

TOWN OF BRIDGEWATER, MASSACHUSETTS
OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE
February 25, 2021
FINAL Meeting Minutes

Attendance:

Committee Members: Eileen Hiney, Chair, Nicole Holmes, Maureen Minasian, Lauren Webb (non-voting new member)

Member Absent: Kevin Mandeville

Others: Steve Solbo, Town Environmental Planner, Pat Neary, Melissa Ramondetta

1. The meeting, conducted on Zoom, began at 4:35 pm. A quorum was present. At the February, 25th Town Council meeting, Lauren Webb was approved as a new committee member and will become an official member once she is sworn in. Lauren introduced herself and was welcomed by committee members. Eileen gave a brief overview of the recent history of the committee. Eileen said that Town Manager, Michael Dutton, was unable to attend the meeting but she will update him and solicit his input on the items on the agenda on a phone call scheduled for March 3rd.

2. Old Business

a. **Approve revised Statement of Purpose.** Revisions to the Committee's existing Statement of Purpose have been discussed at a number of prior meetings but no final action was ever taken. Eileen shared proposed revisions, with deletions and insertions (highlighted) which address earlier committee discussions. The revisions, as shown below, including an addition of "and buffers" in paragraph ii as suggested by Ms. Ramondetta, were unanimously approved.

PROPOSED REVISIONS:

*The Open Space Committee advises and otherwise assists the Town Manager on the preservation of open space and updating the Open Space Plan. The Committee evaluates opportunities for the acquisition and protection of open space parcels against a number of: criteria, including whether the Town's acquisition of the parcels would **to advance the following objectives:***

- (i) *help preserve Bridgewater's **semi-rural** character,*
- (ii) *protect Bridgewater's water resources **and buffers,***
- (iii) *abut or conjoin existing conservation lands,*
- (iv) *provide public access for walking, biking or other passive recreation,*
- (v) *preserve or enhance distinctive streetscapes, views or vistas, ~~or~~*
- (vi) *preserve important wildlife and/or vegetation habitat,*
- (vii) ***limit the impacts of climate change,***
- (viii) ***contribute to long-term environmental sustainability.***

To this end, the Committee works with Town residents, local officials, state and federal agencies, and private nonprofit land conservation organizations to further these open space objectives. The Committee advises the Town Manager on the development and content of the Open Space Plan. The Open Space Committee is an advisory committee in the Town.

b. **Community Preservation fund projects.** At the last OSC meeting we discussed possible projects that might be eligible for CPA funds, including uniform signage for town parks and creating better access and parking for the Murray Needs property. Eileen has attended three recent Community Preservation Committee meetings to better understand the criteria and process for awarding CP grants.

3. New Business

a. High Street dam removal/bridge replacement at Iron Works Park. Michael Dutton asked a number of town committees, including Open Space, to be part of a federal “Section 106 consultation process” for this project. There is likely to be a finding of “adverse impact” on the historic High Street bridge as a result of the dam removal. This finding will entitle the town to receive Section 106 mitigation funds. Two meetings were held in February with representatives from the town, federal and state agencies, and consultants, to discuss possible mitigation measures. One likely measure will be design and placement of signs and kiosks at the site describing the historic importance of the bridge and dam and the industrial history of the area. During the first call, Eileen suggested that the mitigation effort might present an opportunity to rehabilitate the entire Iron Works Park if the town could provide funds for additional work to supplement the mitigation measures. A site visit is scheduled for March 16. Work on this project would not start before 2022.

b. Tree ordinance. Nicole discussed the clear-cutting of forested land that has taken place in recent years at developments in the Cherry St. area. She reported on her research into measures that have been adopted in some towns to protect trees. Measures can be in the form of tree ordinances that can apply to all areas of town, or subdivision regulations that can ensure that some minimum number of trees are left standing when property is cleared for construction. The committee is in favor of investigating options for Bridgewater to preserve trees.

c. Toole property. (Should have been under Old Business) As mentioned at a prior meeting, in 1996, 9 acres on Pleasant St was given to the town for a park. The possibility of creating a trail from this property to gain access to the Murray Needs Farm has been discussed. Eileen spoke with Joan Pierce, of the MA Fish and Game southeast office who is very familiar with the entire area; she believes it is far too wet and overgrown for development of a trail to Murray Needs. A separate issue remains with respect to what to do with this parkland.

d. Jennie Lenard Park. This 10.4 A parcel on Cherry St was a playground at one time but it was not maintained and all playground fixtures have been removed. Eileen reported that she was asked about this status of this park at a recent Community Preservation Committee meeting. With the large new residential developments in that area, the town may want to consider restoring this park.

e. Lake Nippenicket property. This open space parcel was acquired for preservation in 2011 with CPA funds. Some aspects of the project as defined at the time have not been fully implemented, including some commitments made by MA Fish & Game. Eileen contacted Joan Pierce with MA F&G’s southeast office and is arranging to visit the property with her in the near future.

f. Other properties. At a recent Community Preservation Committee meeting, a question was raised about water quality at town-owned water bodies. Some towns have granted Community Preservation funds to study invasive aquatic vegetation at town lands. An assessment of water quality at Carver Pond, and other town water bodies, should be considered. Eileen contacted Scott McFayden at Wildlands Trust about that organization’s land-protection priorities in BW. He identified the Taunton River corridor as of primary concern.

4. Next Meeting. Committee meetings have been on an ad hoc basis to date. The members present decided to establish the 4th Thursday of each month, at 4:30 pm, as the regular meeting time going forward. The next meeting will be Thursday, March 25, 2021 at 4:30 pm.

5. Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 6:00 pm.