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CITY HALL

1 Market Street Amesbury, MA 01913

Amesbury Open Space, Natural Resources, and Trails Committee MEETING MINUTES June 24, 2026, 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, Chair; Rich Hucksam; Jessica Redfern; Pascal Rettig; Amanda Armington (City of Amesbury) **Absent:** Fred Zackon (illness), Craige Hird (traveling) **Guests:** None

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at approximately 7:00 p.m. by Chair Sherwood.

Minutes from April 24, 2026 Meeting: The minutes were not yet available as the transcription had not been finalized. Armington will search for the recording or transcript to assist the Chair in drafting them.

Public Comment: None.

Communications – Mowing / Grassland Birds at Battis Farm:

Chair Sherwood reported concerns regarding mowing at Battis Farm during nesting season for Bobolinks and Killdeer. He noted that Field A was approximately one-third mowed, but he had sighted and heard Bobolinks in the remaining unmowed section. Discussion ensued regarding the 2020 management study which recommends rotating fallow fields to support bird populations. Armington noted that mowing schedules are tied to DPW contracts and the application of water treatment sludge on certain fields. The Committee agreed that Sherwood and Redfern would send a formal request to DPW Director Joe Buckley suggesting the remainder of Field A be left unmowed until the nesting season concludes. Armington will also advocate for the Conservation Commission (ConCom) to formally adopt the mowing plan for future years.

Chair's Report:

- **Invasives Demonstration Project – RDAs** Work at Woodsom Farm is complete; the focus has shifted to the Lake Gardner shoreline near Po Hill. The committee is preparing a Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA) for invasive removal at the Lake Gardner beach area to the trail junctions. **Regulatory Update:** Armington clarified that per 333 CMR 10, herbicides cannot

be applied on city property by unlicensed individuals. A licensed applicator must be present even for minor "cut and dab" activities.

- **Craige Hird – Summer Absence** Hird is traveling abroad for the summer and will return in August. ii. Sherwood recently attended a Community Preservation Committee (CPC) meeting in Hird's place to ensure open space priorities were represented in the draft CPA plan.
- **Draft Invasive Plant Management Plan** The plan has been sent to the Conservation Commission and is scheduled for review on July 6, 2026. Armington will collect and forward their comments to the Committee.

Referrals:

- **Update: Rocky Hill / Clark Road Development** Armington reported that the applicant has revised plans to move stormwater basins out of the 25-foot wetland buffer. A new trail plan focusing on connectivity between adjacent parcels is being developed by the city's project manager and landscape architect.
- No other referrals at this time.

Other Business:

- **Trail Management and Stewardship Plan - Draft** Sherwood presented a draft framework for town-wide trail stewardship, developed using AI assistance (Gemini) to synthesize MA DCR trail standards and content from the Mass Audubon Extension management reports. The plan aims to provide a formal structure for volunteer groups like Amesbury Outdoors (formerly LGIA) to perform maintenance in concert with the City and the Conservation Commission. This Plan would bring consistency to efforts and help guide decision-making. **Liability and Permitting:** The Committee discussed the need for a hierarchy of work. Pascal suggested a "waiver plus education" system where volunteers sign liability releases and confirm they understand what activities (e.g., clearing debris vs. using chainsaws) are permitted. General concern was expressed for the need for liability waivers for anyone performing volunteer work on public properties. **Trail Uses:** The draft includes standards for different users, including mountain bikers and equestrian use. Sherwood noted that MA DCR's trail standards for bike use would rule out most of the woodland and farm trails in Amesbury, so we will need to consider if those standards should be adopted. The plan also contemplates use by horse riders; Amesbury has several horse farms adjacent to public trails. Redfern will contact local horse farm owners to gather data on current trail usage. **E-Bikes:** Members discussed the rise of high-speed electric motorbikes on trails. The Committee may explore a city ordinance to regulate non-pedal-assist electric bikes if state laws remain unclear. This Draft Plan will be reviewed at OSNRTC's next meeting (July 22, 2026).

- **Park Benches** Amesbury Outdoors has expressed interest in installing memorial benches at Woodsom Farm. The Committee discussed the need for standardizing bench types (e.g., teak or metal) and footing specifications to ensure safety and prevent erosion in buffer zones.
- **All Persons Trail** Sherwood and a consultant toured several sites (Battis, Batchelder Park, Deer Island) to assess suitability for an accessible trail. Batchelder Park was identified as a strong candidate, though it would require the addition of dedicated parking spots to be truly accessible. The Committee is considering a CPA application for planning and specification costs.

Unplanned Items: i.

- Armington introduced a new comprehensive data sheet tracking care and custody, usage, and resource areas for 18 major city-owned open space parcels. Committee members will review this to provide input on which department should hold long-term jurisdiction over specific sites.

Adjourn: Moved by Redfern. Meeting adjourned at 8:29 p.m.

Minutes unanimously approved at 09/23/26 meeting and respectfully submitted by Jonathan Sherwood, Chair, OSNRTC