**Open Spaces and Recreation Plan**

**10 Mechanic Street Bellingham, Massachusetts 02019**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Monday January 29th, 2024**

**Meeting In-Person and Via Zoom**

*This was a continuation of the January 4th, 2023 OSRP meeting that began the review of the 2017 Open Spaces and Recreation Plan in order to determine what has been done, and what still needs to be done in creating the coming five-year plan.*

Attendees:

Hannah Crawford, Sahan Sahin, Nicole Rutkowski, Denis Fraine, Pam Brodeur, Claudia Decker

*Administrator Crawford called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.*

*Ms. Crawford begins the meeting by reviewing the progress made on the initial reference document from the previous meeting. Review begins with reviewing the “improving parks and recreation sites” list.*

**Universally Accessible Facilities:**

Universally Accessible Facilities is designated as “In Progress”, citing previous efforts that have been made in Silver living, the Blackstone middle and high school fields, South school, and Stallbrook Park. Improvements are noted and marked to be continued in the coming recreation plan.

**Charles River:**

Uncertainty regarding charles river property was discussed with the input of Denis Fraine and agreed that ConCom owns access point at north point of maple street near Victory Packaging established in easement of 2015. Progress is noted and marked to be continued in the 2024 plan.

**Improve Access to SNETT:**

SNETT is noted as a great outline to apply to other functions around town, though increased education is noted as a point of potential improvement. Ms. Crawford proposes a town websource with listed recreational opportunities as educational resource. Progress and potential improvements are marked for future use.

*The next section discussed is the “Development of Additional Recreational Facilities”.*

**Canoe Launch:**

The prospect of a Canoe Launch site is dubbed as incomplete due to a lack of space, though potential is noted with using a high street access point. Access noted at Pearl Street. Marked as a potential project with Charles River Watershed Association and with 2024 plan.

**Jenks Reservoir:**

Committee confirms the area surrounding Jenks Reservoir includes the Arcand Park Beach. Progress on accessible recreation including trail, beach, and fishing access is noted, and marked for continuation in 2024 plan. Confirmed no permit is needed by residents to canoe in these areas.

**Scouting Activities**

No progress has been made since the 2017 plan, however, ongoing communication between the scouting program and ConCom is noted. Further work is necessary to grow relationships with the scouting program in the coming 2024 plan.

**Adoption of Community Preservation Act (CPA)**

Has not been pursued. Ms. Crawford shared a CPA projection report courtesy of the CRWA, to visualize the tax breakdown in Bellingham. Mr. Fraine notes this would be worthy of adopting this plan in the coming plan given its many benefits. Information will have to be presented to the board for further consideration. Has been brought to the attention of the Select Board, but has yet to be brought forth in a town meeting.

*The next section discussed is “Preserve/ enhance community character”.*

**Implement Master Plan**

The Master Plan was created in 2019 and included a collaborative collection of different opinions from townspeople and administration. Plan does not have to be used in creating the 2024 plan, but will be used for reference.

**Zoning changes**

The 2017 plan outlines zoning changes to encourage development of a more traditional New England Town Center, increasing residential access to town common. Project is noted as just beginning and in process. Will be continued in the 2024 plan.

**Protect Farm lands**

Need to protect farmland is questioned before agreeing on a need for it. Plan is to maintain current farm land, ensuring land does not get bought off.

**Protect Wildlife and Other Natural Resources**

This plan was discussed extensively in previous meetings and marked as such. Future need for Depot St is noted for further review.

**Review and Amend Measures To Encourage Compact Development**

Proposed revisit of bylaws and master plan before 2027/28 review.

**Public Awareness**

Noted as huge room for improvement. Work is needed to update the town website as a means for education.

**Signage**

Briefly discussed before. More signage is needed throughout town, and will continue in future plans.

**Increase Outreach Events**

Previous annual town efforts were noted including town cleanups on Maple Street, Center Street, and High street to name a few. Residential engagement and board of health participation are noted. Margerie Turner is noted as a great potential contact to raise awareness for accessible trails.

*The next section discussed is “Improve Regional Cooperation Efforts”.*

**SNETT**

Skipped.

*Lake Hiawatha Aquifer, Mine Brook Corridor, Arnold’s Brook, and Blackstone River objectives are discussed collectively.*

Mr. Fraire notes stormwater structure efforts on Lake Hiawatha. No group is recognized for working on Arnold’s Brook. Blackstone Valley Watershed Association is noted but we are not included, but potential inclusion is noted as a goal for the 2024 plan. Farm on Prospect St. is noted as a potential avenue in protecting bordering resources, though SNETT is already involved in this.

*Ms. Crawford then begins sharing results from the recent Town of Bellingham Open Spaces and Recreation Survey.*

The 10 question survey was distributed via Google Form and on paper, and included multiple choice and short answers. It yielded 504 responses, making up 2.8% of the Bellingham population - an improvement from the 2016 survey which yielded only a 1.1% response rate. The survey shows a large proportion of individuals who believe more open space is needed in Bellingham. The committee and survey results agree this is likely due to a lack of education regarding current recreational opportunities. Future progress focused on increasing education through updating signage and the website, as well as accessibility within parks.

*Mr. Sahin made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:40 PM. Motion was seconded by Ms. Crawford.*

*Minutes submitted by Claudia Decker.*