



TOWN OF PALMER

Open Space Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, August 12th, 2021 – 11:30 AM
LOCATION: VIRTUAL VIA ZOOM

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

Contact: Sarah Fortune
Email:
sfortune@townofpalmer.com

Members Present: Donald Blais, Jr.
Nicholas Zeo
Amber Kumpulanian
Mike Swiatlowski
Kelly Bergeron
Kathy Burns

Members Absent: Dave Cotter
Phil Hebert
Lynn Greany
Howard Fife

Also Present: Sarah Fortune, Interim Conservation Agent
Mimi Kaplan, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
Jessica Sizer, Palmer Town Councilor

1. **Call to Order:** 11:30 AM – 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 – present**
 - vii. **Dave Cotter - absent**
 - viii. **Phil Hebert – 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. **7/15/2021**

Motion made by Nick Zeo to approve the minutes from 7/15/2021 as amended
Motion was seconded by Mike Swiatlowski
No further discussion

Role call vote: Donald Blais, Jr. – aye; Nicholas Zeo – aye; Amber Kumpulanian – aye; Mike Swiatlowski – aye; Kelly Bergeron – aye; Kathy Burns - abstain

No further discussion

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

4. New/Old Business

a. Discuss Public Visioning Session

The Public Visioning Session is scheduled to occur on Tuesday, September 28, 2021 from 6:30 to 8 PM. The Committee discussed whether or not to hold the PVS virtually via Zoom or in-person due to the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic at this time. Kelly Bergeron suggested that the meeting occur in a hybrid fashion, allowing both in-person and virtual participation; the Agent reported that her in experience, hybrid meetings are challenging because of a breakdown in communication between in-person and virtual participants. The Committee decided to hold the meeting in-person due to the difficulty of holding hybrid meetings.

The Committee continued to confirm the location the PVS, and the Agent suggested venues such as the Town Hall Meeting Room or Palmer Public Library. Nick Zeo suggested that the PVS be held in the Town Hall Meeting Room as people may be more receptive to this location rather than the library. The Committee agreed to hold the PVS at the Palmer Town Hall; the Agent will confirm that the Meeting Room is available on 9/28/21.

Mimi Kaplan of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission proceeded to give an overview of the PVS agenda which will include a presentation on Open Space Plans, a summary of results from the 2021 Open Space & Recreation Community Survey, and a review of accomplishments since the last plan update in 2014. The PVS will also include breakout group discussions in which participants will form small groups to discuss topics such as conservation, passive recreation opportunities and facilities, active recreation opportunities and facilities, and increasing community involvement in maintenance and improvement of open space areas. Each breakout group will then provide a summary of the goals and objectives for each topic; these goals and objectives will then be compiled into a 7-Year Action Plan to integrate into the 2021 OSRP update.

Amber Kumpulanian inquired as to the role of the Committee members during the PVS. Mimi Kaplan stated that Committee members will facilitate breakout group discussions and take notes. Mike Swiatlowski asked for clarification on the goal of the breakout group discussions. Mimi informed him that the breakout discussions function like an extension of the community survey to gain public input on open space and recreation goals and objectives for the next 7 years. Nick Zeo added that it will be important to discuss general themes identified in the community survey, such as improving facilities and providing more opportunities for the mobility-impaired.

b. Review Survey Results

The Committee proceeded to review results from the open space community survey, which was available for residents to respond from July 1, 2021 to July 30, 2021. The survey was available to take digitally and by hard-copy form; the hard copies were distributed at the Town Hall, the Palmer Public Library, all four (4) Post Offices, and the Senior Center. The survey was also distributed digitally to the local Housing Authority, to the Palmer Public School District, and via several community Facebook groups. The survey was advertised in the local newspaper, on local access TV, and through informational flyers posted at popular community establishments.

There were a total of 200 responses to the open space community survey; 156 responses were online while 44 responses were in hard-copy. The hard-copy surveys had been uploaded into Survey Monkey, which shifted the age group with the most responses slightly; although age groups 30-44 and 45-59 still had the largest response rate, more responses were received from these groups in addition to the 60-75 age cohort. Mimi Kaplan added that the responses represented a good cross section of age groups in the community.

The Committee continued to review results from the hard-copy surveys. Amber Kumpulanian stated that there were two (2) main themes expressed from the results – lack of information on open space areas and lack of maintenance on open space areas. She suggested that public engagement in maintenance and improvement of open space areas would be a great topic for discussion at the PVS.

Nick Zeo suggested that the survey responses be posted online and shared with other town departments and boards as an outreach material. The Agent will post the survey results to the Committee’s website.

c. Review Draft OSRP Section 3: Community Setting

The Committee reviewed the draft of Section 3 of the OSRP which discusses the Community Setting of Palmer. The Committee did not have any revisions or suggestions to make on this section.

d. Review Draft OSRP Section 4: Environmental Inventory

The Agent reported that she is still working to update Section 4, but provided the Committee with the section as updated to date, and requested that the Committee provide comments on it.

5. Set Next Meeting Date

- a. The next meeting of the Open Space Advisory Committee Meeting will occur on Thursday, August 26, 2021 at 11:30 AM via Zoom.

6. Meeting Adjourned: 12:56 PM

Motion made by Nick Zeo to adjourn at 12:56 PM

Motion was seconded by Amber Kumpulanian

No further discussion

Role call vote: Donald Blais, Jr. – aye; Nicholas Zeo – aye; Amber Kumpulanian – aye; Mike Swiatlowski – aye; Kelly Bergeron – aye; Kathy Burns – aye

Vote was Unanimous – Motion Caries

Sincerely Submitted,
Sarah A. Fortune
Interim Conservation Agent



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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: 7/15/2021	Approval of Minutes	Retained in 2021 OSRP Minutes
2.	Online & Hardcopy Survey Results	New/Old Business	Retained in 2021 OSRP Survey
3.	Review Section 3: Community Setting	New/Old Business	Retained in 2021 OSRP Update
4.	Review Section 4: Environmental Inventory	New/Old Business	Retained in 2021 OSRP Update
5.	Review draft agenda for Public Visioning Session	New/Old Business	Retained in 2021 OSRP Update