

## Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee

Town of Chelmsford  
50 Billerica Rd. Chelmsford, MA 01824  
Meeting Minutes  
August 20, 2024

**DRAFT**

### Members Present:

Karl Bischoff (Conservation Commission)  
Peter Spawn (Conservation Commission)  
Pat Wojtas (Select Board)  
Paul McDougall (Planning Board)  
Brian Stripp  
David Sperry  
Jerry Schmidt

### Members Absent:

None

### Others Present:

Support Staff: David Koonce (Conservation Agent), Christine Clancy (DPW)  
NMCOG: Michael Asciola  
Chelmsford Commission on Disabilities: Joanne Stanway, Katrina Schmidt, Matt Pellegrino

### Proceedings:

Meeting called to order at 7:00 PM.

The committee voted to approve the July meeting minutes with the following change: David Koonce should only be included in the Others Present section.

Committee members provided a summary of progress on the Task 1 assignments for each of the four roles.

Jerry and Paul (Contact & Outreach) said that posters had been placed at 140 locations in town, including a wide range of local businesses, apartments, condominiums, daycares, shopping centers, bus stops, churches, recreation areas, and other gathering places. Their spreadsheet shows that almost 80% of these locations were either in or adjacent to Environmental Justice (EJ) zones that have been historically underrepresented. Jerry and Paul continued to build on the progress that Dave Sperry made during June, and used his initial spreadsheet to create a combined list. In some cases, multiple postings were done at the sites listed (for example, where a condominium had many buildings). In at least two cases, office managers agreed to send an email to all their residents, encouraging them to click on a link to complete the survey. Meghan also printed a large number of surveys, and the team placed them at the entrance of the Chelmsford Public Library along with a collection box. Jerry said that they also reached out to the Lowell Sun to ask them to run an article in the Local News section. The article ran on July 30<sup>th</sup>. It described the OSRP and included a link to the survey.

Peter and Brian (Historians) created spreadsheets to evaluate how well has the town done with executing the 2017 OSRP recommendations. To facilitate the assessment process, they bundled multiple actions together to create an abbreviated list. Overall, the historians feel that the town is batting about 500. Peter said that the town has 1/3 “in hand,” another 1/3 with “some progress,” and the final 1/3 with “no action” to date. In other words, from a project completion perspective, the town is about 50% complete.

The Historian team also reviewed Sections 2, 3 and 4 of the 2017 OSRP and provided detailed notes in outline format. Peter said that Section 2 needs a lot of editing, and he thinks we should consider adding a theme. He feels it is very important that we better define and offer a blueprint for our proposed Open Space and Recreation Committee. He would like to see us prepare a charter with clearly defined roles and responsibilities, along with a plan for how the committee will interact with other town entities, including open space stewards, DPW, and the Conservation Commission.

Peter also feels that it is important for us to describe why Chelmsford’s numerous wetland areas will be vital to the entire region as we continue to experience climate change.

Since we are all interested in getting more of the plan executed this time around, Jerry suggested we include early socialization of the plan in our scope of work to get up-front buy-in from other town entities before the plan is released. Karl & David agreed that this does fall within the OSRP working group’s charter.

Peter suggested that we create a chart that shows the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders. He also thinks we could add a section describing the challenges that have been identified. Karl suggests we approach this as a “gap analysis.”

Christine says she has a list of upcoming grants that the DPW plans to pursue. Karl says it will important to prioritize them to ensure they tie closely to our plan goals and objectives.

Peter explained that the guidance for Section 3 shows that we need a regional map showing interconnectivity. He said that Section 4 needs to focus on protecting the biodiversity, ecosystems, and ecological integrity of the items found in our environmental inventory, so it is critical that we get an accurate inventory to proceed forward.

David Sperry and Karl (OSR Inventory & Programming) described progress on reviewing the initial OSR inventory. Dave Sperry said he received a good map from NMCOG, but it had a few “rabbit holes.” He said he found about 50 properties that missed the initial list, so he sent them to NMCOG so they can be added in. This includes some important nonprofit properties. He was happy to see that is more interconnectivity than initially expected. Peter said that this will help us to think about acquiring parcels that we might not have otherwise considered for acquisition.

Dave Sperry generated a list of properties that should be included in the ADA review, and he provided a spreadsheet to the committee.

Joanne and Katrina (Chelmsford Commission on Disabilities) reached out to the state office and Andover to get guidance on doing the ADA assessments. They said they could recruit some volunteers and do the training to do the assessments. Because of the detail required, we may need to hire someone, and fund that person under a grant that is specifically targeted at assessing areas that need improvement.

Dave Sperry says we need a signed letter identifying the ADA coordinator for our town. Christine said that Jose Negron, Building Commissioner, is the ADA coordinator for the town of Chelmsford. David Koonce said he will provide a copy of his appointment letter.

Dave Sperry said that the town needs to have grievance procedures, and that according to the town manager, that policy doesn't exist. However, Katrina Schmidt says she has seen a policy from Chelmsford and also from Andover. Dave Sperry says that the OSRP guidance also provides an acceptable example of a grievance procedure, but it would need to be approved. Christine said she will check within the DPW to see if one already exists. Dave Sperry said we also need a signed employment practices policy, and Christine said she will check for that as well.

David Koonce said we should aim to provide a draft of the ADA assessment by December 17.

Joanne Stanway said she will check other towns for resources and keep the OSRP Working Group informed. She said she will also review the draft spreadsheet and questions to see which ones can be closed out.

Pat (Production Assistant) is providing guidance and oversight to the Chelmsford Commission on Disabilities who were present at the meeting. She is also coordinating with OSR Inventory and Programming Researchers. She said that she plans to manually enter survey data into survey monkey when paper surveys have been collected.

Mike Asciola said that NMCOG conducted a number of EJ outreach interviews. He said that they were very productive and will provide a transcript to the committee.

Mike said that two OSRP outreach events are planned for the coming month. Committee members should try to attend both if possible. On September 11<sup>th</sup>, an Open House/Focus Group will be held at Chelmsford Woods. Barry Dunn will moderate the focus group, and gift card will be provided to compensate focus group participants for their time. On September 18<sup>th</sup>, an Ice Cream Social will be held at the Chelmsford Elks Club. Meghan Tenhoff will provide additional details as we approach these two events.

Mike said that the Strategic Planning Committee has posted a survey as well. He said that the focus is on setting vision and goals, and he suggested that we all try to respond to their survey.

Mike asked the committee to complete the following activities by our next meeting.

Next Task for Each Role:

**1. Contact and Outreach Coordinators**

- Members: Jerry (lead) and Paul
- Task 2 to Complete by September Meeting: Work with NMCOG to plan for the Coordinated Planning outreach events: Ice Cream Social (Sept. 18) and Chelmsford Woods Residences Open House/Focus Group (Sept. 11). Meghan will reach out to schedule a Zoom call.

**2. OSRP Historians**

- Members: Brian (lead) and Peter
- Assistance: Tree Committee
- Task 2 to Complete by September Meeting: Need to assess progress. Meghan and Mike will reach out to schedule a Zoom call.

**3. OSR Inventory and Programming Researchers**

- Members: David Sperry (lead) and Karl
- Assistance: Chelmsford Commission on Disabilities
- Task 2 to Complete by September Meeting: 1) Continue review of OSR inventory and mapping produced by NMCOG and work to finalize inventory. 2) Finish compiling list of properties that are subject to ADA Self-Assessment. 3) Set schedule/plan with individuals with disabilities or organizations representing the disabled community to conduct site visits and begin site visits. 4) Work with David Koonce to coordinate with Town's ADA Coordinator to ensure Part 1: Administrative Requirements are met, specifically: a) ADA Coordinator designation is signed by town manager, b) grievance procedures are developed, c) update public notice on disability nondiscriminatory requirements, d) work with ADA Coordinator (Jose Negron) to create a signed statement attesting to employment practices are ADA compliant.

**4. Production Assistants**

- Members: Pat (lead)
- Assistance: Christine and DPW interns
- Task 2 to Complete by September Meeting: 1) Collect paper surveys and manually enter the data into survey monkey. 2) Distribute flyers for ice cream social coordinated outreach event. 3) Assist with outreach final push for survey before it closes on 8/31.

Public Comments:

Iva Mooney asked: “Have you received any input from the immigrant community?” Response: Mike said that we received some good input from the shelter. Jerry explained that the committee arranged a meeting at the Best Western Family Shelter on Chelmsford Street. CTI’s Chief Program Officer and two case workers provided input on open space awareness, demographics, languages spoken, how we can better support this part of our community, and what we can do to make them feel welcome. We learned that residents at this shelter speak Haitian Creole, Portuguese, and Spanish among other languages. The program officer suggested that the town “consider designing spaces for all ages, not just one specific part of the population.” He added that “the town needs to create spaces that will welcome a wider range of the population.” The case workers also said that about 20% of the residents use the rail trail because it is a very short

walk from the Best Western Shelter. Residents say that they like the space, but there isn't any place for people to sit and gather.

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 PM.

**Next Meetings:**

Tuesday, September 17, 2024 at 7:00 PM

Tuesday, October 15, 2024 at 7:00 PM

Tuesday, November 19, 2024 at 7:00 PM