



SARATOGA SPRINGS

OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

JANUARY 27, 2021

5:00 P.M.

MEETING HELD VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM

1. RECORDING OF PROCEEDING

- a. Committee: Tom Denny (chair), Tim Holmes, Jennifer Hunt Dempsey present. David Miller and Maureen Roberts joined meeting in progress as noted below.
- b. City Staff: Tina Carton, Admin of Parks, Open Lands, Historic Preservation/Sustainability

2. RECORDING OF PROCEEDING

- a. No public comment.

3. RECORDING OF PROCEEDING

The minutes are not a verbatim record of the proceedings.

Mr. Denny called the meeting to order at 5:09 PM.

4. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

- a. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** - The minutes from the 11/18/20 meeting were unanimously approved.

5. DISCUSSION AND VOTE: OFFICERS FOR THE OSAC

Mr. Tom Denny recommended that the committee set up a time to meet and discuss amending the OSAC policy on a 2-year term limitation for the Chair of the committee. Ms. Tina Carton will look into amending this committee policy on term limits. In the meantime, Mr. Tom Denny was nominated to continue as Chair, and a unanimous vote followed this. Mr. Dave Miller will continue to serve as Vice Chair, and Maureen Roberts will continue serving as secretary. Both were unanimously approved.

6. OPEN SPACE PLAN UPDATE AND NEXT STEPS

A survey was sent out to various members of the steering committee and the OSAC on Survey Monkey, and about 11 responses were tabulated. Most people valued recreational trails as their #1 concern with open space, but also expressed interest in many of the other choices too. It was discussed that we will need to prioritize carefully for future land acquisitions.

There was also a high demand for recreational space and trail connections.

The Open Space Steering Committee is comprised of stakeholders from many different groups, including the Recreation Commission, Saratoga PLAN, Superintendent of Saratoga Springs Public Schools, City Center Board, the Saratoga Spa State Park, and selected members of the OSAC. Many topics were discussed at the kick-off



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meeting, including building on partnerships for the maintenance of spaces, opportunities to build infrastructure for long-term stewardships, and the fact that during Covid, there has been increased interest in the outdoors, and this may represent an opportunity to get the public more involved. For example, Saratoga PLAN has a Monday trail stewards program, which has seen robust trail usage observed by a dedicated steward checking on the trails on a weekly basis.

The steering committee also wants to provide equal access to open space across the city, with the idea promoted by the Land Conservation Trust that every resident could get access to green space within a ten-minute walk from his or her home.

They discussed the funding, acquisition, and maintenance of new properties as critical challenges. There are fiscal challenges facing the city, as well as pressure from developers. Additional open space opportunities within the city limits are limited, and so the development of pocket parks should be considered.

Mr. Tom Denny showed a map from 2015 that outlined several 50 and 100-acre parcels of land that remain opportunities for preservation. The steering group discussed breaking these down into 20 acre parcels, which is the minimum threshold for recreation fields that the Recreation Commission is currently searching for. Our Open Space consultants would have to show the degree of development on these parcels in 2021, and some of them may no longer be available.

It was also discussed that the 2002 Open Space Plan mentioned properties that were worth preserving, and the committee should re-visit that list again to see what is left and still available.

The consultants are currently working on a conservation analysis tool, and developing four (4) conservation values maps, which include natural water systems, forests, fields, and wildlife ecosystems, conserved and protected lands, and connectivity for key destinations (recreational, open space, and scenic resources).

The proposed Greenbelt Trail should be included on one of these maps and sidewalk connections.

A community survey will take place before the new Open Space Plan is completed, and it is felt that public input will be crucial. Does the “city in the country” resonate with residents still? The Steering Committee will be coming out with an outreach plan to get public input. Ms. Hunt Dempsey discussed the potential for video interviews of residents out in our current open spaces and parks, to get their impressions and ideas about parks, and use this for promoting Open Space initiatives on social media.

This could lead to a catchy slogan and help with marketing the new Open Space plan.

7. PLANNING BOARD EXCELSIOR PARK



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This current Witt Construction project is in front of the Planning Board for committee. It involves development near the boardwalk off Excelsior Ave, involving both sides of Ormandy Lane. The OSAC may be asked to render an opinion for the Planning Board.

8. DARK SKIES AND LED STREET LIGHT PROJECT

Ms. Tina Carton has been working with the City Council on the purchase of energy efficient street lighting for the city. It is expected that the City Council will be voting on a contract with NYPA to purchase the National Grid owned streetlights in the next month. The lights will be “dark sky compliant” and will have the capability to be dimmed. They also will be able to be monitored to see if they are off or on.

At the end of the meeting, we discussed some areas of overlap with the Complete Streets committee. Progress is being made on the “missing sidewalk” links project, and multiple areas around the city with missing or partial sidewalks will be “corrected”, which will be based on our city’s Complete Streets plan.

The Geyser Rd Trail is nearing completion, as the City waits for a traffic light at Route 50 to be fully electrified. The city is hoping for a spring 2021 ribbon cutting ceremony.

9. PUBLIC COMMENT — No members of public present

10. Meeting adjourned at 6:23. Next committee meeting is on February 24th at 5 pm via Zoom.

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