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CITY HALL
62 Friend Street
Amesbury, MA 01913

**Amesbury Open Space, Natural Resources, and Trails Committee
MEETING MINUTES
April 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, Rich Hucksam, Pascal Rettig, Councilor Jessica Redfern, Michelle Faucher, Fred Zackon Bill Giezentanner from Mass Audubon

- Call to Order
- Minutes from February 28, 2024 meeting. Unanimously approved.
- Public Comment: No public comment
- Communications:
 - As Planning Board Chair, Pascal Rettig signed and transmitted in April 2024 to the American Farmland Trust a letter acknowledging the designation of some parcels in Amesbury as farmland 'of local importance,' as there wasn't any objections from the Mayor's Office.
 - OSNRTC chair Jonathan Sherwood sent an email, with attachments, of the established mowing recommendations for Woodson Farm and Battis Farm (2017 & 2021) to both the Mayor's office and to Joe Buckley, the Director of Department Public Works.
- Chair's Report:
 - OSNRTC chair Sherwood developed a scope of work for a trails assessment, for utilizing some remaining ARPA funds. The City has received a quote from a vendor, consistent with the scope. Sherwood is attempting to also develop a scope of work for a feasibility study for a fully accessible all user, ADA compliant trail.
 - ARPA funds are currently committed to Mass Audubon Extension Service (Consulting) for Town Forest – Woodsom Farm Plan. For July – December 2024, there is a plan for Mass Audubon Extension Service to develop an additional land management report for Battis Farm – Powow Hill Conservation Area.
 - Sherwood brought up activities of the Lake Gardner Improvement Association, which has been expanding its trail and beach stewardship activities around Lake Gardner; LGIA and OSNRTC both interested in collaborating with the City on volunteer-based stewardship work. Zackon

asked about next steps and concrete actions that could be taken in this regard. Sherwood suggested having representatives from LGIA come to a meeting this summer to discuss. Michelle Faucher requested information regarding when LGIA meets; she'd like to start attending their meetings.

- Referrals: None at this time
- Ongoing Projects:
 - Woodsom Farm – Town Forest Management Plan - Bill Geizentanner/Mass Audubon. Discussion focused on the draft Goals and Objectives in the draft management plan, as developed and presented by Bill Geizentanner. As a starting point, the goals and objectives will aim at an ideal state (without necessarily considering budget and other constraints), though the actual management recommendations to be developed later will take constraints into account. Context: Woodsom Farm is some of the most valuable grassland bird breeding habitat in the Northeast; the City is the steward of this valuable property. First objective, 'zone' Woodsom Farm into areas where allowable/unallowable activities are clearly defined. Second, develop a sustainable mowing and land management plan for Woodsom that ensures long-term viability of fields for public enjoyment and prioritization of grassland bird breeding. Third, develop a public education program that highlights the values of the Woodsom property, as well as educates regarding management practices and allowed uses. For Town Forest, recommend developing a forest management plan.

Discussion ensued regarding mowing plan. Hucksam asked if the 2009 bird survey has been refreshed with any newer survey, to assess success (or not) of current mowing practices. Geizentanner noted this is beyond scope of current project but Mass Audubon could perhaps organize a separate survey and train some volunteers, agreeing that this would be valuable, as the survey is 15 years old.

Retting brought up from the March forum that there were user groups with clearly conflicting uses and goals. Retting applauded Objective #3, emphasizing education and need to clarify what is allowed and where. Redfern noted that defining the zones of activities is a critical part of this. She also noted that education is great but enforcement will be needed, as well. Sherwood reviewed history of Article 97 protection and the previous attempt to formally define zones and restrictions, which failed at that time.

Rettig noted that public education will be important but municipal leadership buy-in will also be very important, to be effective. For example, the issue of dogs off leash at Woodsom will take a lot of work to impact how people behave currently.

Sherwood had some suggestions for goals and objectives, specifically to drop in information from the 2020 OSR Plan and the 2023 Conservation and Stewardship goals and objectives.

Faucher brought up invasive species and suggested that OSNRTC get more involved in educating the public about invasive and native species both.

Next steps: Geizentanner will deliver a revised draft in April, then suggested a second public forum in May or June. Sherwood will try to get an article in the Daily News and has been invited to appear on the Local Pulse podcast out of the Daily News as well. Get City to post information about the event on Facebook as well. Sherwood will work on scheduling a second public form.

- Other Business: None
- Motion to adjourn by Zackon, seconded by Rettig. Unanimous.

Minutes unanimously approved at 06/25/2024 meeting, respectfully submitted by Jonathan Sherwood, Chair, OSNRTC