

CITY OF BEVERLY

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

BOARD: Open Space and Recreation Committee
SUBCOMMITTEE: None
LOCATION: City Hall Council Chambers
DATE: January 5, 2022
BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: David Alden-St. Pierre (Chair), David Brewster (Vice Chair), Elizabeth Dunne, Charlie Mann, Marilyn McCrory, Wayne Miller, Gregory Sharp
BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Todd Callaghan, Alison Dudley
STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Chelsea Zakas, Associate Planner
OTHERS PRESENT: David Birner (virtual)
RECORDER: Sharlyne Woodbury

1. Call to Order

Alden chairs and opens the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Note, a this is a hybrid of virtual and in-person meetings allowed by extension (Act effective June 16, 2021 thru April 1, 2022) of state Executive Order signed March 12, 2020 due to COVID-19.

2. Members of the Public Opportunity to Address the Committee

No public members present.

There being no further comments or concerns. No action required at this time.

3. Approval of Minutes

Mann moves to approve the December 1, 2021 minutes as amended. McCrory seconds. The motion carries 7-0.

4. Open Space and Recreation Plan

a. Working session to develop plan goals

Zakas provides materials for the members to review and comment. Presented are the 2008, 2016 action plans for comparison. Zakas asks members to look for overarching themes. Mann suggests building upon the last plan; how it's meaningful and applicable today. After reviewing the 2016 action plan members can focus on the new items such as inclusive language, bilingual signs, etc. Members agree keeping the plan outline and structure of what was done originally and are amenable to Mann's suggestions. Zakas proposes to incorporate the Beverly Master Plan into some of the updated action items as well.

Members begin with the 2016 action items. They will review old action items before focusing on new action items per the recent survey, starting with properties under Chapter 61. Alden and Mann recommend starting with an updated list of properties currently under Chapter 61. Zakas will update the entire inventory list prioritizing Chapter 61 properties. Members review and ensure the development protocols are consistent with property. Members want to maintain an active list of parcels for protection under conservation restrictions.

They discuss the continued information sharing with other groups. Members would like to add the Beverly Bike Committee and Human Rights Committee as part of that broadening information sphere. Members believe increased communication and coordination with the city solicitor to develop CRs for lands that are appropriate for long term protection is prudent.

Members discuss the trails and maintenance needs. Mann reminds members this committee does not have the funding to routinely update, repair, maintain broken equipment in parks and open city spaces. Members are acutely aware of the public comments from the survey that were overwhelming in support of maintaining current parks and spaces before building new. On that note, Miller comments to the effectiveness of the committee maintaining or exceeding goals on their action plan. The committee should consider connecting with a city representative at director level who can further guide and advocate for committee needs. Members would like further coordination with grant staff for additional funding of open space needs. Members would like to have Parks and Recreation involved in many of their joint issues of concern as well as a joint representative on the committee.

Discussion moves on to the theme of creating a trail network and connectivity through the city. Identify and publicize new/old rights of way and access points. Waterfront access is a popular topic among the public. It is important to acquire and identify easement and access points along the water front. Add water crafts, create a sea path, work with local officials, and acquire parcels with Ch 91 licenses. Members discuss trail and waterfront access promoting ADA opportunities. Zakas confirms there is an ADA coordinator. Members also discuss increasing playing fields in the community.

In reviewing the survey, members discuss which areas are better merged for cohesive goal results on action items in the survey. Mann and members would like to see the recreation piece not part of the open space plan. It requires different resources. Zakas confirms the recreation piece is required by the state. Members suggest removing section B3. Members would like a definition of what exactly is active recreation. Members turn focus to increasing public awareness of open space through social media and recommend combining B4 & B5. Those items are better merged. Miller wonders if another item to add and discuss places focus on increasing public awareness, orientation and public education for trail safety and location during emergency times.

Talking point highlights include the following topics on the plan for new items: safety, climate, inclusion, environmental justice. Members agree to a stopping point and will resume at the next meeting. Zakas emailed members an updated timeline. Zakas proposes the March meeting is good timing for a Public Hearing.

5. Discuss Principal Items of Business

a. Community Preservation Committee – Representative Report

No updates at this time. Members will discuss at the next meeting.

b. Planning Board – Representative Report

No updates at this time. Members will discuss at the next meeting.

c. Harbor Management Authority Updates – Representative Report

No updates at this time. Members will discuss at the next meeting.

d. Conservation Commission – Representative Report

No updates at this time. Members will discuss at the next meeting.

e. Encroachment Updates

No updates at this time. Members will discuss at the next meeting.

f. Parcel Updates – additional details outlined in Zakas’ staff report.

i. Green Street update

27X – There are no updates at this time.

27A – There are no updates at this time.

ii. Congress Street – “Pocket Park”

There are no updates at this time.

iii. Gloucester Crossing

Simon Street – There are no updates at this time.

Beckford Street – There are no updates at this time.

iv. Norwood Pond update (NSMT)

Alden provides the updates. Further discussed under agenda item 7a: “Dunham Ridge trail easement discussion”.

v. Endicott College trails

There are no updates at this time.

vi. Pole Swamp Lane

There are no updates at this time.

i. Project Adventure update

Members collectively discussed under agenda item 7f: “Moraine Farm”.

6. Trails & Open Space Discussion

a. Trail Safety & Trail Guidance

Alden and Mann review the trail safety issues with updates by Alden. He spoke with Captain Matt Hart (BFD). They are working to update their technological and geo-finding equipment. Capt. Hart will update trail maps in addition to known parking areas and lots. The digital maps will have updated features; ideally to add QR code links to trail kiosks. Alden comments on the process of importing city maps as an overlay with the software the BFD uses; it is not always compatible. Members stress the importance of inter-agency collaboration; and agencies possessing updated resources with the same information for victim location and EMS retrieval when necessary.

b. New trail at Sally Milligan

There are no updates at this time.

7. Other Business

a. Dunham Ridge trail easement discussion

Alden provides the updates for the members. The site walk clarified this existing trail. It is in good shape, established, and contiguous with other trails present. The original proposed easement would have disturbed what is currently there. Cummings will need to go to the Planning Board for the minor modification. Conservation Commission wanted to make sure OSRC is aware and supportive of the changes and modification. Zakas suggests drafting a letter in support of the easement.

Motion: Mann moves to draft a letter in support of the changes and modification. Dunne seconds. The motion carries 7-0.

b. New name for Beverly Emerald Necklace

Alden suggests “The Garden City Greenway”.

c. MassTrails Grant funding

Zakas informs the members the applications are due by the end of February 2022. Encourages members to think of ideas for projects/applications. McCrory asks Zakas to forward the grant details to members. Inquires if the grant is the same one previously used to update trail signage.

Members banter about ideas for additional funding. Suggestions include funding for increased public waterfront access along the Bass River; funding for additional bike racks; funding to add QR codes to racks (bike and kayak); and funding for Japanese garden stone path materials for trail crossings where appropriate. Dunne and Miller discuss the stones used for the paths. Both agree the blocks optimal use would be for river crossings near vernal pools. They would help bikes, pedestrians, and possibly maintenance vehicles successfully cross without disturbing or minimizing disturbance to the area. Members find this an interesting concept needing additional information and further evaluation. The blocks require review and approval by Conservation Commission since impervious stones would be added to or near conservation wetland area.

d. Greens Hill/CPC grant

There are no updates at this time.

e. NOI for trail work – Discussion on next steps

There are no updates at this time.

f. Moraine Farm

McCrory suggests drafting a thank you letter to the city in support of the approved funding for the parcels. Members are supportive of the suggestion. Zakas will draft a letter.

8. Adjournment

Dunne moves to adjourn the meeting at 9:07 p.m. Brewster seconds. The motion carries 7-0.

Next Meeting: February 2, 2022 at 7:00 p.m.