

Open Space Committee Meeting Minutes
September 13, 2022

Present: Kenley Clark, Paul Kennedy, Sally Loomis, Melinda McCall, Markelle Smith, Holly Hendricks (Planning Board liaison)

Minutes from July 18 were approved.

Submitting the revised OSRP – We need to complete a few lingering tasks and will be ready to resubmit the plan.

Williamsburg conservation initiatives:

- A 20 acre parcel on the Upper Mill River across from Devil’s Den is being gifted to Hilltown Land Trust (HLT) as part of the settlement from the solar array lawsuit. A Conservation Restriction (CR) on the land will be held by Kestrel Trust. HLT has requested that the Conservation Commission support the conservation restriction for the parcel which will be protected with a primary focus on preserving wildlife habitat. There is currently no public access nor road frontage, and the site is quite steep so the site is not a candidate for public recreation. The Select Board will review the Conservation Restriction document at their October 20th meeting. The project should close by December 2022.
- A 132-acre parcel in Goshen, Williamsburg, and Conway is slated for protection per the will of Sylvia Sofinowski. Most likely, HLT will own the land with a Conservation Restriction (CR) held by The Trustees of Reservations. The terms of the Sofinowski will dictate that the land be open for public recreation. The property is in the northwest corner of Williamsburg between Briar Hill Conservation Area and inaccessible land owned by the Town of Goshen. The bulk of the land is in Goshen with 25 acres in Williamsburg. The land offers excellent wildlife habitat, climate resilience, and is a key connection between multiple adjacent conservation areas. **There is a possibility of making a trail connection between this property and the DAR, a project that would fulfill three goals of the Open Space Plan: recreation, resource protection, and collaboration with other towns.**

Funding through the MVP program:

Williamsburg received a \$1.8 million grant from the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program for improving the Public Safety Complex. The funding adds photovoltaics, more insulation, radiant heating for the apparatus bay, and more native plantings along the stream. Other town entities can apply for money from this same funding source grant next year for projects such as a watershed management plan or a master plan. The Planning Board is already working on a Master Plan proposal. It was suggested to get Mimi Kaplan, who lives in Williamsburg and works for Pioneer Valley Planning, on board for any planning processes.

It was noted that MVP plans will need to be updated soon.

Town Commons planning:

Selectman Bill Sayre is bringing people together to form an ad hoc committee to plan for a town commons area around the Public Safety Complex. Eric expressed interest in joining this group.

Review of the Open Space 7-year action plan:

- Town Master Plan: There is some momentum for this in town, but it is unclear how a plan would support open space. A suggestion was made to check other towns' master plans. The Planning Board is leading this effort and it could be supported by MVP funds.
- Pursue adoption of Community Preservation Act: this will take a big push and be challenging but it is a priority. The votes may be there, but a voluntary tax will also face resistance. Someone needs to speak with Bill Sayre. The time frame is so short when land is removed from Chapter 61 and made available to the town. CPA funds would be very helpful for any a quick turn-around purchases such as when land is removed from Chapter 61 and the town has the ability to exercise its right of first refusal to purchase the land. CPA funds are also useful in meeting matching fund requirements for state grants.
- Chapter 61 lands: The Open Space committee has a role to play in keeping ears to the ground about possible land sales. The land trusts all talk to each other so any information would get to the right organization. Educational outreach about donating land to the town has been done in the past, and it would be helpful to do it every few years. MassWoods at UMass sometimes funds conservation outreach that the open space committee could apply for.
- Develop by-laws or siting guidelines for renewable energy: progress has been made on this. The updated regulations are attached.

Other business:

- The Recreation Commission is eligible to apply for state funds to acquire or improve recreational land. Kenley sent them an email that the Open Space Plan has provisional approval so they are eligible to apply for grants.

The next meeting is scheduled for November 15.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.