear about cleanup days and if it’s in their own neighborhood. J. Magaldi said he gets calls repeatedly about particular areas, so those could be focused on. He suggested

that in addition to cleanup days, they can try to be more proactive by preserving what we have, like awareness of invasive insects, and suggested adding it as an objective. He said the Department of Public Works (DPW) Tree Division webpage is a good resource for information. A possible project is an Eagle Scout could create a program to have people hike through a particular area and check for invasive insects so the state Department of Agriculture could get rid of them. S. Sullivan discussed Biodiversity Days in Greater Boston. She mentioned a mobile application called iNaturalist. She and J. Magaldi discussed tree planting programs and the benefits of tree planting on both public and private property. They agreed there should be more education, awareness, and resources for people to get involved. J. Magaldi said the library will contact the Tree Warden Association about sapling planting. He discussed the annual Arbor Day Seedling Program where participants get pack of seedlings and instructions on how to plant them, and it's available to the general public. The library has a brochure for it. V. Gingrich and M. Fiorello discussed gathering materials like brochures and posters and making them more available. J. Magaldi suggested using Twitter to create monthly or biweekly tweets with a different topic each time. Suggestions were discussed, including education on trees, insects, and planting; planting programs; trail locations; and conserving water.

J. Campbell suggested having a full trail map and educational and historic information at trail heads. K. Campbell said the signs at Yentile made by V. Gingrich are a great example. J. Magaldi suggested a standard protocol in the signage plan for getting signage and posters laser printed to last longer. It was agreed that a standard trail head sign would make it easier for volunteers to make them and put them up. K. Campbell and J. Campbell suggested Andover as a program to emulate. V. Gingrich and S. Sullivan discussed existing kiosks in Town, one of which was recently done by an Eagle Scout. V. Gingrich said there is an ongoing proposal to build a kiosk and create better access to the Ipswich River. J. Campbell said Camp 40 Acres is accessible to all residents, but the entrance is gated and makes it appear inaccessible. There was general discussion about lack of awareness of trail access and parking. J. Magaldi said the survey indicated many people aren't aware of trails. He suggested making fact sheets for trails with a standardized format, and they could tweet about different trails every month. V. Gingrich said there are existing one-pagers for a few areas but they don't include parking, and more one-pagers should be created.

She asked what people thought about coordinating with WCTV for more exposure of existing open spaces, and doing a program every so often on different places. K. Campbell said the viewership is low on TV, but they also post on social media. There was discussion about social media having more exposure and WCTV being interested in more volunteers and programming. They could reach out to all the media outlets but have WCTV make the video content, and spotlight a different amenity each month.

V. Gingrich and K. Campbell talked about outdoor recreational programs that the Recreation Department has been doing and wanting to have more programs. J. Magaldi said it would be good to target companies in industrial areas, such as for litter cleanup as a team building exercise. There is a lot of litter on the side of the road in these areas and on bridges. He said the truck volume on Ballardvale Street is dangerous. He and M. Fiorello discussed possibly closing the road on a Saturday and having police detail, and kids who have to do community service could use this cleanup for it.

V. Gingrich asked about the third goal. J. Magaldi suggested a library education program. M. Fiorello suggested adding signage for flora and fauna education to the signage plan at some point after trail heads. S. Sullivan and V. Gingrich discussed connecting resiliency and

preparedness planning with open space planning. V. Gingrich said the Town is planning to apply for the state Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Program to draft a plan and update the Hazard Mitigation Plan. She discussed transferring open space from Town ownership to the Conservation Commission and transferring some every year. It was a goal in the 2015 Plan that hasn't been achieved yet. She said the benefit of switching ownership is it protects the property from being built on and instead keeps it natural. Going backward to transfer ownership from the Conservation Commission to the Town is very difficult and requires a vote of legislature.

J. Magaldi, V. Gingrich, and M. Fiorello discussed the possibility of neighborhood composting in the future. J. Magaldi said the state currently mandates schools with certain tonnages of waste to compost. He said the DPW sells discounted compost bins. He and S. Sullivan and discussed educating people on composting. M. Fiorello suggested it be associated with the trash and recycling information that is widespread.

S. Sullivan suggested identifying certified and potential vernal pools as an objective. She said vernal pools are not protected under the Wetlands Protection Act because they are isolated, but they can become protected if it's shown that certain species use them to breed. V. Gingrich suggested seeing if the high school environmental club would be interested in identifying vernal pools. She said there are vernal pools on GIS. S. Sullivan and K. Campbell discussed starting with an inventory, then volunteer groups could go out and identify more. S. Sullivan explained they don't hold water often, and people may have them on their property and not know it.

J. Hounsell brought up a previous discussion of having a committee to help enact the Open Space & Recreation Plan (OSRP) and guide objectives. J. Magaldi said they are waiting on a group to come in to volunteer with their resources. S. Sullivan and J. Hounsell discussed advertising and increasing awareness. S. Sullivan and V. Gingrich discussed having implementation plans in the OSRP text.

Public Comment

No members of the public were present.


Schedule and Next Steps

V. Gingrich said for the next meeting, she could incorporate this discussion into the draft goals and objectives. Her department has started working on the plan text and will have pieces of it ready for review at the next meeting. She discussed the timeline and the review and approval process through state, and once the plan is approved the Town is eligible for state grants. The Selectmen will be updated on what's in the plan. The next meeting date was discussed.

Next meeting 3/2/20 at 6pm room 9

Meeting adjourned at 7:43 pm

Respectfully submitted by



Sierra Pelletier, Assistant Planner