



# TOWN OF PALMER

## Open Space Advisory Committee

### Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at 3:00 PM  
LOCATION: VIRTUAL VIA ZOOM

Donald Blais, Jr.  
David Cotter  
Nick Zeo  
Kathy Burns  
Jessica Sizer  
Michael Swiatlowski  
Howard Fife  
Amber Kumpulanian  
Kelly Bergeron  
Lynn Greany

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**Members Present:** Donald Blais, Jr.  
Amber Kumpulanian  
Dave Cotter  
Mike Swiatlowski  
Kathy Burns  
Howard Fife

**Members Absent:** Nicholas Zeo (Enters at 3:04 PM)  
Kelly Bergeron  
Lynn Greany  
Jessica Sizer

**Also Present:** Sarah Fortune, Interim Conservation Agent

1. **Call to Order:** 3:02 PM – Donald Blais, Jr. (Chair)

a. **Roll call attendance:**

- i. **Donald Blais, Jr. – present**
- ii. **Nicholas Zeo – absent (Enters at 3:04 PM)**
- iii. **Howard Fife – present**
- iv. **Amber Kumpulanian – present**
- v. **Mike Swiatlowski – present**
- vi. **Kelly Bergeron – absent**
- vii. **Dave Cotter - present**
- viii. **Jessica Sizer – absent**
- ix. **Lynn Greany – absent**
- x. **Kathy Burns – present**

2. **Review Mail/Phone Messages**

There was no mail or phone messages to review at this time.

3. **Approval of Minutes**

- a. **9/23/2021**

**Motion made by Donald Blais, Jr. to approve the minutes from 9/23/2021 as written**  
**Motion was seconded by Amber Kumpulanian**  
**No further discussion**

**Role call vote: Donald Blais, Jr. – aye; Amber Kumpulanian – aye; Dave Cotter – abstain; Mike Swiatlowski – aye; Kathy Burns – aye; Howard Fife – abstain**  
**Motion Caries 5-0-1 (Howard Fife abstained)**

#### **4. New/Old Business**

a. Discuss Public Visioning Session on 9/28/2021 from 6:30 to 8 PM

The Open Space and Recreation Public Visioning Session occurred on Tuesday, September 28, 2021 from 6:30 to 8 PM in the Town Hall Meeting Room, located at 4417 Main Street in Palmer. The PVS included a short presentation by Mimi Kaplan of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission which gave an overview of Open Space Plans, a summary of results from the 2021 Open Space & Recreation Community Survey, and a review of accomplishments since the last plan OSRP update in 2014. The PVS also included breakout group discussions in which participants formed small groups to discuss the following topics: greatest open space and recreation assets and needs; top priorities for open space and recreation improvements; increasing community involvement in maintenance and improvement of open space areas; and overall top funding priorities for open space and recreation projects. Each breakout group provided a summary of discussions for each breakout group topic; this information will be refined and compiled into a list of goals and objectives to serve as the 7-Year Action Plan component of the 2021 OSRP update.

The Advisory Committee continued to discuss the development and purpose of the OSRP 7-Year Action Plan . Mike Swiatlowksi asked how these goals are to be met; Donald Blais, Jr. stated that a great deal of the progress made since 2014 was done by the previous Conservation Agent. The Interim Agent added that she would like to form an OSRP Implementation Committee which would be tasked with the responsibility of carrying out the Action Plan goals and objectives over the next 7-years. Mike Swiatlowski asked why previous efforts to form a permanent OSRP Committee failed; Dave Cotter stated that the previous Advisory Committee was composed primarily of municipal department heads compared to the current Committee which is composed primarily of residents, which may help with the establishment of a permanent OSRP Implementation Committee. Donald Blais, Jr. added that we will need to confirm if the Implementation Committee would be a subcommittee of the Conservation Commission or a stand-alone committee; the Interim Agent stated that it would likely be a separate committee but will confirm that information prior to moving forward on this matter, but that an Implentation Committee would likely be formed in 2022 after OSRP is finalized and approved.

The Committee proceeded to review the draft goals and objectives developed by the Interim Agent from the breakout group discussion notes from the Public Visioning Session. Notes from the Top Priorities group included: centralizing information on open space areas and recreation opportunities, forming a trail committee to help build and maintain trails, maintaining and improving existing open space and recreation facilities, and increasing access to rivers. Notes from the community involvement group included: creating a Recreation Department to coordinate volunteer groups, create geocaching sites on existing trails, organize events centered on education as a mechanism to engage residents in open space areas, and offer incentives for volunteers for maintenance of open space areas, such as coupons to local businesses. Notes from the top funding priorities group included: overall improvement of existing open space and recreation areas, hiring a Recreation Director, increasing opporunties for kids and teens, and creating parking and restroom facilties at trails. Finally, notes from the assets and needs group included: the 4 rivers, hiking trails, and community parks as assets; more unversally accessible walking trails in centrally located areas, more hiking/ walking trails overall, and more activities for older age groups in centrally located areas as needs.

The Committee continued to review the draft goals and objectives in comparision to those from the previous 7-Year Action Plan. Howard Fife suggested that the Committee include some of the goals and objectives

identified in the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Climate Mitigation workshop that occurred in February of 2019, as some of those goals will align well with those for open space and recreation; the Interim Agent will review this information for relevance.

The Committee agreed to retain Goal 1 from the previous Action Plan which states, “Protect and Preserve Open Space Parcels and environmentally sensitive Conservation Areas”. The Committee decided to retain this goal because of feedback received from the Public Visioning Session, and to maintain the ability to apply for grant funding to open space acquisition projects. Objectives for this goal include: acquire and/or protect environmentally sensitive areas; identify aquifer and/or preserve areas suitable for conservation of wildlife via contiguous open space corridors; and identify, map and protect areas of critical habitat. This will be included as Goal 5 in the 2021 Action Plan.

The Committee reviewed goal 2 from the previous Action Plan which states, “Protect water resources and promote their appropriate use” and decided to retain this goal because of feedback received from the Public Visioning Session. The Committee revised objectives for this goal to include; enhance river access opportunities by developing blue trails, boat launches, and formalizing river access locations; develop a plan to create, manage and enhance existing recreational use and accessibility to waterways and watershed land; and to promote said plan to include multi-use policies with appropriate recreational and conservation guidelines. This will continue to be Goal 2 in the 2021 Action Plan.

The Committee reviewed Goal 3 from the previous Action Plan which states, “Preserve and manage open space lands, archeological treasures, and scenic views for conservation and recreation purposes”. The Committee agreed to include in the updated plan because of feedback received from the Public Visioning Session in addition to the fact that none of the identified action items have been completed. Nick Zeo suggested that these goals and objectives could be removed because they could be completed by other departments/committees; Howard Fife added that, on the other hand, it is helpful to site several of the same goals in different town reports, especially with respect to grant writing for open space and recreation projects. The Committee agreed that it would be good to retain all of the Action Items for Goal 3 to include in the update; the Interim Agent added that she will update responsible parties and funding sources accordingly. Objectives for this goal included: encourage programs that include nature study and other passive recreational activities; and identify and protect areas of significant historical, cultural, and ecological significance. This will continue to be Goal 3 of the 2021 Action Plan.

The Committee reviewed Goal 5 from the previous Action Plan which states, “Enhance neighborhood parks, playgrounds, and recreational opportunities” and agreed to retain this goal due to feedback received from the Public Visioning Session. Objectives for this goal include: adoption of the Community Preservation Act; provide recreational opportunities for all age groups, especially kids, teens and the elderly; and develop and/enhance recreational facilities and playgrounds for each of the 4 villages, providing access for all. This will become Goal 1 in the 2021 Action Plan.

The final goal for the 2021 Action Plan will deviate from the previous plan as a result of feedback received from the Public Visioning Session; this goal states, “Publicize open space and recreation areas and promote their appropriate use”. Objectives for this goal include: develop informational materials on all open space and recreation areas to provide to residents; streamline information on open space and recreation areas to increase access; and enforce rules and regulations for use of open space areas through routine monitoring and inspections. This will be included as Goal 4 in the 2021 Action Plan.

b. Review & Comment on First Revision of OSRP Maps

The Committee was unable to review and comment on the first revision of the OSRP maps because they were not yet available at this time. The Interim Agent will follow up with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission on the status of the map revisions, and will forward the maps to the Committee for review and comment when they are available.

c. ADA Self-Assessment & Conservation Land Tables – Update in process

The Agent reported that the ADA self-assessment and update of the conservation land tables is currently in process. She will provide the committee with the ADA self-assessment information and conservation land tables when they are complete.

d. Lower Ware Blue Trail

The Committee inquired as to the development of the Lower Ware Blue Trail. The Interim Agent reported that she is working with the Chicopee 4 Rivers Watershed Council to formalize access to the lower Ware River for the development of this Blue Trail, with an access point off Bennett Street. She anticipates the project to be completed during 2022.

**5. Set Next Meeting Date**

- a. The next meeting of the Open Space Advisory Committee Meeting will occur on Thursday, October 28, 2021 at 3:00 PM via Zoom.

**6. Meeting Adjourned: 3:55 PM**

**Motion made by Kathy Burns to adjourn at 3:55 PM**

**Motion was seconded by Nick Zeo**

**No further discussion**

**Role call vote: Donald Blais, Jr. – aye; Nicholas Zeo – aye; Amber Kumpulanian – aye; Mike Swiatlowski – aye; Kathy Burns – aye; Dave Cotter – Aye; Howard Fife – aye**

**Motion Caries 7-0-0**

Sincerely Submitted,  
Sarah A. Fortune  
Interim Conservation Agent



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The following is a list of documents used at the above-mentioned meeting, in addition to those included in the agenda packet which is part of the official record of the meeting:

Number	Description	Agenda Item	Notes
1.	Approval of Minutes: 9/23/2021	Approval of Minutes	Retained in 2021 OSRP Minutes
2.	Review notes from Public Visioning Session	New/Old Business	Retained in 2021 OSRP Update
3.	Review 2014 OSRP Action Plan	New/Old Business	Retained in 2014 OSRP Update
4.	Review draft goals & objectives for 2021 Action Plan	New/Old Business	Retained in 2021 OSRP Update