

**TOWN OF BRIDGEWATER, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE**  
**March 25, 2021 Meeting Minutes**

**Attendance:**

Committee Members: Eileen Hiney, Chair, Nicole Holmes, Maureen Minasian, Lauren Webb, Kevin Mandeville  
Others: Michael Dutton, Town Manager, Ms. Latoia, interested citizen

1. The meeting, conducted on Zoom, began at 4:35 pm. A quorum was present.
2. Minutes of the February 25, 2021 meeting, as circulated prior to the meeting, were unanimously approved.

**3. Old Business**

The following items were discussed at the February 25<sup>th</sup> meeting, and subsequently discussed on a March 3<sup>rd</sup> phone call between Eileen Hiney, Michael Dutton, Town Manager, and Steve Solbo, Town Environmental Planner. Michael Dutton provided additional information and responded to questions and comments related to each topic.

**Tree ordinance/subdivision regulations.** A Planning Department staff member has researched tree ordinances and a proposal was presented to the Planning Board to create a board/committee to develop standards for shade tree management. The board/committee will be set up once the new DPW Director and Roadways Superintendent are appointed. Nicole noted that shade tree management would not address the issue of clear-cutting large tracts for subdivision development. Lauren said that planting shade trees cannot replicate the value of mature forests and trees. Michael will send to this committee information related to tree planting and care including a memo written by town staff. He suggested the committee have a conversation with Jennifer Burke about the about the feasibility of making changes to the Planning Boards Rules and Regs and/or zoning to encourage protection of open space and mature trees as part of subdivision development. He also suggested having a joint meeting with the Planning Board.

**Toole property.** This 9-acre parcel on Pleasant St was given to the town for a park years ago but no plans for a park were ever developed. The site is currently one of a number of parcels the town is considering for the location of a new fire station. The possibility of creating a trail from this property to gain access to the Murray Needs Farm has been discussed. An in-depth consideration of development of a park or a connecting trail will be more feasible after a decision is made about the fire station. Ms. Latoia questioned if anything can be built on the parcel if it is conservation land, as she understands it is.

**Jennie Lenard Park.** This 10.4-acre parcel on Cherry St was given to the town as a playground. For some time, it was maintained by volunteers but no one has maintained it for years. Michael said that the Lehtola family, the original developer of the subdivision adjacent to this parcel, agreed to provide parking for the park. Because of the steep access to the property there were subsequent concerns about how to make it fully accessible. The 3<sup>rd</sup> phase of the Lehtola subdivision, which is adjacent to the park parcel, was subsequently transferred to Longbuilt Homes. The Planning Board decision should be reviewed to determine what was stated with respect to the park. Nicole asked if Bridgewater has a mechanism for developers to contribute to long-term maintenance plans for open space/parks within new subdivisions, as is done in some cities. Michael suggested talking to Jennifer Burke about this.

**Uniform signage for town lands.** Michael mentioned a couple of prior efforts to create a “brand” for town properties that the Town Council declined to pursue. The development of the Stiles & Hart property will include a plan for signage. The removal of the High Street Dam and reconstruction of the High Street Bridge is expected to result in some enhancements to the Iron Works Park, which may include design and placement of new signage. Creation of a design for signage at these two parks will not be undertaken for a while. In the meantime, this committee could pursue

development of a plan for consistent signage related to all town parks and conservation lands. A joint meeting with the Conservation Commission might be a next step. A professional signage consultant would likely need to be hired to create a plan for placement and design of signs.

**Water quality.** Michael will ask the Health Agent about what water quality testing takes place at town water bodies.

**Identification of Chapter 61 properties.** A report on Chapter 61 properties can be obtained from the Assessor's office. Also, as part of the FY 2022 budget process, the town is reviewing the status of all undeveloped properties in town in order to project future growth. This could be a useful inventory for this committee.

### 3. New Business

**a. 3/24 Community Preservation Forum.** Eileen attended this forum, which is held annually by the Community Preservation Committee to solicit input from the public. Comments were made at the forum concerning the following topics related to open space:

- a need for better signage for all town public lands
- a potential trail connection from the Toole property to Murray Needs Farm
- preservation of agricultural lands, including outreach to landowners and creating a Chapter 61 properties list
- whether the town will be able to fill the parklands steward position, which had been approved and advertised prior to the start of Covid but was put on hold. Michael said it will be reposted.

**b. MA Open Space Conference session links.** This Zoom conference was held on four Thursdays in March. Eileen attended 2 of the 1.5 hour sessions and recommends them as a good learning tool related to open space committee issues. The seminar sessions can be viewed at [YouTube channel](#). Other resources and links can be found at <https://massopenspaceconference.wordpress.com/>

**c. Old State Farm trail/trail map.** Eileen forwarded to committee members an email message and map about this new trail, which she received recently from Kitty Doherty.

**4. Next Meeting.** Committee meetings are normally held on the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of each month. The April meeting will be rescheduled and held on the 5<sup>th</sup> Thursday, April 29<sup>th</sup>, at 4:30 pm via Zoom.

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