**Open Spaces and Recreation Plan**

**10 Mechanic Street Bellingham, Massachusetts 02019**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, January 4th, 2024**

**Meeting In-Person and Via Zoom**

*This meeting serves as the first review of the 2017 Open Spaces and Recreation Plan. The purpose of this meeting is to ask the questions: What has been done? What has not and why? What still needs to be done? And what should we focus on for the coming 2024 Open Spaces and Recreation Plan?*

Attendees:

Ms. Crawford, Steven Kohler, Sahan Sahin, Sean Harrington, Nicole Rutkowski, Arianne Barton

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

*Ms. Crawford begins the meeting by introducing the goal of the meeting and the volunteer committee members involved and present.*

The last plan was created in 2017 and requires it be updated every 5 years, hence its current review. Ms. Crawford (ConCom Administrator), Steven Kohler (ConCom Member), Sahan Sahin (SelectBoard, Vice Chairman), Sean Harrington (Assistant DPW Director), Nicole Rutkowski (Landowner), Arianne Barton (ConCom Member), and Dennis Fraine are all present.

*Original 2017 Action Plan Summary is displayed (over zoom) for all to view for discussion. The document notes 1) the plan 2) the lead agency 3) other agencies involved 4) implementation mechanisms 5) schedule and 6) the possible funding.*

*Discussion begins with the “Protect Natural Resources, Especially Aquifers and Recharge Areas” section.*

**Protect Peters River Aquifer**

No progress has been made. Responsibility lies with the conservation commission but confusion remains with the meaning of “acquiring”. Mr. Fraine provides input on potential avenues for conservation. Ms. Barton notes it is likely referring to the conservation of this aquifer for the purpose of drinking water protection. Area in question includes wells behind the treatment plant and Peter’s River. More information is needed on the CPA (Community Preservation Act) in order to pursue this further.

**Acquiring Priority Habitat Areas**

Push to acquire open space with priority habitats in order to protect from recreational use. Progress made in the past by promoting the certification of vernal pools. No active perusal of property but Beaver Pond is under consideration and acquiring is encouraged when possible. Will remain as consideration for future plans.

**Adapt Policies Regarding Stormwater Treatment**

Progress to update town stormwater regulations has been made over the past 3-5 years and adopted by town. Recharge requirements remain under the administration of DPW. Further efforts needed to confirm legislation uses dynamic phrasing to encourage ongoing compliance with changing stormwater regulations.

**Protect Vernal Pools**

Ms. Crawford will confirm ongoing vernal pool certifications. Original plan notes vernal pool acquisition as protection of currently certified vernal pools. Committee is unaware of any current tax advantages of vernal pool certifications and does not consider it as necessary in continuing the current objective.

**Transfer of Development Rights and SNETT**

Defined as exchange of property to increase developmental density in some areas, in exchange for not developing elsewhere. The Home Depot area is referenced as an example. Idea did not gain traction. SNETT trail, however, was successful in its implementation.

**Beaver Ponds**

Beaver pond property is still in play. Historical disagreement on price for land. Limited access but still worthy of acquiring if possible.

**Protecting Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B Parcels**

There is currently a Chapter 61 parcel being considered as a Solar Project site but it in the hands of the Selectman Board.

*The committee then focuses on the “Linking Existing Open Space and Recreation Plan” section.*

**Greenway Along Charles River, Silver Lake, SNETT**

Linkage approved and in progress between Silver Lake and the highschool. SNETT work is noted as substantial.

**Improve Park and Recreation Facilities**

Progress has been made on a volunteer basis given the lack of a parks department. Progress to be made on navigating funding for these projects.

**Increasing Public Awareness**

No progress has been made. Essential for the 2024 action plan. Signage is noted as an important and viable option to increase this public awareness.

*Ms. Crawford notes a stopping point and for work to be continued in a future meeting at a later date.*

*Mr. Sahin made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:40 PM. All present vote in favor.*

*Minutes submitted by Claudia Decker.*