



TOWN OF PALMER

Open Space Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 28th, 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

Contact: Sarah Fortune
Email:
sfortune@townofpalmer.com

Members Present: Donald Blais, Jr.
Dave Cotter
Nicholas Zeo
Mike Swiatlowski
Jessica Sizer

Members Absent: Amber Kumpulanian
Kelly Bergeron
Lynn Greany
Kathy Burns
Howard Fife

Also Present: Sarah Fortune, Interim Conservation Agent

1. **Call to Order:** 3:33 PM – Donald Blais, Jr. (Chair)

- a. **Roll call attendance:**
- i. **Donald Blais, Jr. – present**
 - ii. **Nicholas Zeo – present**
 - iii. **Howard Fife – absent**
 - iv. **Amber Kumpulanian – absent**
 - v. **Mike Swiatlowski – present**
 - vi. **Kelly Bergeron – absent**
 - vii. **Dave Cotter - present**
 - viii. **Jessica Sizer – present**
 - ix. **Lynn Greany – absent**
 - x. **Kathy Burns – absent**

2. **Review Mail/Phone Messages**

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

3. **Approval of Minutes**

- a. **10/14/2021**

Motion made by Dave Cotter to table the approval of the minutes from 10/14/2021 until 11/10/2021 at 3 PM

Motion was seconded by Nick Zeo

No further discussion

Role call vote: Donald Blais, Jr. – aye; Dave Cotter – aye; Mike Swiatlowski – aye; Nick Zeo – aye; Jessica Sizer – aye
Motion Caries 5-0-0

4. New/Old Business

a. Discuss & Finalize OSRP Action Plan Goals & Objectives

The Committee proceeded to review the draft goals and objectives developed from the breakout group discussion notes from the Public Visioning Session in comparison to those from the previous 7-Year Action Plan and as discussed at the last Committee meeting on 10/14/2021.

The Committee finalized the draft Goal 1 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. Specific Action Items include renovation of Burleigh Park, creation of a community Center at Converse Middle School, and explore Shared Use Agreements with Palmer Public Schools to allow community use of recreation and fitness facilities after school hours, among many others.

The Committee finalized the draft Goal 2 of the 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. Action items include the construction of universally accessible boat launches and fishing docks, provision of bathroom facilities at river recreation areas to protect water quality, and the development of a parking pass system for users of Forest Lake Public Beach, among many others. Mike Swiatlowksi asked how the town could develop a parking pass system for use of the public beach at Forest Lake without causing a backlash among residents who regularly recreate there; the Interim Agent stated that she was unsure how to go about this, but that many other towns restrict access to public beaches, which could be used as a model to develop a similar system for Forest Lake.

The Committee finalized the draft Goal 3 of the Action Plan which states, “Preserve and manage open space lands, archeological treasures, and scenic views for conservation and recreation purposes”. 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. Specific Action Items include hiring a Recreation Director, forming a Trails Committee, and working with neighboring towns to expand and connect to the current Mass Central Rail Trail, among others.

The Committee finalized the draft Goal 4 of the Action Plan which 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. Specific Action Items include the development of one (1) informational resource on all open space and recreation areas to provide to residents, increase access to conservation lands by facilities such as parking areas and kiosks, and enforcing against illegal dumping and ATV/off road vehicle use on conservation

lands, among others. Jessica Sizer added that she would like the town to work on overall communications, and has been investigating the possibility of hiring a communications intern who could assist with the completion of the action items associated with this goal, particularly regarding the streamlining/enhanced access to information.

The Committee finalized Goal 5 of the draft 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. Specific Action Items include to apply to programs for grants and funding to preserve and protect open space parcels, fully staff the Conservation Department, and to develop connections between existing state and town-owned land to expand existing wildlife corridors, among others.

Mike Swiatlowski commented on the overall draft Action Plan, and suggested that that Laviolette Field and Legion Field/Eager park be included in one of the sections as they were not currently included. He also added that the Mass Central Trail should be mentioned as many times as possible in the plan to support the current expansion efforts for the trail in Palmer. Additionally, he added that Converse Middle School should be a focus of future open space and recreation plans because of the numerous facilities it contains combined with it’s central location, which would make it perfect for a community center or senion center. Jessica Sizer added that these are good points and that the Town Council is interested to know what the community would like to see occur at the school, realizing that residents might not want to see a private business there regardless of potential revenue, due to the fact that Converse Middle School is a community icon that is important to many residents.

b. Review Draft OSRP Chapters Completed to Date

The Interim Agent will forward draft OSRP Chapters 3 to 5 to the Committee for their review and comment prior to the next meeting.

5. Set Next Meeting Date

- a. The next meeting of the Open Space Advisory Committee Meeting will occur on Wednesday, November 10th, 2021 at 3:00 PM via Zoom.

6. Meeting Adjourned: 4:19 PM

Motion made by Mike Swiatlowski adjourn at 4:19 PM

Motion was seconded by Nick Zeo

No further discussion

Role call vote: Donald Blais, Jr. – aye; Nicholas Zeo – aye; Mike Swiatlowski – aye; Dave Cotter – Aye;

Jessica Sizer – aye

Motion Caries 5-0-0

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, 10/14/2021	Approval of Minutes	Retained in 2021 OSRP Minutes
2.	Review notes from Public Visioning Session	New/Old Business	Retained in 2021 OSRP Update
3.	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