

1 **CALL TO ORDER**

2 First Selectman Lisa Heavner called the regular meeting of the Open Space Committee to order at 4:32  
3 PM on Wednesday, May 4, 2016. The meeting was held in the main meeting room of the Simsbury  
4 Town Offices located at 933 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury, CT. In attendance were the following  
5 committee members: Helen Peterson, William Rice, Donald Rieger, and David Ryan. Staff included  
6 Gerard Toner, Director of Culture, Parks and Recreation; Town Engineer Jeff Shea; and Assistant Town  
7 Planner Michael Glidden.

8  
9 **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

10 All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

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12 **PUBLIC AUDIENCE**

13 Susan Masino, of 41 Madison Lane, provided a handout with her comments, concerns and suggestions,  
14 as well as that of someone she consulted, on the forest management plan for Onion Mountain Park.  
15 Her full comments are attached.

16  
17 Ferg Jansen, of 3 Fox Den in West Simsbury, said he did a site walk of Simsbury Meadows and was  
18 impressed, but thought it was an under-used asset. He asked whether there was serious consideration  
19 to allow bikes there. As a bike friendly community, he said it might be something to consider.

20  
21 **REVIEW/ADOPT MINUTES OF APRIL 6, 2016**

22 **MOTION** Mr. Rieger made the motion to adopt the minutes of April 6, 2016 with the change of  
23 making the second “is” on line 45 to “it.” Mr. Ryan seconded. All voted in favor, the motion passed.

24  
25 **1 OLD BRIDGE ROAD UPDATE**

26 Mr. Shea went through the elements of the proposed master plan for the site. He said some of the  
27 improvements were dialed back in order to take a simpler approach. Site changes/improvements  
28 included such items as keeping the asphalt surface but adding a drop off area, creating formalized  
29 parking with striping, establishing a handicapped accessible spot, a proposed pavilion/picnic tables,  
30 plants and buffer areas, removal of invasive species, benches, educational signage, walking paths, and  
31 the flower bridge shed.

32 The top priority is to take down the existing building and put up the pavilion. From there, the  
33 concentration will be on site improvements and seeing what else can be done within the budget, and  
34 what permitting allows.

35 There was some discussion on the footpath and whether or not pavers were safe. Mr. Shea said if  
36 constructed property, they are safe. Once the committee approves the plan, it moves on to the board  
37 of selectmen.

38  
39 **MOTION** Mr. Ryan moved to approve the proposed master plan for 1 Old Bridge Road as presented.  
40 Mr. Rice seconded. All voted in favor, the motion passed.

41  
42 **TRAIL CONNECTION TO ONION MOUNTAIN PARK**

43 Stephen Philbrick and Mike Gotaski from the Canton Land Trust described to the committee the plan to  
44 connect a trail in Canton with Simsbury. The Simsbury area in question is about 50 to 75 near the  
45 Canton town line. There was some discussion on who is involved in this process, such as Jay Kaplan  
46 from the Roaring Brook Nature Center in Canton and the Canton Land Trust. There are no wetlands

47 involved and no permitting is needed on the Simsbury side. There was a reiteration that the plan will  
48 be careful not to hurt any species during the process. And before the trail is created it would be  
49 flagged, and a mailer sent out to inform people/groups so anyone can walk it and make comments. Mr.  
50 Toner and Mr. Glidden said they would discuss whether or not this should go through the Simsbury  
51 Conservation Commission.

52

53 **MOTION Mr. Ryan made the motion to support the creation of an approximately 50-75 foot**  
54 **Simsbury connection between the Blue Trail of Onion Mountain to the Stitch Trail, contingent upon**  
55 **flagging, and a site walk by Mr. Kaplan, and from Mr. Toner the confirmation that there is no**  
56 **invasive species. Ms. Peterson seconded. All voted in favor, the motion passed.**

57

58 **FORESTRY MANAGEMENT PLAN – ONION MOUNTAIN PARK**

59 Mr. Toner went through the history of and the thinking behind the plan. He also discussed the work  
60 that went into creating a plan, how people are notified, etc. The town entered into its first forest  
61 management plan in 1989 with the idea to revisit the plan every 15-20 years. There was movement to  
62 do another harvest recently, but the logger dropped out. There are renewed efforts to find someone to  
63 execute the program, and when a person is found and a timeline is in place, a walk of the site will be  
64 planned and notifications sent. There was some discussion on site access, equipment and site usage.  
65 No action was needed on this.

66

67 **SUMMER INTERN PROJECT**

68 Mr. Toner said the town would have Adam Hammershoy, who interned here last summer, back again.  
69 Projects for him might include open space signs, marking access to open space parcels, possibly more  
70 open space inventory work, light trail cleanup, and identifying tree limbs that are hanging. No action  
71 was needed on this.

72

73 **ADJOURN**

74 **MOTION Mr. Ryan moved to adjourn and Mr. Rieger seconded and all voted in favor. The meeting**  
75 **was adjourned at 5:34 PM.**

76

77 Respectfully submitted,  
78 Stephanie Riefe

## Open space Committee May 2016

### How do you manage land? Why would you manage land?

How you manage land is determined by WHY you are managing the land, i.e. what are the current and future goals for that land.

In recent years I have had long conversations with several land owners who I have known for many years who bought land and now have their land under “management” due to state tax requirements. All have similar forested properties but very different plans. All own land that they plan to pass down to future generations in their family. I consider this similar to the Town – we are stewarding this town for the current and future residents.

### What are the Town of Simsbury’s goals for management of our forests?

Any plan for land management must align with the goals of that management.

1. They should align with our Town’s reasons for conserving these forests, which were - and are - **biodiversity, recreation, and water resources.**
2. They should recognize that Simsbury’s forest resources are UNIQUE and head and shoulders above neighboring towns in terms of diverse habitats, water resources, and connectedness of open space.
3. Land management plans should be deeply aligned with local information on these features of our land, including connections that cross over town lines. Some areas should be managed quite different than others. Some could be forested and some should not be.
4. Forests do not need to be managed in order to be healthy. Some land should be left alone and allowed to become an old growth forest in New England ☺.
5. To meet our town goals, forests do not need any management other than keeping trails clear for recreation. Management costs money, risks bringing in invasives, and, most importantly, risks the unique features of that land. Managed land is less unique than unmanaged land, and becomes more so over time. Harvesting our forests, to pay for developing the plan to harvest our forests, is like a tiger chasing its tail.
6. **Onion Mountain and the Ethel Walker Woods have specific areas that should be left alone due to specific habitats and plant and animal species.**

### Who should make land management decisions?

People with specific expertise should compile local resources and make decisions in keeping with the Town’s goals. **A forester will make much different decisions than a forest ecologist.**

## Masino, Susan A.

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**From:** Edward Faison <efaison@highstead.net>  
**Sent:** Friday, April 29, 2016 3:14 PM  
**To:** Masino, Susan A.  
**Subject:** Re: Forestry question from neuroscience professor at Trinity College  
**Attachments:** 5937\_onion\_mountain\_plan\_EF.pdf

Hi Susan,

I had a chance to read through the plan, perhaps not as closely as I would have liked, but I wanted to get back to you before you meet with the town with some thoughts (see attached with comments and below).

I think the best argument against the plan is that it is a mostly one-dimensional assessment of the property from a forestry perspective and therefore an incomplete assessment of the various natural resources and ecological values that one should know before engaging in multiple timber harvests (you, of course, alluded to this with your point about rare species and unique habitat not being mentioned in the plan).

A couple of specifics:

1. the plan has almost nothing to say about herbaceous plants (and little to say about shrubs), which make up the vast majority of plant diversity and rare species in forests. The New England Wildflower Society recently published the state of the plants <http://www.newenglandwild.org/conservation/state-of-the-plants-technical-report.pdf>. On page 12 they have a map of rare plant populations in all the towns in New England, and interestingly Simsbury ranks relatively high in number of rare plant populations.
2. The plan discusses wildlife in general terms, but says nothing about threatened and endangered species both locally in Connecticut [http://www.ct.gov/deep/lib/deep/wildlife/pdf\\_files/nongame/ets15.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/deep/lib/deep/wildlife/pdf_files/nongame/ets15.pdf) or at a global scale. For example, a number of turtle species that occur in CT are globally threatened or endangered (e.g., wood, spotted, box <http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/4965/0>). Other bird species such as the wood thrush are globally "near threatened" <http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/22708670/0>. Lack of consideration of rare or threatened wildlife species seems like a critical omission prior to timber harvest.
3. as you pointed out, discussion of geology and the traprock ridge absent along with any consideration of distinctive ecological communities and flora that may be associated with this geology.

I don't think you can really fulfill the first goal listed on page 1 of the plan "Engage in sound, sustainable land stewardship" without addressing the three points above.

Overall, the goals outlined by the town may be the larger problem than the management plan itself, because the plan is developed very much with the town's goals in mind. One thing you might ask is how the town's goals were developed and question whether these goals need to be reevaluated? (see my comments page 1 about their lack of specificity).

Hope this helps.

Best,  
Ed

Note:  
will provide commented  
pdf of plan,  
via email.

May 2015

To the Open Space Committee,

Below organized, condensed and compiled general comments about the management plan for the Ethel Walker Woods submitted by people associated with Keep the Woods. I encouraged people to attend the Open Space meeting June 3<sup>rd</sup>. Expertise from Trout Unlimited will likely be present or will submit additional comments.

In general folks are happy with many aspects. There are concerns about "overmanagement" and people want to make sure we set the right priorities based on its well-researched values. They don't want to spend money unnecessarily and feel it is important to address existing problems first and adhere to "*First Do No Harm.*"

**1. Priorities:** The first goals should be sustainable land stewardship, preservation of ecosystem health, and diverse wildlife habitat. Other properties which do not have a high level of biodiversity and sensitive habitat are better-suited as recreation-focused. For similar reasons people are concerned about forestry and "periodic income" since most of the damage done to the property (watercourses, ecosystems, invasives) was caused by previous logging and perc tests (did MMI's previous contract include removal of PVC pipes for the septic sites?). Meadow habitats can be achieved by mowing and/or expanding the many existing nearby meadows.

**2. Access:** We need access, but not so many points. McLean's is > 10x as large and has 3 parking lot access points. Putting in a gravel pull out on Woodhaven is an unnecessary expense since it will essentially remove 3 current on-street spots. Town Forest is a site the Town should invest in and maintain with services since there is a ballfield, playground, picnic area, pond, etc. A wheelchair-accessible path from the parking lot to the picnic area would be nice. Composting toilets should be used if possible (they have these at Heublein).

Upgrading access and adding signage should be a goal (rather than adding new access points and trail markings). Many people use these woods and have done so for years without harming the wonderful and varied wildlife and plant populations (Jay Kaplan at Roaring Brook can rattle off an awesome list of unexpected bird species). Access and use should not be substantially limited and trail closure avoided unless necessary.

**3. Information and Signage:** It does not appear that a comprehensive set of relevant resources and documents have been compiled from Trust for Public Land, Farmington River Watershed Association, and perhaps other sources. (Keep the Woods was a main resource). Malone and MacBroom mention educational signage in four locations. While many would rather not have signs every 20 feet it seems as the diversity of the woods provides opportunities to educate the public and thus calls for at least more than four signs. Maybe this could be done over a period of several years. Entrance kiosks should be visible from the road and/or parking.

**4. Invasives:** This should be a priority so they do not become worse. Most invasives are at sites of logging or other disturbance. The plan for the marsh may be excessive and too environmentally damaging; phragmites should however be contained from spreading further and hot spots downstream should be addressed.

**5. Trail marking, erosion and water resources:** Wide trails, suitable for heavier use, are already marked. Unmarked trails, for lighter use, should be left unmarked. The narrow trails are really important for quiet nature study and contemplation, with numerous plant species and invertebrates not seen on the wider, busier trails; if more traffic were to be directed there by blazes and signs their special features would be destroyed. Kiosks at entry points could state that unmarked trails are not maintained and travel on them is at one's own risk. Bicycles should not be allowed on unmarked trails for safety reasons and because of erosion (and damage to plants and animals). Trail erosion is a big problem and has diverted watercourses in some areas. Siltation in the brook is a major problem – it is significantly "stressed" by runoff.... sand and silt, choking habitat, even downstream at the Trout Pond at Stratton Brook State Park.