

Open Space and Recreation Committee Meeting

Monday, January 9, 2023, at 4pm.

Room 7, Town Hall

Members present: O. Hayes (co-chair), S. Gang (co-chair), H. Bethel, S. Linehan, C. Rising and P. Mitchell

Members absent: D. Saunders

Minute Taker: E. Ware, Interim Town Planner (using recording)

The meeting was opened by S. Gang at 4:15pm. A quorum was present.

The OSRC voted to approve the minutes of the December 12, 2022 meeting. S. Gang made a motion to approve, with S. Linehan providing a second. All voted in favor of the motion.

Western Woods. The stewardship program is in place, with both the Conservation Commission and the OSRC voting to approve the plan. Now onto the second chapter of the project.....with Jeff Bodmer -Turner offering to assist in the management of the property. Several members felt that there should be a job description for the manager of the land. H. Bethell stated that there was some town land that needed to be placed into restriction and that it might be an article for an upcoming town meeting warrant. She stated that the owners of the various properties needed to operate together- in unison- to coordinate the management of the property. She suggested that the town work closely with the Manchester Essex Conservation Trust (MECT) to coordinate efforts.

Crooked Lane land parcel. While it is not clear to some OSRC members what this topic is, it was noted that in order to access trails off of Crooked Lane, there needs to be some parking at the trailhead. S. Gang stated that if parking were to be proposed, then the town would need to approach the Conservation Commission as there are wetlands within 100 feet of where parking would be proposed.

Western Woods Right of Way Project O. Hayes indicated that title examiner Florence Denhard would be hired to complete some title work and easement research in order to insure that the town had adequate access via easements with trails, to the town lands. She had worked on reviewing some parcels and that she recommended that the meeting in February be a working session with F. Denhard so that the entire OSRC was aware of the issues and the lands in question.

Newport Park- Access into Powder House Conservation Land. O. Hayes indicated that there was a need for more parking in the area and that the town had looked at new parking at the right of the cul-de-sac of the Powder House units. She stated that the OSRC needed to discuss this issue with the Manchester Housing Authority (MHA) as the parking issue is due to a right of way that was violated by the MHA when the buildings were placed in the wrong location when they were constructed back in the 1960s. The OSRC wants to make sure that the parking and

trails are accessible to all residents. H. Bethell stated that the hikers would need to use the Newport Park roadway to get into the reservation. O. Hayes stated that the parking area should be staked out so everyone would fully understand where the proposed parking would be located and the maps and easement language would need to be revised by an attorney, to correct the violated right of way. It was noted that the group needs to optimize the location of the parking.

Water Resources Protection Task Force. S. Gang reported that the WRPTF was working to finalize their findings and present to the SB. The specific concerns were water supply protection, the larger users of the water supply with particular focus on Gravelly Pond. It was noted by H. Bethel that some of the land within the water supply district was not fully protected and that the two landfills- Manchester's and Hamilton's were an issue due to contaminants. S. Gang stated that there may need to be some bylaw changes around the groundwater zones. He stated that more recommendations were to come regarding this project.

Mapping of Trails. It was noted that the mapping of trails needs to be updated and apparently Amy _____ at MAPC was doing this work. The trails around Newport Park need to be reconfigured, as well as other locations. The mapping is done in GIS (Geographic Information Systems). A request was made to have Amy contacted to see who had the files and whether they could be updated. H. Bethell stated that the Town, Conservation Commission and MECT need to work together to make sure that trails connect, easements are secured and there is coordination to protect these lands. S. Gang stated that a standardized approach needs to be taken to insure consistency.

Trail Use in Manchester/Essex Woods. No one knew why this was on the agenda.

Priority Projects. Parking in Western Woods was identified as well as securing easements and reviewing the OSRC's Master Plan for priority projects.

H. Bethell stated that water resource protection should be a priority as well as protection of the Gordon College land on the north side of Route 128 as well as protection of Essex County Club. She felt that a conservation easement needs to be placed on the golf course to protect it from development. She felt strongly that it needed to be addressed now! S. Gang stated that there was not a strong argument to protect the Gordon College land. He also stated that if Essex County Club were to remain a golf club, then there would be little change in value to the site.

It was noted that H. Bethell had some issues hearing. It was suggested that it be explored as to whether headphones could be plugged into the Zoom screen for better hearing.

O. Hayes noted that the February meeting should be a working session with Florence Denhard, with use of the big screen for mapping. February 13, 2023 was the decided date, which happened to be H. Bethell's birthday!

The meeting adjourned at about 5:10pm.

E. M. Ware, minute taker