



# TOWN OF PALMER

## Open Space Advisory Committee

### Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, November 10<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

Contact: Sarah Fortune  
Email:

[sfortune@townofpalmer.com](mailto:sfortune@townofpalmer.com)

**Members Present:** Donald Blais, Jr.  
Dave Cotter (Enters at 3:10 PM)  
Nicholas Zeo  
Mike Swiatlowski  
Jessica Sizer  
Kathy Burns  
Amber Kumpulanian

**Members Absent:** Kelly Bergeron  
Lynn Greany  
Howard Fife

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

1. **Call to Order:** 3:04 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 – present**
- v. **Mike Swiatlowski – present**
- vi. **Kelly Bergeron – absent**
- vii. **Dave Cotter – absent (Enters at 3:10 PM)**
- viii. **Jessica Sizer – present**
- 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. **10/14/2021**

**Motion made by Nick Zeo to approve the minutes from 10/14/2021 as written**  
**Motion was seconded by Mike Swiatlowski**  
**No further discussion**

**Role call vote: Donald Blais, Jr. – aye; Mike Swiatlowski – aye; Nick Zeo – aye; Jessica Sizer – abstain; Amber Kumpulanian – aye; Kathy Burns – aye**  
**Motion Caries 5-0-1 (Jessica Sizer abstained)**

b. 10/28/2021

**Motion made by Nick Zeo to approve the minutes from 10/28/2021 as written**

**Motion was seconded by Mike Swiatlowski**

**No further discussion**

**Role call vote: Donald Blais, Jr. – aye; Mike Swiatlowski – aye; Nick Zeo – aye; Jessica Sizer – aye; Amber Kumpulanian – aye; Kathy Burns - abstain**

**Motion Caries 5-0-1 (Kathy Burns abstained)**

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

a. Discuss & Finalize OSRP Action Plan Goals & Objectives

The Committee proceeded to discuss and finalize 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 10/28/2021.

The Agent reported that she integrated a few goals and objectives pertaining to health considerations for open space and recreation, as identified in the Palmer Park Access Report that was developed by through the Mass in Motion program of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission. The first goal from this report included in the OSRP states to, “Provide opportunities for all residents to have safe and accessible opportunities to recreate in all seasons in Palmer” and included the following action items: Improve accessibility in and around parks to encourage use by all users through sidewalk maintenance and improvements; visible crosswalks, curb ramps and detectable warning strips at intersections; lighting; and adding benches, shaded rest areas and accessible restrooms; Develop outdoor recreational programming for residents of all age groups including older adults; Explore the development of Shared Use Agreements with the Palmer Schools to allow community use of recreation and fitness facilities after school hours; and, Develop and promote places for winter outdoor recreation. The second goal from this report included in the OSRP states to, “Provide opportunities for people to grow food by siting, constructing and managing at least one community garden on Town-owned property” and included the following action items: Ensure access to community garden opportunities by installing raised beds at heights that are accessible by people in wheelchairs; and, Partner with Pathfinder and Palmer Schools to design and construct raised beds for a community or backyard gardens and to educate residents on how to grow food. These goals and objectives were integrated into Goal 1 of the 7-Year Action Plan.

The Committee finalized 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 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 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 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.

Amber Kumpulanian asked if the Agent had obtained information on the establishment of an Open Space and Recreation Implementation Committee; the Agent reported that she had not obtained information on this at this point. Jessica Sizer added that there is an opportunity to combine this implementation committee with the Master Plan implementation committee because open space is a component of the Master Plan. Nick Zeo supported this idea because it will help avoid duplicating efforts boards and committees with overlapping plans, goals and objectives.

b. Review Draft OSRP Chapters Completed to Date

The Committee reviewed comments they provided on the drafts of Sections 3, 4, and 5. Amber Kumpulanian asked if a motion was necessary to accept the final drafts of these sections; the Agent recommended that the Committee wait to make a motion to accept the final drafts of these sections until the entire draft Open Space and Recreation Plan was ready to review.

The Agent will provide drafts of Sections 1 and 2 for the Committee to review and comment on in preparation for the next meeting.

c. Review ADA transition plan

The Committee reviewed the draft ADA transition plan which was updated to reflect renovations and projects that have occurred at open space and recreation areas since 2014, such as at Endelson playground and at Eager Park. The Agent informed the Committee that the ADA transition plan remains the same for those open space areas that have not been renovated or changed since 2014, and that ADA upgrades aren't feasible at a few other open space areas, such as the Midura Conservation Area and the Pattaquatic/Shaw District.

d. Discuss final components of plan acceptance and approval process

The Committee reviewed the final components of the plan acceptance and approval process, which begins with the acceptance of the final draft plan by the Committee. The plan is then submitted to the Department of Conservation Services for review and comment in which the plan will receive conditional approval and the Committee will be provided with information on any required revisions identified by DCS. At this time the plan will be submitted to the Town Council, the Conservation Commission, the Planning Board, and the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission in order to obtain letters of support. After revising the plan per DCS comments and obtaining letters of support, the final plan will be re-submitted to DCS for final approval. Upon receipt of the final approved plan from DCS, the Town Council will adopt the plan.

**5. Set Next Meeting Date**

- a. The next meeting of the Open Space Advisory Committee Meeting will occur on Wednesday, December 1, 2021 at 3:00 PM via Zoom.

**6. Meeting Adjourned: 3:51 PM**

**Motion made by Mike Swiatlowski adjourn at 3:51 PM**

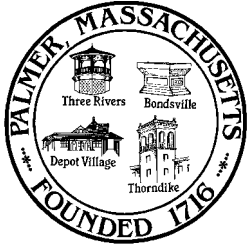
**Motion was seconded by Kathy Burns**

**No further discussion**

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

**Motion Caries 7-0-0**

Sincerely Submitted,  
Sarah A. Fortune  
Interim Conservation Agent



# TOWN OF PALMER

## Open Space Advisory Committee

### Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at 3:00 PM

LOCATION: 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

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: 10/14/2021, 10/28/2021	Approval of Minutes	Retained in 2021 OSRP Minutes
2.	Review & finalize goals & objectives for 2021 Action Plan	New/Old Business	Retained in 2021 OSRP Update
3.	Review ADA transition plan	New/Old Business	Retained in 2014 OSRP Update
4.	Review draft sections 3, 4, and 5 completed to date	New/Old Business	Retained in 2021 OSRP Update