

Open Space and Recreation Committee Meeting

Monday, April 24, 2023- 4pm.

Town Hall, Room 7/Zoom

Members present: S. Gang, O. Hayes, C. Rising, T. Cowman, S. Linehan, H. Bethel, and P. Mitchell

Staff: E. Ware, Interim Town Planner

Guests: Nancy Taylor-Roberts, Meredith Fine and Grant Gerdes

Meeting started at 4:05pm.

Western Woods discussion focused on access and management and oversight. It was noted that having Jeff Bodmer-Turner available would be beneficial.

The OSRC reviewed the report from real estate title examiner Flory Denhart on the Western Woods properties. OSRC members wondered who had legal access to the trails and cart paths within the area, with many of the roads being privately owned.

After reviewing Flory's report, it was decided that legal counsel needed to review the properties at 4 and 10 Brookwood Road. Issues related to easements and access over these properties.

Regarding Highland Avenue, #17 and #19 Highland Ave have rights to use Jersey Lane. Both Brookwood and Highland Ave roadways need to be reviewed for who has rights to travel on them. There was some discussion of parking at the Brookwood School and walking to the trailhead, but it was unknown who has rights to park either at the school or on the roadway. This would be good information to know.

The Davis Family Housing Trust, who own the carriage house at 11 Highland Avenue own a nub of land across the street at the trailhead. O. Hayes will try to contact that owners and see if they are interested in providing an easement for the use of the land.

14 Highland Avenue was recently acquired by Builders by the Sea with a conservation restriction. With Highland Avenue being a private roadway, parking might be off the roadway at #11 Highland Ave. The 11 Highland Ave "nub" would provide a trail head for hikers. The OSRC needs advice on plowing and winter access.

Discussion switched to Orchard Lane and Walker Road. There was nothing in Flory's report about rights of way or passage over these roadways. Walker Road is public. Cart paths which were part of the Walker Estate have been used for hiking, walking and biking for years.

Land clearly owned by the Manchester Conservation Commission, or the Manchester Essex Conservation Trust allowed residents to use the trails and cart paths on their properties. It may be just the areas in Manchester that residents can travel on foot for a walk or hike.

O. Hayes stated that access from Crooked Lane, Highland and Brookwood would be best to avoid legal battles. Some hikers might need to get permission to access from Walker Road or Orchard Lane, which are the areas where access is least likely. The good news is that Pine Street access over town land is good as there is parking and access over town land.

Discussion continued on access, with discussion on the public nature of Jersey Lane from #2 to #12 Jersey Lane. After #12, the roadway is privately owned. #12 is near the Clara Winthrop field. There is MECT land on Jersey Lane however there is a gap between the Winthrop field and the town-owned land on Jersey Lane.

Andrew Cotreau at 4 Orchard Lane and Amanda McGrath (19 highland) are both property owners who need to be approached regarding access. The group needs to come up with a list of questions for legal counsel on access and monumentation.

Newport Park Housing and the easement that the town had for access is another area of concern. When the buildings were constructed, the buildings were pushed back and located on an easement that was not supposed to be built upon. O. Hayes would like to meet with the Manchester Housing Authority on this issue and the fact that hikers cannot park within the Newport Park complex, near the trail heads. She wondered if an attorney needed to be present for this meeting. It was noted that the OSRC needed its own parking and access on Pine Street. There was further discussion on trail locations and on the MHA's potential for construction of more housing. Also, a trail that was cut from Michael Symes property at 89 Pine Street, resulting in land eroding. The trail that was cut crosses 87 Pine Street.

Open space Action Items:

- Review the OSRC Plan for action items.
- Top priority- a restriction on the Gordon college land that is in the watershed.
- Discussion on a School supported bee program- not to be located on school property.
- Finding quality volunteers

S. Gang provided an update on the Water Resources Protection Task Force. The Select Board turned down the Task Force's primary recommendation, to create a 3-member Water Advisory Board with responsibility to the SB for implementing the Task Force's recommendations. Their decision is based on the "Governance Project" which is intended to streamline Tow government and reduce the number of Boards or Commissions dedicated to a single issue. He also offered a walk around Gravelly Pond to look for lady slippers.

Next meeting date: May 22, 2023, at 4pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Ware

Interim Town Planner