

Open Space Committee minutes for November 8, 2022

Present: Rick Gardner, Deb Cary, Laura Reynolds, Annie Charrette, Susan Downing and Karen Rossow. Guest: Brianna from the Conservation Commission.

Meeting began at 7:08 p.m.

Minutes of the October meeting unanimously approved.

Open land parcel analysis: Rick and Deb have completed an analysis of 180 parcels of land in Princeton. We can sort them by various criteria to determine which have greater value based on specific goals. They had a productive meeting with a representative (Felicia) from DCR wetlands protection to discuss the analysis. Once we have determined the best way(s) to utilize our data we can incorporate it into our program. Susan suggested overlaying a map of the important parcels with our trails map, which Brianna graciously offered to do for us.

We have to discuss this with other pertinent groups including Princeton Land Trust, Worcester and Fitchburg water, North County Land Trust. Deb and Rick will have individual conversations with each and invite them to present at our upcoming **Landowners Opportunity Meeting/Land Preservation** Workshop (official title to be determined, as well as date and time). We'll also invite residents with important parcels based on our data. We expect to hold this 2-hour event prior to February 12, 2023 on a Sunday afternoon. In addition to land conservation it can also address ways landowners can benefit from various management grant opportunities, how to improve their land. As an example there is a new state program to help farmers preserve their farmland in a financially feasible manner.

Action items: *everyone* can work on ideas for who to invite as speakers. *Deb and Rick* will personally invite them. *Deb and Rick* will create a list of landowners to invite. Rick will create a flyer for sending to them; *any of us* can spruce it up visually.

Trail Vision Update: Red Fox Farm (RFF) trails were cleared during a work party team effort October 1st, including a new starting point. Great job and thanks to all the volunteers! Rick has created a temporary map and four trail markers. The temporary map will be replaced with a permanent one that has been designed but not yet installed. He had a conversation with one key landowner who had granted permission for a trail on his/her land to be included on the map. It is one of the "legacy trails", meaning those which have been in use for decades but not officially.

One of the new bridges is installed and the other is slated for installation this coming weekend. Rick has seven locations for small brown directional signs. Deb suggested an eighth one indicating the route to follow to take that eventually leads to Trout Brook, which we all agree is a good idea. Parking exists at the end of Brooks Station Road
VOTE: unanimously approved \$300 for RFF signs.

Susan reports that **Goodnow Park** officially has the blessing of the selectboard for us to clear trails there. Deb and Susan will do one more walk through to clearly mark where the trails will go and create a simple map of them. Then they can report back what types of tools will be needed to clear the trails. It would be terrific if we can get a work party together to clear the trails in the next month or so, before snow falls.

Thomas Prince School trail kiosk will be moved to the trail head, hopefully with the help of Joe DiFranza and Phil O'Brien. The Wachusett Garden Club is going to erect two kiosks, one where ours currently is at the butterfly garden to highlight pollinators and the plants they like best and another at the trailhead educating about invasive plants.

Communication and documentation plan: *Annie* is still tweaking the hikes for kids; *Laura and Susan* are documenting the natural attractions; *Rick* has made some small cards with basic information on Princeton trails with a QR code and he's distributing them around town in public places. After much consideration, we unanimously discourage creating Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) for landowners, citing the lack of them

for the successful, 80-year-old Mid-State Trail and the lack of interest in them by the landowners. No landowner has approached us about these to date.

Ecotourism: Susan contacted Sherry Patch about volunteering to represent the OSC for this section of the Master Plan creation. Central Mass Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) was recently awarded \$33,425 to assist and guide the Master Plan Steering Committee through development of stage two of the new Master Plan, which is designed to steer Princeton through the next 15-20 years. Karen is also representing the OSC on this committee.

Princeton Hikes! continues to be popular. Regarding the liability/survey concept, Rick will send it out in December to everyone on the mailing list. It will have a clear, brief statement about us not being liable for anyone's injuries and a few survey questions about hike preferences. *Rick* will send it out to us to review for typos before he sends it to the hikers.

Annie reports that the **EAC drought hike** had about 15 participants and went very well.

The **solar farm idea at the former dump** is an idea the town has regarding use of that town property. DCR watershed land surrounds it and they might consider trading parcels if the town has another one.

DCR sent out a Public Access Survey electronically this week and some of us have completed it. They already held a public hearing on the topic previously but we hope they'll have another opportunity for public to hear the results of the electronic survey.

None of us are attending the **Mass Trails Conference** held this week. Perhaps next year!

We want to participate in the **Earth Month Clean Up 2023**.

Next meeting is on Tuesday, December 13, 2022.

Meeting adjourned at 8:52.

Tasks: everyone consider representatives to invite to speak at our Land Preservation meeting; Deb and Rick will personally invite them; Deb and Rick will determine which landowners to invite; Rick will come up with a flyer to send those people and any of us can give it some stimulating visual formatting and images. Rick will create signs for RFF. Susan and Deb will mark and map exactly where trails should be at Goodnow Park. Rick will see about moving our kiosk at TPS. Annie will continue to work on hikes for kids, Laura will work on the PDF of natural attractions. Rick expects to send the liability/survey to Princeton Hikes! participants in December.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Rossow