

MINUTES

**Deerfield Open Space Committee Meeting
January 7, 2026
5:00pm – 6:30pm**

***Meeting held in person at the Deerfield Town Hall, Conference Room
8 Conway St., South Deerfield, MA***

And on Zoom

Remote Meeting Connection noted below:

Please click this URL to

join. <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/9116041580?pwd=NkRHV3gzSWYvSm1JR0xlQXphUkt5UT09>

Meeting ID: **911 604 1580**

Passcode: 570012

Present: Julie Caswell, Chris Curtis, Andrea Leibson, Alan Swedlund

Guests: Karen Fitzpatrick (Member of the Indigenous Partners Working Group), Alex Galloway (Town Planner)

Welcome & Introductions

Minutes of December 8, 2025 meeting were approved unanimously.

Overview

The Open Space Committee meeting focused on two main grant applications: a CPC grant for establishing a Deerfield Conservation Fund and a MassTrails grant for trail development. The committee discussed the CPC grant requirements, including the need for a warrant article at town meeting to establish the conservation fund, and approved a proposed list of allowable uses for the fund. For the MassTrails grant, they reviewed feedback from a recent DCR meeting where eight staff members heard their presentation about connecting trails between the Connecticut River and Mt Sugarloaf Reservation, with DCR expressing interest in the accessible trail component. The committee also discussed map options and trail design considerations, with plans to meet again if needed in working groups before the February 2nd grant deadline.

Next steps

- [Julie: Draft a simple "process page" describing the proposed decision-making and application process for the Conservation Fund, to be reviewed by the Conservation Commission and presented to CPC by next Wednesday.](#)

- [Julie: Send out the current draft list of allowable uses for CPC funds to all relevant committee members for review and discussion.](#)
- [Julie: Coordinate/schedule a meeting with Holly \(town accountant\), Kathy Sylvester, and other financially relevant parties \(and possibly Sarah and Christopher\) to ensure administrative alignment on the Conservation Fund setup.](#)
- [Chris, Julie: Coordinate with town staff to draft warrant article language for establishing the Conservation Fund for town meeting.](#)
- [Julie: Present the proposed uses/process to CPC at the next CPC meeting on January 14.](#)
- [Julie: Send out assignments to committee members for specific sections of the MassTrails grant proposal for editing/writing. Also send assignments and sample text for committee members to use in securing letters of support.](#)
- [Committee members: Write/review assigned sections of the MassTrails grant proposal as requested by Julie.](#)
- [Alex: Send list of contacts/organizations to Julie for letters of support for the MassTrails grant.](#)
- [Karen: Reach out to Senior Center to request a letter of support for the MassTrails grant.](#)
- [Chris: Contact Pete Westover to ask about the cost differential for designing an accessible trail versus a regular hiking trail for the MassTrails grant budget.](#)
- [Alex: Ask Ryan to send the FRGOG contact ridge trail map data for use in proposal maps.](#)
- [Alex: Create/prepare improved maps \(including possible inner loop for accessibility\) for the MassTrails proposal.](#)
- [Julie: Send narrative and maps to DCR contact \(Katherine Preissler\) for potential letter of support for the MassTrails grant.](#)
- [Chris: Confirm with Amanda \(or relevant MassTrails contact\) whether including an accessible trail component would move the proposal into a different funding category and/or increase chances of funding.](#)
- [Julie: Send out information and assignments to committee members for finalizing the MassTrails grant proposal.](#)

Summary

Deerfield Conservation Fund Grant Review

The meeting focused on two main funding items: a grant application to the CPC for the Deerfield Conservation Fund and the MassTrails grant application. The CPC reviewed the Conservation Fund grant application on December 17th, raising questions about the need to establish a conservation fund under state law. The group discussed the process of creating a warrant article for town meeting to establish the fund, with Chris having researched similar precedents. They also reviewed a list of potential uses for the CPC money, which would require a grant agreement between CPC and the Conservation Fund. The committee noted that CPC would ultimately decide on the acceptable uses.

Deerfield Conservation Fund Funding Process

The group discussed the process for funding open space projects through the Deerfield Conservation Fund, including creating a checklist form for applications and establishing a subcommittee with members from both the Conservation Commission and Open Space Committee to provide feedback to the Conservation Commission on proposed projects. They agreed to seek CPC approval of the funding list.

Motion by Chris Curtis, seconded by Andrea Leibson, approved unanimously:

The Open Space Committee adopt the Grant Agreement Language for the use of CPC funds for the Deerfield Conservation Fund shown below and seek CPC's approval of the list.

The Deerfield Community Preservation Committee recommends the allocation of \$100,000 of Community Preservation Act funds to the Deerfield Conservation Fund for use on open space projects.

- These funds must be segregated from any other funds the Conservation Fund may have and tracked separately by the Town Accountant to assure their use for approved projects.
- CPA funds may be used only for the purposes outlined by the Community Preservation Act.
- CPA funds allocated to the Conservation Fund may be used for these purposes:
 - To acquire conservation land for the town.
 - To acquire town restrictions or easements on land owned by others, such as a Conservation Restriction or an Agricultural Preservation Restriction. If Community Preservation Act funds are used to purchase an interest in land, a conservation restriction must be established as part of that purchase.
 - To pay for the expenses directly related to an acquisition, such as an appraisal, boundary survey, drafting of a Conservation Restriction, legal fees, closing costs, etc.

- To acquire parcels coming out of Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B for which the town has right of first refusal to purchase.
- To be combined with state LAND or other state or federal grants to purchase open space.
- To provide the local match for the MA Agricultural Preservation Restriction program. Note that the town must be named as a co-holder of that APR with the state.
- To acquire trail easements on private property.
- To make conservation-related improvements to conservation land, such as creating hiking trails.

Conservation Project Review Process

The group discussed creating a process for the Conservation Commission reviewing and approving conservation fund projects, aiming to keep it simple and fluid. Julie emphasized the need to avoid replicating the CPC process and proposed a straightforward form with a checklist and project description. They agreed to present the process to the CPC next Wednesday and discussed potential future initiatives like land grants and easement programs. Alex suggested coordinating with Holly, the town accountant, and others to ensure administrative alignment.

Further Town Conservation Fund Items

The group discussed holding an open space meeting to present information to the community. They also mentioned an upcoming meeting with various town committees, including the Open Space Committee, to be held by Engage Deerfield.

MassTrails Grant Application Review

The group reviewed progress on the MassTrails grant application, highlighting the involvement of ecological clubs and outdoor education programs, and noted the absence of local scouting troops. Andrea mentioned reaching out to various groups, including private and public schools, and confirmed permission to use specific names in the grant application. They planned to update and refine the application based on previous year's content.

DCR Trail Project Partnership Discussion

The team discussed their recent meeting with DCR staff about the MassTrails project, where they presented their proposal to 8 DCR representatives, including regional leadership. The team agreed to pursue an accessible trail design, which DCR staff indicated would be a strong addition to their application. They also discussed updating their project title to "Connecticut Riverview to Mt Sugarloaf Reservation Trails" and agreed to add \$5,000-\$10,000 for design work on a connector trail.

Close Meeting

Next meeting date: February 12, 2026, 5:00-6:30pm

Minutes taken by Julie Caswell, using AI to generate draft from the transcript.