

**Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee**

Town of Chelmsford

50 Billerica Rd. Chelmsford, MA 01824

Meeting Minutes

July 16, 2024

**Members Present:**

Karl Bischoff (Conservation Commission)

Pat Wojtas (Select Board)

David Sperry

Jerry Schmidt

**Members Absent:**

Paul McDougall (Planning Board)

Peter Spawn (Conservation Commission)

Brian Stripp

**Others Present:**

Support Staff: David Koonce (Conservation Agent), Christine Clancy (DPW)

NMCOG: Meghan Tenhoff, Michael Asciola

Chelmsford Commission on Disabilities: Joanne Stanway, Katrina Schmidt, Matt Pellegrino, and Francis Gilroy

**Proceedings:**

Meeting called to order at 7:01 PM.

The committee voted to approve the June meeting minutes as written.

Michael explained that the Open Space & Recreation Workbook contains a self-evaluation for compliance with the guidelines described in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). It includes administrative requirements, such as an ADA coordinator, a grievance procedure, and public notification requirements, and it must involve people with disabilities. Michael said that the state provides a template that we can use as a framework. Ensuring program accessibility starts with a facility inventory. A transition plan should be prepared if structural changes are necessary. The transition plan will identify physical obstacles, describe necessary changes, identify a responsible individual, and define the schedule for completion. The ADA Coordinator must also ensure that the town's employment practices are ADA compliant.

Christine said that Jose Negrón, Building Commissioner, is the ADA Coordinator for the town of Chelmsford.

Michael said he will review inventory from other towns to see if there is a streamlined process that might already exist for us to use.

David Sperry suggested creating an ADA spreadsheet and then setting up a team to assess the status of all items that are listed.

Joanne Stanway recommended that we reach out to Andover, because they have a mature ADA program in place. She was not able to provide a point of contact.

David Koonce suggested that we get started on the ADA Access Self-Evaluation without delay. Michael said we should create list of sites. Then, visit and assess them, create a form for each facility, followed by a transition and implementation plan. David said that there are probably 40-50 outdoor sites where programming is offered. Whoever gives technical assistance (on a wetlands application, for example) must have facilities that are ADA accessible.

Christine said the areas around the building also need to be considered for ADA accessibility (paved areas and berm heights, for example). Michael suggested that we look for guidance from another town that doesn't have a recreation department, because they may have already tackled some of the issues we are facing in Chelmsford.

Meghan said we need to consider whether we will include schools in our plan because those facilities might already have a plan. Christine said that the DPW already has a maintenance plan for playgrounds, but in general, ADA compliance has not been addressed. However, she thinks that the DPW could include it going forward. Karl said it will be important to bound the problem by deciding exactly what will be included. David Koonce mentioned that DCS has provided assistance in prior years, so it also makes sense to reach out to them.

Joanne Stanway said that that the ADA Commission will go back as a group to discuss how they can be helpful to the committee. She suggested the we adopt a "divide and conquer" strategy by bringing in representatives from other groups in the town. Karl liked the idea of bringing in other representatives, and suggested that we strive for early wins on some key projects. Katrina Schmidt said that the Chelmsford Commission on Disabilities has four members on the team who have been trained to do inspections for ADA compliance. David Koonce suggested that we create an inventory list as a first step.

The OSRP Committee closed out the ADA compliance portion of the meeting by thanking all four members of the Chelmsford Commission on Disabilities for their valuable input and willingness to participate in future ADA planning and execution activities.

Meghan led a discussion on the preliminary survey results and gaps identified to date. As of July 12, we had received 212 responses. Initial responses on Question 12 show that we need to encourage greater participation from residents in our Environmental Justice (EJ) communities. Areas # 1, 6, 7, 8 were initially included in this designation, but Dave Sperry shared plots that indicate that Areas # 1, 2, and 7 fully incorporate all current EJ zones. So, the committee agreed to focus enhanced outreach activities in those three areas.

Initial results from Question 13 show that only 35% respondents have children in the home, indicating that we need to get more families with children engaged. Christine says she plans to bring a stack of postcards to reach out to youth at community and summer programs.

Initial results from Questions 15 & 16 indicate that we need to engage with more minority and lower income groups. This reinforces the need for enhanced outreach in EJ communities.

Meghan said she is planning to do some EJ focus groups. She plans to invite the housing authority along with representatives from families who are currently residing at the Best Western on Chelmsford Street. If participation is low, her backup plan will be to engage individuals in semi-structured interviews. Meghan has also planned some “Bus Ride Along” events during the month of July. She will hold informal discussions with riders, and perhaps even offer them a cold drink to promote a positive engagement. Jerry shared a map of LRTA bus routes that supports the idea of targeting riders for enhanced outreach because most LTRA stops within Chelmsford fall within an EJ community. Meghan said that a second official focus group will include the Muslim Student Association and/or Asian Student Association at the high school, which is also in an EJ zone. She said that some of this outreach is being supported by the transportation budget.

In preparation for posting additional flyers in EJ communities, Meghan plans to create an updated version of the flyer that includes a larger QR code, eliminates references to past tabling events, and highlights this as the “last chance” to respond.

Michael reviewed the roles and tasks for OSRP Committee. Then, Meghan and Michael were encouraged to depart because the meeting had already exceeded the planned one-hour limit. The committee paused to thank NMCOG for the outstanding support that they continue to provide.

The OSRP Committee assigned members to the following roles:

**1. Contact and Outreach Coordinators**

- Members: Jerry (lead) and Paul
- Role: Public relations and managers of communication distributions.
- General Tasks: Contact list maintainers, distributors of flyers and information materials at the direction of Town and NMCOG project managers (PMs), staffing open house, tabling events, misc. resident engagement.
- Task 1 to Complete by August Meeting: Advertising push for survey responses. Target geographic areas with lower responses (to date), EJ communities or other groups or organizations to encourage participation by posting flyers, site visiting, emailing, social media contact, or by telephone.

**2. OSRP Historians**

- Members: Brian (lead) and Peter
- Assistance: Tree Committee
- Role: Summarize Chelmsford’s progress on OSRP planning actions
- General Tasks: Research and report on status of prior OSRP and active relevant plans, work with the Conservation Officer to understand progress of aforementioned plan action items, report on open space and recreation spaces/facilities improvements since 2017 OSRP (regardless of specific mention in plan). Reviews and recommends changes to sections 2-4 of the OSRP.
- Task 1 to Complete by August Meeting: Review Sections 2-4 of the 2017 OSRP. Identify which sections are: 1) still relevant and should be kept; 2) are no longer relevant because of change in circumstances or was a completed action item; 3)

needs updated data; and/or 4) needs additional information. Please provide as much detail and specifics in your notes as to what amendments and information are needed along with any rationale you can offer.

### **3. OSR Inventory and Programming Researchers**

- Members: David Sperry (lead) and Karl
- Assistance: Chelmsford Commission on Disabilities
- Role: Reviews and updates OS inventory and recreational users of facilities
- General Tasks: Reviews OSR inventory and suggests updates or changes in status, reviews GIS mapping provided by NMCOG for accuracy, develops a list of recreational facility user organizations, develops a list of agricultural operations in Chapter 61, 61A, and/or 61B programs, identifying wildlife corridors. Participates in ADA Self-Assessment task.
- Task 1 to Complete by August Meeting: A) Review initial OSR inventory and map produced by NMCOG and review for accuracy. B) Determine which properties are subject to ADA Self-Assessment. C) Set schedule/plan with individuals with disabilities or organizations representing the disabled community to conduct site visits.

### **4. Production Assistants**

- Members: Pat (lead)
- Assistance: Christine and DPW interns
- Role: Quality controllers
- General Tasks: Enter paper survey data, reviews materials produced by the OSRPC and PMs for accuracy and drafting errors, draft plan review, marketing material review, and other misc. tasks.
- Task 1 to Complete by August Meeting: A) Collect paper surveys and manually enter the data into survey monkey. B) Oversee selection process to involve participation of individuals with disabilities or organizations representing the disabled community in the OSR Inventory ADA Assessment and coordinate meeting with the OSR Inventory and Programming Researchers.

For Role #1 (Contact and Outreach Coordinators), Karl said social media and email campaigns are largely complete. Dave also posted recently on Facebook. Going forward, they suggested we primarily focus on flyer posting, especially in the EJ communities. Christine recommended that we also include the Hannaford/Walmart shopping area.

For Role #2 (OSRP Historians), David Koonce suggested we pull in the tree committee. He said he will take the lead on reaching out to identify changes in the variety of trees, loss of canopy, and invasives.

For Role #3 (OSR Inventory and Programming Researchers), the first step will be to review the OSR inventory, which Michael says is 95% complete (to be emailed within the next week).

For Role #4: (Production Assistants), Karl asked if paper surveys have been collected. David said not yet (still at the library). Christine said volunteers at DPW can help with this task.

The survey deadline is currently August 1<sup>st</sup>. Karl said he would reach out to Meghan to see if it might make sense to extend the deadline to August 15<sup>th</sup> to allow more time for residents in EJ communities to respond.

**Public Comments:**

- Iva Mooney reminded the committee that the town has its own taxi service for seniors. She suggested that we ask drivers to encourage riders to respond to the survey.

Meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM.

**Next Meetings:**

Tuesday, August 20, 2024 at 7:00 PM

Tuesday, September 17, 2024 at 7:00 PM

Tuesday, October 15, 2024 at 7:00 PM