

MINUTES

Deerfield Open Space Committee Meeting

February 12, 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: 840 7912 0343

Passcode: 574161

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

Guests: Karen Fitzpatrick and Deb Yaffe (Members of the Indigenous Partners Working Group), Alex Galloway (Town Planner)

Quick recap

The Open Space Committee meeting focused on several key initiatives including the MassTrails grant application, which was submitted with a \$79,000 budget and includes three trail components: Pocumtuck Ridge Trail, Loop Trail, and Connector Trail. The committee discussed the establishment of a Deerfield Conservation Fund, with \$100,000 requested from the Community Preservation Committee, and reviewed the formation of a playground subcommittee to explore new recreational spaces in town. The group also addressed plans for an upcoming Indigenous Partners event in April featuring David Brule and discussed potential farmland preservation opportunities through a new state grant program. Additionally, the committee reviewed the status of various trail projects and discussed the need for further protection of Pocumtuck Ridge, with plans for a meeting with the Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) and Franklin Land Trust in early March.

Next steps

- [Julie: Report back to the committee after the next CPC meeting regarding the outcome of the Deerfield Conservation Fund grant agreement vote.](#)
- [Christopher D and Alex: Meet with Eaglebrook to discuss their interests in land use and potential trail easements, then report back to the Open Space Committee.](#)
- [Alex \(and/or relevant committee members\): Research the current lease payments from Eversource and Delta Sand and Gravel for their cell towers and investigate the possibility of increasing or earmarking a portion for open space funds.](#)
- [Julie: Set up a meeting in early March with DCR, Franklin Land Trust, and Open Space Committee representatives to discuss further land acquisition and easements on Pocumtuck Ridge, and report back to the committee.](#)
- [Julie: Contact Tamsin Flanders at FRCOG to express interest in the farmland protection planning grant and determine the commitment expected from Deerfield; share Deerfield's existing farmland prioritization plan with FRCOG.](#)

- [Playground Subcommittee \(led by Andrea\): Begin process to formalize subcommittee membership, including identifying and appointing members \(e.g., one Rec Committee member, one Open Space member, and interested community members\), and ensure compliance with open meeting law.](#)
- [Playground Subcommittee: Develop and distribute information about proposed playground/pocket parks for public outreach \(e.g., via Engage Deerfield, Deerfield Now, town website\), in preparation for information table at town meeting.](#)
- [Indigenous Partners Working Group \(Deb, Karen, Emily\): Meet with David Brule to plan April event, confirm event details, and consider options for additional funding or donations to support Indigenous speaker fees.](#)
- [Playground Subcommittee: Investigate options for playground design/feasibility studies, including potential collaboration with Conway School of Landscape Design, UMass, or other academic programs.](#)
- [Committee: Review and correct the typo in the annual report paragraph about resubmitted materials.](#)
- [Committee: Schedule and confirm next meeting date \(settled on March 16th, 5pm\), and revisit scheduling preferences at next meeting.](#)

Summary

1. Minutes Approved

The group reviewed and approved the meeting minutes from January 7th.

2. MassTrails Grant Update Approved

Julie provided an update on the MassTrails grant application, noting that the budget increased to \$79,000 due to a 5% cost increase and additional design work. She highlighted that UMass Amherst approved design work on the connector trail, and the group received a letter of support from DCR. The team is now waiting for a response, which could come as early as June, with a timeline of approximately 200 days.

3. Deerfield Conservation Fund Proposal Approval by CPC

Julie discussed the ongoing proposal to establish the Deerfield Conservation Fund, which would be supported by a \$100,000 contribution from the Community Preservation Committee (CPC). After three meetings, the CPC approved the project with 6 votes in favor and 2 abstentions. Julie and others are working further on a grant agreement between the CPC and the Conservation Commission to ensure proper oversight. The CPC will reconsider the proposal at their next meeting, with Julie hopeful for a unanimous vote. The process involves two warrant articles: one to establish the conservation fund and another to allocate CPC funds to it.

The Committee discussed the need to spread information about land protection initiatives and town meetings, emphasizing the importance of explaining the process to residents. Julie addressed concerns about the grant agreement, clarifying that the Conservation Commission would handle decision-making, with town administrator oversight for land acquisitions. Julie suggested publishing information on the town website and proposed a presentation at an upcoming Engage Deerfield meeting to coincide with the May town meeting. She also mentioned the possibility of a joint meeting with the Select Board and Open Space to discuss Pocumtuck Rock, which is being considered for a spring warrant article.

4. Pocumtuck Rock Article 97, Lease Renewal and Tower Expansion

Alex discussed the renewal of a lease with New England Public Media and the potential expansion request from Delta Sand and Gravel for additional land to build a new cell tower. She noted that Delta Sand and Gravel maintains the road and has surveyed the area for the tower. Alex also mentioned ongoing communications with Eversource, Verizon, and AT&T about co-locating on the existing tower. The town

owns the land, and Delta Sand and Gravel would sublease it for the tower construction, with the town receiving rent from both Delta Sand and Gravel and the co-located companies. Andrea suggested exploring the possibility of using some of the rental income for open space and discussed the potential for a trailhead on the land.

The Committee discussed trail access and the need to meet with Eaglebrook to determine their specific requirements around trail access. The Committee discussed the possibility of maximizing protection efforts and the importance of the Pocumtuck Ridge Trail as a priority. The conversation touched on the potential for a parking lot in the area and the desire to avoid one. Julie expressed hope for the protection of the area around Pocumtuck Rock itself and the potential for a better viewing area if certain structures were moved back.

5. Playground Subcommittee and Playground Location Options Discussed

The Playground Steering Group has identified two potential locations for a playground: behind the library where a deteriorating shed currently stands, and a piece of town-owned land between the elementary school parking lot and football fields. While the library location is preferred, it cannot be developed immediately due to the shed's use by the police department, though there are plans to relocate police storage to a future expanded police station. The group discussed formalizing their efforts by becoming an official subcommittee of the Open Space Committee, which would require following open meeting laws and excluding town employees from membership.

Andrea discussed the formation of a playground subcommittee, emphasizing the need for careful selection of members and the involvement of the recreation department. She outlined plans for a new playground, including potential funding from the CPC, design considerations, and the need for community input, particularly from children. Chris also mentioned a previously installed rain garden that could be integrated into the new playground design and highlighted the importance of creating a space accessible to all age groups.

The Open Space Committee discussed establishing a playground subcommittee and reviewed a motion to formalize its structure. A motion to establish a Playground Subcommittee was made by Chris and seconded by Andrea and was approved unanimously by the Open Space Committee. (See p. 4 for the motion language.)

6. Other Business

- DCR and FLT Land Protection Meeting set for March 3. Nick Rossi from the Department of Conservation and Recreation and Alain Peteroy and Liam Kreagan from Franklin Land Trust want to meet and discuss Deerfield Open Space protection priorities. Julie and Chris will attend.
- FRCOG will begin working on a planning grant for farmland preservation and are seeking participating communities. Julie will investigate further.
- The Indigenous Partners Working Group reported on their activities. They are hosting an Indigenous speaker event in April, with David Brule tentatively confirmed for \$250. This will be a Saturday event geared to families and kids.

8. Next Meeting Date

They scheduled their next meeting for March 17th at 5 PM. Changed to March 16th.

Minutes taken by Chris Curtis, using AI to generate draft from the transcript.

Motion:

I move that the *Open Space Committee* hereby establish an official **Playground** Subcommittee, with the purpose, authority, scope of work, and membership structure defined in the document titled “Playground Subcommittee Rules” dated *Feb. 12, 2026*.

Be it further moved that:

1. **Adoption of Rules**

The *Open Space Committee* formally adopts the attached Playground Subcommittee Rules as the governing framework and authorizes the subcommittee to operate in accordance with those rules unless and until they are amended.

Playground Subcommittee Rules

Formed and adopted by the Open Space Committee (Parent Body) on *Feb. 12, 2026*.

1) Purpose

The Playground (“Subcommittee”) is established to support the 2023-2033 Open Space and Recreation plan Goal C1 “C1. Create new recreational facilities identified as a need in the survey and other town planning efforts” with a specific focus on play equipment.

2) Authority

The Subcommittee operates under the authority of the Open Space Committee as established under Chapter 10: Committees, Article VII in the Town Bylaws. The committee will make recommendations to the Open Space Committee.

3) Scope of Work

The Subcommittee will:

- *Identify potential areas for installation of a playground.*
- *Conduct community outreach to further prioritize location and conceptual playground structures*
- *Research costs, funding opportunities, and composition of a conceptual playground(s)*

4) Membership & Composition

- *Size: 4-7 voting members*
- *Composition: at least 1 member from Open Space Committee, 1 member from the Recreation Committee, and up to 5 community representatives appointed by the Open Space Committee*
- *Interested parties should provide a completed Town Committee Application to the Open Space Chair*

5) Sunset / Review Date

The subcommittee shall be reviewed by the Open Space no later than February 12, 2027 to determine continuation, amendment, or dissolution.