

MEETING MINUTES

Deerfield Open Space and Recreation Committee

September 19, 2023

3:30pm – 5:00pm

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

Present: Julie Caswell, Andrea Leibson, Susan Haff, Alan Swedlund (Absent: Lynn Rose)

Guests/Volunteers: Denise Schwartz, Greg Hendricks, Deborah Yaffe, Emily Johnson

1. Welcome & Introductions
2. Approved Minutes from 8-22-2023 Meeting
3. Discussion of Broadening Stakeholder Groups for OSRC Projects, including Land Preservation and Trail Network Development.

a. Emily Johnson (Harvard Forest) - broadening stakeholder groups

Deerfield formerly Pocumtuck and Nipmuc Lands. Stakeholders include representation by descendants of tribes.

History of exclusionary practices of Colonial period.

Preservation and other projects to have inclusive notions of conservation values.

Focus on how to invite groups and individuals to the table, with need for relationship building.

Options to consider are building use agreements as addenda to or separate documents from conservation easements or restrictions.

Memberships in tribal groups are varied and complex in contemporary states/nation. Who has sovereignty in terms of state or federal recognition?

Names of contact people and their titles in terms of tribal affairs will be provided by Emily.

Discussion of Native groups and identities in the region. How best to reach out to Native stakeholders?

How necessary and imminent is the conservation easement? There are costs involved.

Committee will develop a brief synopsis statement about its thinking about preservation and stakeholder engagement to share with stakeholders.

Sheryll Holly (Nipmuc), Marge Bruchac (Abenaki), Lisa Brooks, and others as possible informants on indigenous knowledge and practices.

Identifying the other principal stakeholders with whom we will want to work.

Resources: The First Light Collaborative (Maine), Emily (Harvard Forest) (she mentioned upcoming event available on the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition).

- b. Julie - Asked for elaboration on Emily's observations on conservation restrictions and the positives and potential negatives. They are needed for state funding, but they can be problematic for other reasons, they are expensive, and can be limiting long-term. Some tribal descendants are not in favor of restrictions because they "chop up" land and can be restrictive.
4. Review motion passed at August 22 Meeting on seeking Conservation Restrictions on five Town of Deerfield Parcels (Pocumtuck Rock, Pine Nook Memorial Forest, Steam Mill Forest, Birchwood Nature Refuge, and Deerfield River Off Mill Village Road)
- a. Response from Selectboard to date
 - b. Response from Alain Peteroy, Franklin Land Trust

Upcoming meeting with the Select Board regarding the possibility of putting conservation restrictions on the town properties that are the OSRC focus on the Pocumtuck Ridge.

Alain Peteroy from the Franklin Land Trust will be coming to our next meeting with Liam Cregan to talk about conservation easements on Town properties.

5. Discuss Process for Applying for Grants to Pursue Conservation Restrictions. Funding would likely be needed for all title, surveying, public access improvements, and other due diligence. (Julie Caswell)
- a. Town of Deerfield Community Preservation Grants, due March 2024
 - b. Opportunities for municipalities to seek funding to support the conservation of town owned lands, such as the LAND grant and the Conservation Partnership Grant. <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-a-local-acquisitions-for-natural-diversity-land-grant>

Julie's comprehensive "Grant Opportunities" handout was distributed and talked about briefly and Julie raised the question about how we might approach the CPC regarding CPA as a funding source.

6. Discuss state-level Solar Forum and Forests as Climate Solutions Forum in relation to OSRC activities (Sue Haff, Andrea Leibson) Forum Info:
 - a. Information on the forum is available here: <https://ag.umass.edu/solarforum>. You can learn more and register here: <https://web.cvent.com/event/c33d3022-39cf-4aa4-8633-8cf6820bb31a/summary?fbclid=IwAR1fL9M9954-utWUVn5Vyvidq0C-ewBT70wzeBAOx30Cq6USIWwl3z61jDk>
 - b. Forest Forum. Please register for the session using the following link. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar. To attend the virtual session on September 12 from 6:00-8:30pm, please [sign up here](#).

We discussed briefly the State Level Solar and Forests as Climate Solutions Forums as they might have negative impacts on open space, and about some of the solar projects in town that have been or will be installed.

7. Close meeting
 - a. Next meeting, October 17th, 3-30-5:00 p.m. Town Hall Conference Room
 - b. Adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Minutes by Alan Swedlund.