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AMESBURY

CITY HALL
62 Friend Street
Amesbury, MA 01913

**Amesbury Open Space, Natural Resources, and Trails Committee
MEETING MINUTES
February 28, 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. Council Wheeler attended, from the public

- Call to Order
- Welcome new members Michelle Faucher and Fred Zackon; Mr. Zackon is representing the Conservation Commission on OSNRTC.
- Organization for 2024: Sherwood appointed chair, Rich Hucksam appointed vice-chair, and Michelle Faucher appointed Secretary. Unanimous.
- Minutes from December 13, 2023 meeting:
- Public Comment: No public comment
- Chair's Report:
 - City Council will be establishing a "Community Preservation Committee" (CPC) in 2024 and may need an OSNRTC Committee member appointed to it, depending on the ordinance approved by the Council.
 - OSNRTC Committee has one citizen vacancy at present.
 - The City applied for a grant from the Commonwealth focusing upon coastal redevelopment funds upgrading the City Marina with sidewalk improvements, crosswalks, and plans to install a boardwalk that is publicly accessible from the City Marina launch to Alliance Park. Sherwood penned a letter in supporting indicating that the proposal was in line with several objectives in the 2020-2027 Open Space and Recreation Plan.
- Update on ARPA funds:
- Currently committed to Mass Audubon Extension Service (Consulting) for Town Forest – Woodsom Farm Plan
- July – December 2024 Plan for Mass Audubon Extension Service for Battis Farm – Powow Hill Plan
- In works:

- Trail Assessment for Town Forest, Woodsom Farm, and Battis/Powow Hill
- Feasibility Study ADA compliant trail
- Referrals: None at this time
- Schedule Business:
 - Town Forest – Woodsom Farm Mass Audubon report: Draft report is done, minus land use objectives and related management recommendations. Committee will plan a public educational event in late March/early April for presenting the preliminary report from Mass Audubon. Suggested location: Shay Elementary School. Sherwood will explore dates and locations.
 - SJC decision Carroll v. Select Board of Norwell – Summary: Rich Hucksam provided a summary of this recent important Massachusetts Supreme Justice Court's decision in Carroll v Select Board of Norwell. In essence, the court held that "if town-owned land is 'held . . . for a specific purpose,' that land cannot be diverted to another, inconsistent use until it has been determined by the 'board or officer having charge of [the] land' that the land is no longer needed for that purpose." This strengthens the status of land held explicitly, for example, for passive recreation and conservation purposes, e.g. land in Amesbury currently under the care and custody of the Conservation Commission by action of the City Council.
 - USDA Farmlands of Local Importance Designation – Rettig introduced this request from the Massachusetts USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and the American Farmland Trust to review agricultural parcels in Amesbury for potential designation as USDA 'farmlands of local importance.' This designation may open the door in the future to federal funds for the preservation of important farmland. These organizations have worked with 34 communities in Massachusetts to date on this review. There appear to be no downsides to approving this review (it brings no restrictions on any property). The review can be approved public officials including the chair of the Planning Board (Rettig) or of the local Open Space committee (Sherwood). Both reluctant to act without involvement from the City. Rettig will draft letter to Mayor and Planning Director (Nipun Jain) describing the request and asking for any objection to proceeding with approval, will copy Sherwood.
- Motion to adjourn by Zackon, seconded by Rettig. Unanimous.

Minutes unanimously approved at 04/24/2024 meeting, respectfully submitted by Jonathan Sherwood, Chair, OSNRTC