

# **Greenway Committee Meeting Summary**

**Feb. 15, 2022**

**Present:** Trish Garrigan, Sherry Anders, Marie Elwyn, Betsy Colburn-Mirkovic, Brian Goldberg

**Public present:** None

1. **Call to Order** – Meeting was called to order at 6:34
2. **Announcements** – Sherry read the usual announcements about recording.
3. **Land Management/Acquisition** –
  - a. GAD/Dupre property (102-A-3) The Greenway and Conservation Committees will draft a joint letter to recommend that Town Counsel take action when needed. We are waiting for word to move forward from Anne Gagnon with MassWildlife, who is gathering information.
  - b. Great Rd/2A tax takings (47-A-1.1; 48-C-5.1; 48-C-7; 48-C-5) – According to Mike Fleming, parcel 48-C-5.1 is developable. Mike F planning to speak to Mike McGovern about plans for these parcels – Betsy suggested asking Anne if she's willing to take 3 of the parcels without the 4<sup>th</sup>. Anne said yes, but thinks the Town would need to remove an old structure from one of the properties to get the approval of her Land Committee. There is also a question about sewer on the potentially developable parcel –there may not be enough room for a septic system.
  - c. EEA L.A.N.D. Grant Opportunities – Sherry reported we are moving forward on LAND grant opportunities with Janet Morrison, two properties are involved and both are necessary to have a competitive application. Sherry requested and received approval of funds from the Conservation Commission last week for Janet to communicate with the probate attorney on one of the properties. Janet and Sherry met with other landowner on Zoom this morning. Sherry asked if we would like to go into Executive Session next time to further discuss the properties. The group said they would like to meet in Executive Session next time. Trish asked how much acreage is involved and Sherry responded about 28 acres.
4. **Article 97 Deed Review** – Betsy and Sherry will present their results at the March meeting. A warrant article is planned for the Spring Town meeting sometime in May.
5. **Fredonian Park** – Sherry submitted a Wild and Scenic Rivers Community Grant application to address invasives. Great job, Sherry! Unfortunately, the Municipal ADA grant submitted by the Town Administrator for the parking area and trail work was never received by the Mass Office on Disability. The Town Administrator thinks it must be a software error. Sherry checked with the state and they said it was never submitted. The Town Administrator thought that if we could tighten the budget and get two more quotes, he will ask for money at town meeting, if that doesn't work he will resubmit for the next grant round. Dave Bortell is looking at the budget and working on getting quotes. Sherry will continue to get quotes for the invasive plant site assessment and management plan and is also looking at the possibility of hiring a graduate student intern. Brian noted that the strategy for asking for money for this at Town Meeting is key, especially if the Conservation Commission is also asking for

money. This is a parks issue, an ADA issue. Sherry noted another possibility for money is the Mass Trails Grant, but they were due 2/1 and it is a lot of work to apply, and may not fit this project, but might be good for the Shirley North/South trail idea.

6. **MassWildlife Barrens Restoration Project, Squannacook River Wildlife Management Area** – Work on this project is delayed. Sherry reported that trees are marked along Shirley riverbank suggesting they plan to do work there – they do NOT need to file with Shirley Cons Comm – they DO need to file a Forest Cutting Plan with the State. The Shirley Cons Comm will have two weeks to comment when that happens. Mike will forward it to the Greenway Committee. Our next steps are we will continue to check for updates; contact appropriate Boards and Commissions to make sure necessary permission is sought and advocate for responsible stewardship of river and its banks if needed.
7. **Open Space and Recreation Plan Update** – Brian reported the committee has met monthly and they are making good progress on the survey. They will forward a draft google survey to us for feedback. He said the major theme is to balance conservation and recreation and that recreation is coming up strongly. He noted that the next step in the process is to get the survey out and get input. He noted that the current plan is so strong and that it will stand as “the bedrock” of the effort and what is emerging is the need for an updated executive summary and set of recommendations. Betsy noted the issue of identifying farmlands of local importance should be included. She noted a recent talk at the NRWA Stewardship Council by Al Averill a retired employee of the Natural Resources and Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Trust for Public Land (TPL). He mentioned that if towns could identify farmlands of importance, they have a higher likelihood of getting NRCS money. She thought it would be good for Shirley to put this in the OSRP update and add these important farmlands to the maps. All agreed. Trish noted this is also a good idea for Shirley as it related to Climate Resilience. It was noted that a few years ago the North County Land Trust was trying to identify farmlands in Shirley and we wondered if they are still interested.
8. **Cost of Community Services Analysis** – Sherry noted this is a tool to educate the community on the value of protected open space. Most people don’t realize that it is fiscally better for a town to keep land in open space than to pay for all the services needed for developed land. She noted it might be possible to contract with UMass Amherst or Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) to do the analysis for Shirley. Mike Fleming suggested we reach out to Paul Catanzaro at UMass as a first step. Betsy noted that Harvard Forest has also done some modeling on this and has an interactive website that can be used to support work done under the Community Preservation Act (CPA). Brian thought it might be a good idea to see what they have at Harvard Forest and suggested we could maybe be a case study for them. Someone mentioned Pepperell might be working on this now.
9. **Shirley Trails** - Brian noted that the OSPR Committee invited people interested in trails and historical issues to attend their January meeting. They wanted to collect feedback on what excites people about trails in town. They are interested in exploring a North/South Trails vision and other ideas to link historical areas, and find economic opportunity. We also discussed a “village loop” trail idea and an historical trail. Marie mentioned naming a trail for Ray Farrar that goes from the Train station to the Nashua River. Betsy cautioned about raising expectations too high and Brian agreed and noted that having a vision can help move people forward and “if we don’t try nothing will happen.” He was suggesting we start sketching out ideas. He pulled up a map of Shirley and identified 3 possible zones

in town- North Shirley, Village Zone and Shirley Center/Benjamin Hill area as places to focus efforts. The concept of developing a “sense of place” and also having connections and corridors between the zones were discussed. We also discussed coordinating with neighboring towns, like Lunenburg. Sherry noted that the Village area could be suitable for grant money as it is an environmental justice area, an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), a cold waters fishery, and has a high urban heat index.

Brian noted an upcoming meeting on March 21 at 2pm North County Land Trust (NCLT)/Lunenburg Conservation and Open Space volunteers/other stakeholders and experts at Montachusett Regional Planning Council (MRPC) headquarters. At this meeting they would be putting out a big map and looking to connect trail networks. If Greenway Committee member were interested in attending, we could post it as a public meeting for the Greenway Committee, enough were interested to attend on the 21<sup>st</sup> to post it. Another meeting idea was to meet with Paul Funch of Groton Trails, and Dick O’Brien to discuss Trail design, grant funding, etc. Trish noted she could ask Paul to attend our next meeting, even if briefly to begin a discussion. Betsy noted we need to be mindful of the MassWildlife areas on the map where there are some restrictions on human use. Betsy also noted that trails will drive a recreation component of the OSRP, but can be counter to conservation efforts. Sherry noted that it might be a good idea to create trails in less ecologically sensitive areas, places where people can go with baby carriages, dogs, etc. There is no update at this time on the trail maps or the trails document.

- 10. Conservation Restrictions** – Some recent issues came up highlighting the need to address Conservation Restriction (CR) Monitoring. Mike Fleming would like to move forward on this and have a meeting with OSRP Committee, Greenway and create an Action Plan and include it in the OSRP update. He asked Sherry to help set up this meeting. Betsy noted that the CR monitoring is the responsibility of the Conservation Commission not the Greenway Committee. Which is true, and Sherry is willing to set something up to get us moving. The Conservation Commission has no ability to do it. Marie mentioned that Ward Baxter is helping with Storm drains maybe he could help with this. Betsy noted that Sally Nasser at TTOR has a handbook for doing CR monitoring and maybe we could invite her to a meeting to explain to us what is involved. Sherry noted that Al Futterman of NRWA said they are trying to get funds to help towns with this. The North County Land Trust is currently doing this for Ayer, so we could talk with them. Betsy noted that the Planning Board should charge a fee to developers that have properties with CR’s to have a source of funding for the required monitoring. Trish noted that at a previous meeting we were going to ask Mike Fleming to identify the most important CR’s from a conservation perspective and that we might be willing to spend our limited time on those.
- 11. Annual Report** – Sherry had circulated a draft Annual Report for our review. Betsy made a motion to accept the draft report submitted by Sherry plus any minor changes she gets from the Committee. The motion passed unanimously.
- 12. Meeting Minutes** – A motion was made to accept the minutes from the Jan. 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022 Meeting, with the note to correct the spelling of Betsy’s name. The motion passed unanimously.

**13. Meeting adjourned at 8:16**

