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CITY HALL
62 Friend Street
Amesbury, MA 01913

**Amesbury Open Space, Natural Resources, and Trails Committee
MEETING MINUTES
December 13, 2023, 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, Fred Zackon, Pascal Rettig, Richard Hucksam, Jessica Redfern, Craige Hird, Amanda Armington (City of Amesbury)

- Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. by Chair Sherwood. The Chair noted that the meeting was being recorded in accordance with Open Meeting Law requirements.
- Minutes from October 22, 2025: Minutes from the October 22, 2025 meeting were not available for review. Approval was deferred to a future meeting.
- Public Comment: None
- Chair's Report:
 - New Committee Member
Chair Sherwood welcomed Craige Hird, recently confirmed by the City Council. Mr. Hird introduced himself and described his interest in open space, trails, and conservation, noting his background and recent move to Amesbury. Committee members and staff introduced themselves in turn.
 - Administrative Items
Discussion was held regarding the use of meeting recordings and transcripts to assist with preparation of minutes. Members agreed that AI-assisted summarization could be a helpful tool provided the final minutes remain focused on actions and decisions. Rettig will assist with production of minutes.
- Updates:
 - Invasives Demonstration Project – Woodsom Farm
 - i. Chair Sherwood provided an update on the proposed invasive species demonstration project at Woodsom Farm. The proposal was submitted to the Mayor's office in late October with a letter of support from the Sustainability and Conservation Planner.
 - ii. The Mayor referred the proposal to the Director of Public Works due to tree and vegetation management concerns.

- iii. No response has yet been received from DPW.
 - iv. Amanda Armington offered to follow up directly with DPW staff to move the review forward.
 - v. Chair Sherwood reiterated that the project is intended as a pilot / demonstration effort, aimed at establishing a repeatable model for invasive plant management on City-owned land in partnership with local volunteer groups.
- Invasive Plant Management / Batchelder (Po Hill) Park Update
 - i. Ms. Armington provided context on recent vegetation clearing and improvements underway at Batchelder (Po Hill) Park, funded by private donations through the Lake Gardner Improvement Association and overseen by City staff.
 - ii. Work includes invasive removal, trail improvements, and modest park amenities.
 - iii. The area is not under OSNRTC or Conservation Commission jurisdiction.
 - iv. Members discussed the importance of proactive public communication to avoid misunderstandings about tree removal.
 - v. Consensus emerged that clearer City messaging would help explain the project's goals and funding source.
- Referrals:
 - **2025-121 – Acceptance of a Quitclaim Deed for a Parcel of Land at 47.5–57 Kimball Road (Subdivision Open Space Parcel)**
 - i. Chair Sherwood summarized the referral, noting that related City Council orders were withdrawn without prejudice and are expected to be resubmitted in January.
 - ii. Using GIS and Open Space & Recreation Plan maps, the Committee discussed:
 - 1. Location and configuration of the parcel
 - 2. Existing informal trail use
 - 3. Wetland and habitat value
 - 4. Proximity to Kimball Road, Ashley Drive, Lake Attitash, and Town Forest connections
 - 5. Potential recreational and conservation benefits
 - iii. Key points raised:
 - 1. The Conservation Commission has already voted to accept care and custody of the parcel.

2. The parcel scores highly on drinking water protection and habitat priority maps.
 3. Members discussed whether permanent restrictions were already established as part of the original cluster subdivision approval, and whether additional protections may be required upon conveyance.
 4. Potential long-term City responsibilities (e.g., tree management, sewer easement access) were noted.
- iv. No formal recommendation was issued, as the matter has not yet been formally re-referred. The Committee agreed it would be prepared to act promptly once the order returns from City Council.
- Other Business:
 - Meeting Schedule
The Committee agreed to continue meeting on the fourth Wednesday of each month, with flexibility in November and December. Staff will set up a recurring calendar invitation for 2026.
 - Future Planning – Open Space & Recreation Plan Update
 - i. Chair Sherwood raised the upcoming need to update the City's Open Space & Recreation Plan (2020–2027), noting:
 1. Much of the baseline data already exists
 2. Significant progress has been made on prior action items
 3. Community Preservation Act funds may be eligible to support the update
 4. A more robust public engagement process would be desirable
 5. Members agreed this should be a key discussion topic in early 2026.
 - Motion to adjourn: Moved by Zackon, seconded by Rettig. Unanimously approved.

Minutes unanimously approved at 01/28/2026 meeting, respectfully submitted by Jonathan Sherwood, Chair, OSNRTC