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AMESBURY
CITY HALL
62 Friend Street
Amesbury, MA 01913

Amesbury Open Space, Natural Resources, and Trails Committee
MEETING MINUTES
July 22, 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; Fred Zackon; Jessica Redfern; Richard Hucksam; Pascal Rettig

Absent: Amanda Armington (City of Amesbury, illness); Craige Hird (hiatus/summer travels)

Guests: Nancy Maynes (resident, Energy, Environment, and Sustainability Committee & Solid Waste Subcommittee)

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at approximately 7:05 p.m. by Chair Sherwood. The Chair noted that the meeting was being recorded and that a quorum was present.

Minutes from April 24, 2026 and June 24, 2026 Meetings:

- **April 24, 2026 Minutes:** Chair Sherwood noted that the April minutes were highly abbreviated as they had to be recreated from notes because a transcript was never finalized. Zackon moved to accept the April minutes as submitted; Hucksam seconded. Unanimously approved.
- **June 24, 2026 Minutes:** Because Redfern and Rettig had not yet had an opportunity to review the draft, the June minutes were carried over and tabled to the next meeting. Zackon noted that he would abstain on the vote since he was absent from the June meeting.
- **Website Status:** Sherwood confirmed that all past agendas and minutes are currently up to date on the city's website, and he will submit the approved April minutes to keep the record current.

Public Comment: Guest Nancy Maynes introduced herself as a resident of Hillside Avenue (Route 150) and a member of the Energy, Environment, and Sustainability Committee and the Solid Waste Subcommittee. She shared updates on two municipal initiatives:

- **Municipal Energy Aggregation:** Maynes explained that the town uses a third-party supplier to negotiate lower electricity rates for residents. The base rate was recently around 14 cents per kilowatt-hour, representing a substantial savings compared to standard utility rates. She noted that savings from this aggregation program generate enough revenue to fund a half-time Energy Manager position for the town.

- **Solid Waste and Composting:** The Solid Waste Subcommittee is encouraging backyard composting and exploring a contract with a commercial composting operator to reduce waste weight. She reported that City Council recently approved a new trash bin sticker program costing $100 per sticker to offset municipal trash collection costs. Stickers will be available in the fall, followed by a multi-month grace period to allow residents time to transition. The committee discussed logistics, potential sticker theft, and unique numbering systems to link stickers to specific addresses.

Communications: None reported.

Chair's Report:

- **Community Preservation Committee (CPC) Plan:** Chair Sherwood attended the CPC meeting earlier that evening on behalf of Craige Hird, who is traveling. The CPC is in the final stages of drafting and completing the appendices of the first Community Preservation Plan, with the goal of finalizing it tonight.
- **CPA Funding Schedule:** The city is scheduled to open the application process for CPA funds in August. Applications will undergo review by the CPC before recommendations are forwarded to City Council, which serves as the final appropriator. The timeline culminates at the end of the fiscal year in June 2027. Sherwood noted that over $500,000 is currently on hand for this first funding round. Hird will resume his role as the OSNRTC representative to the CPC upon his return in August.

Referrals:

- **Invasive Plant Management Plan – Returned from ConCom Review:** Chair Sherwood reported that the Conservation Commission (ConCom) reviewed the draft plan and expressed general support with no major concerns. Amanda Armington had previously provided a key regulatory clarification regarding herbicides: under state regulations (333 CMR 10), private property owners may apply over-the-counter herbicides (such as Roundup) without a license, but applications on city-owned property require a licensed applicator. The draft has been updated to reflect this requirement.
    - **RDA vs. NOI Clarifications:** Fred Zackon (serving on both ConCom and OSNRTC) recommended adding clear definitions and examples to distinguish between a Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA) and a Notice of Intent (NOI) in both the invasive plan and the trail plan. This ensures volunteers and staff understand that an RDA is for minor projects with negative determinations (no impact to resource areas), whereas an NOI involves larger projects with potential disturbances and formal orders of conditions.
    - **Omnibus / Standing Orders:** Zackon also suggested that OSNRTC and ConCom develop an "omnibus" or standing order of conditions for routine, recurring trail maintenance and invasive control projects. This would allow the committee or approved volunteer groups to perform specific activities over a multi-year period without seeking separate approvals for identical, low-impact tasks. The committee supported trying this framework in the field for six months before formally standardizing categories.
    - **Black Swallow-Wort Addition:** Guest Nancy Maynes recommended adding Black Swallow-wort (dog-strangling vine) to the invasive target species list, explaining its threat

to Monarch butterfly larvae which mistake it for milkweed. Sherwood noted that Black Swallow-wort is already listed under the plan's target species profile on page 8.

- **Motion to Approve Plan with Updates:** Jessica Redfern moved to formally approve the draft Invasive Plant Management Plan, pending the addition of ConCom definitions for RDA and NOI, and a statement recommending that project approval be sought from the conservation agent (Armington). Zackon seconded. The motion was unanimously approved. Sherwood will incorporate the text, review it with Armington, and submit the final draft to the Mayor's office for review before posting.

Other Business:

- **Trail Management and Stewardship Plan - Draft:** Chair Sherwood presented a comprehensive draft plan for town-wide trail stewardship, which establishes standard trail classifications (borrowed from DCR), design solutions, maintenance standards, signage templates, and volunteer partnership guidelines. The document aims to provide a clear structure for active groups such as Amesbury Outdoors (formerly LGIA) to operate.
  - **Audience and Usability:** Pascal Rettig and Fred Zackon noted that while the master plan is excellent for city administration, it is too long and complex for individual volunteers. They recommended distilling the document into a simple, one-page guide of "do's and don'ts" for field workers, while supervisors can reference the full master document.
  - **Routine Maintenance Permissions:** Rettig raised questions regarding permissions for repairing boardwalks and water bridges, which are typically located within wetland resource areas. The committee discussed defining clear thresholds for volunteer activity that do not require formal approvals, such as clearing fallen branches under 3 inches in diameter, cutting back encroaching vegetation, and replacing existing signs, while leaving major tree-clearing or new trail-building subject to formal permission.
  - **Liability and Volunteer Safety:** The committee identified liability as a critical issue for volunteer operations on city land. Richard Hucksam referenced the state's recreational use statute, which protects municipalities from standard recreational liability when land is open for free public use, but noted it remains unclear if this protection covers organized volunteer work parties. The committee agreed that any volunteer liability waivers or formal policies must be reviewed and drafted by the City Attorney.
  - **Plan Simplification and Next Steps:** Sherwood agreed to go through the draft to simplify it and pare down "boutique" sections that exceed current volunteer capacity, such as specialized design specifications for equestrian and mountain biking trails. Committee members will send specific edits to Sherwood (either via a marked-up Word file or a shared Google Doc). Sherwood will compile these edits and share the simplified plan with Armington for review before the next meeting.

Unplanned Items:

- **Jessica Redfern's Committee Roll-Off:** Redfern announced that due to upcoming committee shifts on City Council, she will be rolling off the OSNRTC, with a revised committee list being voted on by the Council next week. She expressed her deep passion for the committee's work and noted that her husband is interested in applying for the

upcoming vacancy. The committee thanked Redfern for her outstanding service as a City Council representative.

- **August Meeting Recess:** Since City Council is on recess in August and no new referrals are expected, the OSNRTC agreed not to hold a meeting in August. The committee will reconvene in September, where they expect to review a returned land referral off Kimball Road / Lock Lane.

Adjourn: Zackon moved to adjourn the meeting; Hucksam seconded. Unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:29 p.m.

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