

Open Space Committee meeting minutes May 17, 2022

Present: Rick Gardner, Laura Reynolds, Susan Downing, Deb Cary, Annie Charrette (alternate), Karen Rossow. Resident Gerry Pellegrini joined as he is interested in our committee.

Meeting began at 7:13 after a modest celebration of Rick being recognized as the *Princeton Citizen of the Year for 2021*. Congratulations to Rick!

Minutes of April meeting unanimously approved.

Prioritizing high value properties/parcels we want to preserve: Rick and Susan have read the 2007 Land Preservation Study document by a committee formed by former town administrator Dennis Rindone. The document includes a matrix for prioritizing parcels (not discussed) and a list of parcels over 50 acres. From this, Rick made a spreadsheet of those parcels with current status listed as well as a map. He uploaded the map from the state's new Mass Mapper software and overlayed all preserved (permanently or temporarily) land with color-coded status (i.e. Chapter 61, conservation restrictions, sold to DCR, etc.) Rick outlined in bold all of the parcels so we can easily see what the status is with each and their proximity to other pertinent parcels. Besides acreage we want to create a list of parcels worthy of conservation value for their vistas, habitats, historical value, proximity to other protected land or natural habitats.

For the benefit of our four new residents at the table we had a discussion of past history and players involved in land preservation strategies. We also entertained concepts to persuade residents who might believe we have enough rural land that there are financial benefits to continue on this path. Among them were camping locations, bed-and-breakfasts, and Sherry Patch's notion of eco-tourism with farm days, festivals, etc. The beauty of our rural town is admired by people coming from other communities.

We expect to hold a Landowner Preservation Options workshop this coming winter and we'll invite landowners based on Rick's list of important properties. Deb wisely suggested that we have a meeting with other land protection professionals for advice on which parcels to focus on. Karen will contact Melissa Cryan from the Central Mass Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) for her suggestions on best practices for criteria model. Deb will invite representatives from the Division of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), DCR watershed protection and Worcester water, and Rick will invite Tom Sullivan from the Princeton Land Trust (PLT). We agreed to have our next OSC meeting include them for this express purpose.

Trails Updates: Phil O'Brien has the final mini-maps to post. We'll want signs for Red Fox Farm (RFF, also known now as Sam Walcott's property), including near the boundary to Nimrod sportsmen's club land. We have funds for benches but need final approval for them from PLT. Rick has re-routed some trails there so red flags indicate new routes in an effort to avoid using private property along the south side of Hickory Drive. There is a greater density of flagging as well. We will have a connection to Holden and other points south. He and Tom Moore cut some limbs in the paths and small sections of stone wall will have to be cleared. Ian Catlow has the free surplus grills that will serve as bridges over wet areas.

Susan reports that the Historical Commission is enthusiastic about our interest in Goodnow Park and welcomes us clearing trails and hosting activities there. Susan will contact the selectboard to talk about Goodnow Park and if we are put on their agenda she'll let us know. We'll include the Historical Commission and Parks & Rec to the invitation.

Matt Lindberg would like us to look at creating a trail on an old, short, discontinued road that runs from Main Street to Gleason Road. This had been discussed with Parks & Recreation a few years ago but they set it aside while searching for a successful director. Karen will ask Matt for any DEP documents he has on this and report back to the OSC.

Website updates: Not much as it's complete. Annie will work on ideas for good hikes with kids. Some ideas include a scavenger hunt, geocaching and locating our biggest glacial erratic boulders.

Princeton Hikes! program is continuing well. Until we reach critical numbers Rick will hold off on formally limiting the number of participants. The numbers have come down a bit since winter. Marie Auger will continue to offer a hike weekly as she has enjoyed leading groups. Senior hikes continue to be popular.

Earth month clean-up has been completed for this year. Certificates have been sent out by Rick Rys and Karen delivered all of the prizes for various photo and story categories.

Meeting adjourned at 8:21 p.m. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, June 21, 2022. *Please note that is the third Tuesday of the month.*

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Rossow