



AMESBURY

CITY HALL
62 Friend Street
Amesbury, MA 01913

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By City Clerk at 12:36 pm, Aug 29, 2024

Amesbury Open Space, Natural Resources, and Trails Committee MEETING MINUTES July 24, 2024, 7:00 p.m.

This meeting was conducted under the "Executive Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law" G.L. c. 30A, Section 20, signed on March 12, 2020.

Attending: Jonathan Sherwood, Jessica Redfern, Rich Hucksam, Pascal Rettig, Michelle Faucher, Alison McKay (Amesbury Conservation Agent)

- Call to Order
- Minutes from June 25, 2024 Meeting. Minutes not available at this time for approval; no action taken.
- Public Comment: None at this time
- Communications: Alison McKay introduced herself to OSNRTC in her new role as Agent. OSNRTC members also introduced themselves.
- Chair's Report:
 - Sherwood provided update on the City's communications with the Commonwealth regarding the Priority Habitat Area designation at Woodsom Farm. Based on shared communications between the DPW Director Joseph Buckley and contact at Mass Wildlife, it seems that the City's position may be that the mowing represents a practice that pre-existed the habitat designation and that permission to mow is not required, under the guiding regulations. This conclusion was not clear from Sherwood's understanding of the regulations and the communications from the Commonwealth.
 - Trail assessment contract with Matthew Smith / Woodsman Inc has been signed. Scope of work, maps, and gpx files of the trails have been provided to the consultant. Work will start in August on 19th on the project.
 - Contract for land management planning for Battis Farm and Powow Hill Conservation Area with Bill Geizentanner / The Collaborative has been signed and will be starting up soon.
- Referrals: New referral to take up in August – 2024-096, regarding expanded solar array zoning to parcel off Meadowbrook pond. Also referred to Planning Board. City Council 2nd reading will be September 25th; need recommendation before then. Committee generally reviewed nexus for OSNRTC to review this type of ordinance – review in context of Open Space and Recreation Plan, in particular the various prioritization maps. The parcel slated for re-zoning is currently zoned

for residential, question may be a matter of which is least negatively impactful, solar or residential.

- **Scheduled Business:**

- Management Recommendations for Mayor Gove and Conservation Commission, based on final Town Forest – Woodsom Farm management report:

- Rettig had previously proposed starting with the ‘near term’ focused recommendations in the Audubon report. Sherwood extracted key near term recommendations into a document for review and discussion. Upon discussion, the following recommendations were approved

- **Increase Value of Woodsom Farm for Grassland Bird Breeding** (Who: DPW; Resources: Operating Budget)

- *Maintain current zones mowed for grassland bird breeding*
- *Expand grassland bird breeding zones mowing practice to also include the Natural Heritage Priority Habitat Area 2151, leaving it un-mowed (save for established walking lanes) from May 15 – August 15*
- *Move to mowing all identified grassland bird zones every 2nd or 3rd year, with thatching, if more economical, as laid out in the report*
- *DPW continues to mow field ‘trails’/lanes regularly, for public use*

- **Develop and Adopt Rules and Regulations for Town Forest and Woodsom Farm Governing Allowed/Excluded Activities** (Who: OSNRTC; Acceptance and Enforcement: Conservation Commission and City, respectively)

- *Woodsom Farm*
 - i. *Clarify what activities are and are not allowed in mowed and un-mowed areas.*
 - ii. *Clearly mark use areas with signage.*
- *Town Forest*
 - i. *Prohibit trail-building and trail modification without permission of Conservation Commission*

- **Educate Public, Including Signage and Outreach, Regarding the Ecological Benefits Provided by Woodsom Farm, the Great Swamp, and the Town Forest** (Who: OSNRTC, with community partners; Resources: CPA, Grant Funding)

- **Improve Management of Off-Leash Dogs at Woodsom Farm** (Who: OSNRTC + DPW + OCA; Resources: CPA [signage and fencing], Donations, Volunteer Time)

- *Install signage and symbolic fencing for use during bird breeding season (May 15 – August 15) along key routes, promoting on-leash practices and explaining breeding activity. Increase enforcement of leash law during this period.*
- *Explore siting a fenced dog-park in town*

- **Improve Trail Management in the Town Forest** (Who: OSNRTC, Community Groups, Conservation Agent, DPW; Resources: Donations, Volunteer Time)

- *Conservation Agent and DPW work with OSNRTC and volunteer organizations to develop standing plans for volunteer-driven trail maintenance and stewardship, including mitigation of trails in wetlands*

- **Tackle Invasive Plant Intrusions** (Who: OSNRTC, Community Organizations, DPW, Conservation Agent; Resources: Operating Budget, Volunteer Time)

- *Survey and identify priority areas to mitigate invasive plant infestations*
- *Develop and implement site-specific mitigation plans, including use of volunteers*

- *Have DPW personnel licensed as herbicide applicators*

[Hucksam motion, Redfern second, recommendations unanimously approved]
Recommendations will be sent to Mayor Gove and Conservation Commission. Councilor Redfern will work on getting a presentation on the Council's agenda in September

- Motion to adjourn, Rettig; Hucksam seconded. Unanimous.

Minutes unanimously approved at 08/2802024 meeting, respectfully submitted by Jonathan Sherwood, Chair, OSNRTC