

Open Space Committee
Minutes
March 14, 7:00

Present: Eric Bloomquist, Kenley Clark, Sally Loomis, Melinda McCall, Markelle Smith

- Minutes from January were approved
- Progress on requested revisions to OSRP before finalized
 - Eric: Needs to add to the special features section. Members brainstormed ideas: Devil's Den, named hills, the monument where three towns come together, Big View, the historic dam site, the Mass Audubon/Graves Farm, cemeteries.
 - Markelle: Needs to add an environmental equity section to environmental challenges. Though Williamsburg does not have an environmental justice population by the state's definition, language can be added to the plan about underserved and vulnerable communities. Sally also added information on Indigenous history of Williamsburg. In a related matter, language should be added for conservation restrictions allowing traditional and indigenous people to use conservation land for cultural practices.
 - Kenley: Needs to add an analysis of needs including the needs of teens, the elderly, and people with disabilities. The relevant information is in the plan and can be pulled together in one section. In addition, she will add in the Greenway Committee's plan to have accessible trails, and ask the Trail Committee about making trail maps more accessible and noting level of difficulty for each trail, and encouraging youth groups to partner with stewardship groups.
 - Sally: Has made progress on her tasks. For Section 5, she needs to expand the table on town-owned properties, and may break out what is protected and what isn't.

Everyone was encouraged to look at Goshen's completed Open Space Plan. Updates should be sent to Sally for addition to the Word documents or entered directly into the google doc version of the plan. The updated plan will then be added to the town website.

- MVP proposal.
 - Sally has been working with a group from town discussing what potential projects could be funded through MVP grants. MVP has two different categories of grants. One is for implementation projects such as land conservation or improving the energy efficiency of the Public Safety Complex and the other is for planning and design projects such as a town Master Plan or Watershed Management plan. These types of projects require separate applications.
 - One idea was to buy the Orwat property for protection, but a neighbor is in the process of buying it for the same purpose. The Hodgkins property is also a good candidate, but the owner is unwilling to drop the price to the appraised value. Markelle will approach a potential conservation buyer in hopes that the property could become protected. Two options were discussed. The town could own the land and Hilltown Land Trust could hold the conservation restriction, or Hilltown Land Trust could own the land and the Conservation Commission could hold the CR. Settlement funds from the solar settlement

could be used to partially fund protection of this land. An additional potential benefit from obtaining the Hodgkins property is the possibility of building affordable housing along the road. The location is good since it is close to town and the bus route. The adjacent farmland could be made into a community farm.

- MVP acquisition projects are generally given one year to complete so any transaction would need to be completed by June 2023. Other types of projects can go over two years.
- Hilltown Land Trust will soon own 20 acres near Devil's Den between the river and the solar panels as a result from the state settlement with the solar company. Kestrel will hold a CR on the land.
- New priority maps are available from Audubon, which is looking to expand its conservation efforts.
- The next meeting is scheduled for May 10. The goal is to have the Open Space Plan finished and to move on to choosing projects the action plan to work on.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:40