

Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee

Town of Chelmsford

50 Billerica Rd. Chelmsford, MA 01824

Meeting Minutes

May 21, 2024

DRAFT
Rev B

Members Present:

Karl Bischoff (Conservation Commission)

Peter Spawn (Conservation Commission)

Pat Wojtas (Select Board)

Paul McDougall (Planning Board)

Brian Stripp

Jerry Schmidt

Members Absent:

David Sperry

Others Present:

Support Staff: David Koonce (Conservation Agent)

NMCOG: Meghan Tenhoff, Michael Asciola

Proceedings:

Meeting called to order at 7:00 PM.

Pat requested that approval of April & May meeting minutes be added to next month's agenda.

Mike provided an overview of NMCOG OSRP responsibilities, including public engagement, data collection and analysis, OSRP preparation and completion, and project management.

Mike suggested that OSRPC members serve as outreach ambassadors, contact coordinators, OSRP historians, OSR inventory and programming researchers, and plan production assistants.

Meghan reviewed the draft survey and solicited input. The committee provided the following guidance to this initial draft:

- “Open space” may have different meanings to different respondents. Karl suggested that we explain the meaning of the term in the survey. David suggested that the term should be qualified to include public and private space. Meghan believes that branding statements in our public postings might be sufficient to clarify the meaning.
- Pat suggested that we identify the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail by name.
- “Stewardship” may not be universally understood. Peter and Karl would prefer to ask “whether there are good upkeep activities.”
- For clarity, Peter suggested changing “urban tree canopy” to “trees in public space.” Mike said he would investigate whether the term is being used to specifically refer to trees along public roads.

- David suggested we ask whether the town needs “better park and playground maintenance.”
- Instead of saying “climate change,” David suggests that we use terms that describe the direct impact to residents, including “flooding, temperature increase, biodiversity loss, and extreme weather.”
- The group suggested the following list of possible responses to the question, “What are new opportunities to meet community open space and recreation needs?”
 - More playgrounds
 - ADA walking trails
 - Greater variety of sports fields & courts
 - Increased wildlife habitat
 - Improved flood protection
 - Better protection of our drinking water supply
 - Additional aquifer recharge areas
- When we ask where respondents live, the committee considered two possible options:
 - North, South, Central, East, West, etc.
 - Provide a map showing all neighborhoods. If we go this direction, Pat suggested we add numbering because the colors on our current map are difficult to interpret.
- David suggested asking if respondents have any open space that they would be willing to convey to the town. Pat thought this could be included at the end of the survey.
- Multiple committee members suggested we list income ranges instead of leaving a space for a number to be written in.
- Karl suggested asking “How often do you use open space areas? How about recreation areas?”

Meghan said she will edit the survey and distribute a revised version for comments. The goal is to have the survey ready for June 1st market on the common.

Meghan recommended that we provide a drop box at the library to collect survey responses.

Karl suggested using interns to tabulate the survey results and creating charts/graphs from the data collected.

Meghan provided two draft postings (flyers) for review. She said she would remove the “2031” date to avoid confusion.

During the month of June, the committee plans to hold two outreach events at the Chelmsford Market on the Common (June 1st and June 8th), followed by an open house at the Senior Center on June 20th. The goal of the outreach events is to build awareness of the planned survey and encourage people to attend the open house. The open house will be used to inform the public about the project, the steps in the planning process, and encourage survey participation. Interested parties will also be encouraged to have a table at that event.

The following ideas were discussed for the open house format:

- Two-hour time block so people can easily come and go.
- Mike will provide a welcome statement and overview every 20 minutes or so.

- Ask folks to share why they love living in Chelmsford.
- Hands-on activities for kids.
- Various groups, including land association, mothers club, etc.
- Committee members will be available to explain the planning process; also take note of ideas that are shared by residents.

The committee discussed the following ideas for advertising the upcoming events: website, social media, Paul's newsletter, senior center newsletter, DPW Facebook page. David said he would serve as a liaison with town hall and other agencies.

Public comment: "The library turned out to be a very effective place" to get the word out. Suggested posting a notice at the front desk.

Mike said he will refine the potential roles, and encouraged committee members to think about what role each might want to fill.

Mike and Meghan recommended that we keep the survey open until mid-August.

Meeting adjourned 8:10 PM

Next Meetings:

Tuesday, June 18, 2024, at 7:00 PM

Tuesday, July 16, 2024, at 7:00 PM

Tuesday, August 20, 2024, at 7:00 PM