**Open Space Committee Meeting Minutes for February 14, 2023**

Present: Rick Gardner, Laura Reynolds, Susan Downing, Deb Cary (remotely), Karen Rossow

Excused: Annie Charrette

Following some GoTo Meeting difficulties we began at 7:13 p.m.

**Minutes** from January unanimously approved.

**VOTE:** Reimburse Deb Cary for $120 spent on postage for invitations to our Landowner Information Session held on Feb. 5th, 2023. ***Unanimously approved.***

**Review of our Landowner Information Session** **held on February 5th**: We feel it was very successful in that there were 19 invitees, each speaker talked for just the right amount of time, people asked questions and were able to put faces to the names of those they would approach if interested in land preservation options. Rick mentioned that Dracut has done this and videotaped their meeting if any of us are interested in viewing it. Dracut also had about 19 attendees and their population is approximately 30,000.

Overall we can use what we’ve done as a template for future landowner conservation strategy meetings, which we should hold every three years or so. There are some ideas for improving, which include allowing the peripheral partners (whom we did identify to the audience) to speak for a minute on what they do and perhaps set them up with small tables along one side of the room with large identifying signs on the wall behind them. We can open the doors sooner for folks to chat beforehand. *Rick* will send follow-up emails to the attendees asking for their feedback.

We think that holding Landowner Neighborhood Listening Sessions periodically would be worthwhile as time permits, meaning that after neighborhoods have been identified we invite them to tell us what changes, if any, they would like to see related to open space and recreation.

**Land parcel analysis**: *Deb and Rick* will review their findings and select some parcels, then bring this information to the whole committee. The value of a parcel includes considerations such as adjacency, open lands, and good trail connections. *This will be the focus of our next meeting.*

**Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) status review:** We will coordinate annual joint meetings with Parks & Recreation to review our progress and the Plan’s expectations. *Susan* will invite Jamie from P&R to our May OSC meeting to discuss the OSRP as it now stands. For Goal 1, *Susan*, as a member of the Wachusett Garden Club (serving Holden and Princeton), will see what they can do regarding item #6, beautifying public areas in town. It appears that the committee that was going to oversee this never materialized. *Karen* will look into #7 ADA compliance and how Central Mass Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) can help and will represent OSC at their upcoming workshop on this topic on Tuesday, February 28th. *Laura* will research a state program for ADA compliance assistance which she is familiar with. This will be a topic for an upcoming OSC meeting.

Regarding Goal 2, #4 perhaps we can hold some walks featuring themes such as using iNaturalist, geography, flora or fauna and have them led by knowledgeable local naturalists. Natural Heritage Program has data on what creatures are on the land and has recently completed an update, so that is a good starting point. Everything is active and ongoing with Goal 3. *Laura* will look into creating a high-tech interactive town map using GIS. Goals 4 and 5 are in good shape.

**Trail Vision**: Well, it’s been fifteen years since our last ice storm but we had another one this winter, resulting in many downed tree branches and crowns throughout town. Remarkably, many of our trails have already been cleared by volunteers! We are grateful for the donated work of Butch St. Louis and Philip Cerynek, and probably several other folks we aren’t aware of.

RRF directional signs have been installed and the kiosk will go in during warmer weather. Goodnow Park needs names for the trails (fun!) and needs the kiosk map to be created (not fun!). We may want to discuss the trail names at our next meeting. *Rick* will work on the kiosk map. TPS sign will also go up in the spring. Regarding communication and documentation, Annie put an article in Redemption Rock News introducing Hikes for Kids and Laura is working on natural attractions on our website. A new trail area involving Ethan Stern will be designed in the spring as well.

**To do items**:

**Rick** will send follow-up email to Landowner Meeting participants; **Rick** and **Deb** will look at parcels once more; **Rick** will work on a map for Goodnow Park’s kiosk. **Karen** will look into ADA compliance assistance from CMRPC and **Laura** will look into a state program related to it for Goal 1, # 7; **Laura** will investigate a spectacular interactive town map; **Susan** will invite Jamie from P&R to our MAY meeting and **Susan** will discuss further beautification of public places in Princeton with the garden club.

Next meeting will be on Tuesday, March 14, 2023.

Meeting adjourned at 8:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Rossow