

**Open Space Commission**  
**Wednesday, November 6, 2019**  
**4:30PM- Simsbury Town Hall- Main Meeting Room**  
**REGUALR MEETING - ADOPTED**

**PRESENT:** Eric Wellman, Helen Peterson, Susan Masino, Margery Winters, Dave Ryan, David Bush, William Rice

**ALSO PRESENT:** Maria Capriola Town Manager, Tom Tyburski Director of Culture, Parks and Recreation

**Absent:** Timothy Walczak

**Call to Order**

Mr. Wellman called the meeting to order at 4:30PM

**1.) Public Audience**

Mr. Wellman asked if there were any members of the Public who wished to speak.

No one spoke at public audience.

**2.) Approval of Meeting Minutes from 3/6/2019**

Tabled until next meeting. Ms. Peterson provided comments and feedback.

**3.) Housekeeping items**

**a) Selection of Chair for November 2019 through October 2020**

Bill Rice motioned to approve Eric Wellman as chair of the committee from November 2019 through October 2020, Margery Winters seconded, motion was approved unanimously.

**b) Selection of Vice Chair for November 2019 through October 2020**

A decision was made to have a vice chair done on an ad hoc basis.

**c) 2020 Regular Meeting Schedule**

Helen Peterson motioned to approve the proposed 2020 meeting schedule, Margery Winters seconded, motion was approved unanimously.

**4.) Updates**

**Parks and Open Space Master Plan** – Mr. Tyburski provided the group an overview of the 10/29 info session about the Parks and Open Space Master Plan, the results of the survey, and dissemination of info session materials. The next steps are to conduct benchmarking and present a draft presentation to the Open Space Committee and the Culture, Parks and Recreation commission in December. A Final Presentation will be made to the Board of Selectmen in January. The impacts to the capital and operating budgets will likely be presented during the budget development cycle in the winter/spring. Parking, restrooms and trail signage were the top priorities according to the survey. A discussion ensued

of capital funding for sidewalks and bike paths. Helen Peterson observed that the survey demonstrates that Simsbury is on the right path for our open space. Susan Masino commented that the survey response rate was excellent, shows engaged residents who care. There was a discussion centered around walking and utilization of paths, particularly about youth walking to school. Tom Tyburski discussed the trail maintenance and tree work performed by staff.

***Policies and Procedures Workgroup*** – Susan Masino provided the committee an update: the work group looked at state criteria and samples from other towns. The group came up with objectives in preserving open space. There would be a list of 15 items that the open space committee would review and provide feedback on. The list would eventually lead to a policy about what is important to focus on when discussing open space acquisition. The Group is also working on a policy for town owned land that is leased. Dave Ryan mentioned that zoning is working on the regs regarding farms. Soil management and the length of the lease are a focus of this group. The group is looking at best practices and model leases to form a version for Simsbury owned agriculture parcels.

#### ***5.) Discussion about Pollinator Pathway***

Eric Wellman framed the discussion for the committee, including what is it and why it is important. Margery Winters stated that the project started in Wilton, CT. It designates portions of properties as pollinator pathways. 75 towns in CT/NY/NJ have designated pathways already. A question was raised about how people can manage pesticide use in their own land and how to educate people about planting native plants. Choosing native species at municipal facilities is something to look at for the Town to start doing. Helen Peterson asked how we can educate nurseries and businesses about the plants they sell, Margery Winters responded that it is often public demand that drives what plants are being sold. Land trusts, garden clubs, master gardeners, nurseries and others were identified as key stakeholders in this project. The hope is to have a preliminary plan by January which would include opportunities for town properties.

#### ***6.) Open Space Encroachment***

The group discussed two properties that are causing encroachment problems on the Belden Forest. An idea was to have a discussion about a volunteer program to monitor open space encroachment as well as other issues such as safety and maintenance. There was also discussion about sending an educational letter to people encroaching on the Forest. Susan Masino learned that a homeowner's insurance policy can payout for damage/dumping in our open space. Tom Tyburski mentioned that West Mountain Farms area has open space encroachment and that we will be sending an educational piece to all abutters of the trail in that neighborhood. Margery Winters explained the Ridgefield Rangers, a citizen volunteer group that walks trails and reports issues like invasive species, encroachment, etc. to the group. Susan Masino expressed a thought about rolling out a message about encroachment issues with the current Parks and Open Space Master Plan, Assessor's info, tax bills or other means.

#### **ADJOURN**

**Motion:** Mr. Ryan made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:44PM. Ms. Peterson seconded and all were in favor.

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86     Respectfully submitted,

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89     **Maria Capriola**

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