



NEWINGTON OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

SPECIAL MEETING

Thursday, February 11, 2016

Conference Room L-101, Lower Level
131 Cedar Street, Newington, CT 06111

6:30 p.m.

A G E N D A

I. ROLL CALL

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. January 14, 2016

III. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Possible revision to Provision #3 of the Town Council Resolution establishing the new Open Space Committee.

B. Review of work done by previous Open Space Committee.

C. Open Space Inventory and Map.

D. Town-wide Open Space Management Strategy.

E. Funding sources and opportunities:

1. CT Greenways Council (deadline: April 29, 2016).

IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS

V. COMMITTEE MEMBERS COMMENTS

VI. ADJOURN

Submitted,

Craig Minor, AICP
Town Planner

RECEIVED & RECORDED BY
NEWINGTON TOWN CLERK

2016 FEB -5 PM 2:29

Craig D. Lewis
TOWN CLERK



Tanya D. Lane
Acting Town Manager

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

131 Cedar Street Newington, Connecticut 06111

Town Planner

Craig Minor, AICP
Town Planner

To: Open Space Committee
From: Craig Minor, AICP 
Date: February 5, 2016
Subject: **Agenda Items for February 11, 2016**

II. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Possible revision to Provision #3 of the Town Council Resolution establishing the new Open Space Committee:

At the Open Space Committee meeting on January 14, 2016 the members discussed the Town Council resolution dated 9-08-15 which established the current Open Space Committee. The members were concerned that Provision #3 restricts the Committee's ability to be pro-active in suggesting open space initiatives to the Town Council:

“3. Upon request from the Town Council, the Open Space Committee shall make recommendations to the Town Council as to Open Space implications on such issues as the acquisition of real property, the sale of Town property, the protection and utilization of existing Town owned property, the financial impact of property acquisition with or without external funding sources and potential use of the Capital Improvement Fund.”

The members agreed that the Open Space Committee should ask the Town Council to revise this Provision so that the Committee could be pro-active on open space issues. I suggest asking the Town Council to add one new sentence at the end of Provision #3:

“3. Upon request from the Town Council, the Open Space Committee shall make recommendations to the Town Council as to Open Space implications on such issues as the acquisition of real property, the sale of Town property, the protection and utilization of existing Town owned property, the financial impact of property acquisition with or without external funding sources and potential use of the Capital Improvement Fund. The Open Space Committee may make recommendations to the Town Council whenever deemed appropriate by the Committee.”

This change retains the Committee's responsibility to submit recommends when requested by the Town Council, but also gives it the ability to be pro-active.

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B. Review of work done by previous Open Space Committee.

I am still working on a summary of the work done by the previous Open Space Committee. I will have it for you at or before the meeting on February 11, 2016.

C. Open Space Inventory and Map.

Last year the Town Plan and Zoning Commission began working on a new zoning district, to be called "Open Space Zone". This is a work in progress. The purpose of that zone is to identify and protect existing open space by restricting how it may be used. A map of all public and private open space parcels was developed by the Town's GIS specialist based on the Town's land use database, and approximately three-quarters of these parcels have been visited by the Planning Department staff. This map is also a work in progress – we know that some open space parcels are missing, such as the Marcap parcel. See attached.

This begs the question of what exactly "open space" is. There are as many definitions of "open space" as there are people and organizations with an interest in it, and they include land that not everyone would consider open space – a football field and a cemetery are both "open space" by some definitions. A vacant lot that hasn't been developed yet because its owner is waiting for the real estate market to improve is sometimes considered "open space".

While the Committee could simply say, "we'll know open space when we see it", I recommend the Committee establish its own definition of "open space" so that it can focus on what the Committee feels is important, and not get pulled in too many directions at once.

D. Town-wide Open Space Management Strategy.

At the Open Space Committee meeting on January 14, 2016 Mayor Zartarian commented on the lack of any comprehensive plan or strategy for managing Town-owned open space. If this is a project that the Committee would like to take on, let me know and I will work with other Town staff (e.g. the Parks and Rec Director, the Facilities Manager, and Highway Superintendent).

E. Funding sources and opportunities:

1. CT Greenways Council (deadline: April 29, 2016).

Chairman Conway yesterday forwarded to me information on a "greenway" grant opportunity. As I write this I have not had a chance to review it in detail to see if Ancient Highway (off of Kitts Lane) or Old Highway (between Russell Road and Mountain Road) qualify.

cc:
file

AGENDA ITEM: IV.D.

DATE: 9-08-15

RESOLUTION NO. _____

WHEREAS, the Newington Town Council desires to replace the existing Open Space Committee; and,

WHEREAS, in order to appoint a new Open Space Committee, the current Open Space Committee must be disbanded;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Newington Town Council hereby disbands the existing Open Space Committee and creates and replaces it with a new Open Space Committee in accordance with the following provisions:

1. The Open Space Committee shall provide assistance to the Town Council, as determined by the Town Council, in those matters associated with Open Space issues as they come before the Town Council.
2. It is declared that protecting natural resources, protecting aesthetics of the community, establishing greenways and trail systems, preserving passive and active recreation areas, preservation of historical assets and similar issues are desirable for the community; and
3. Upon request from the Town Council, the Open Space Committee shall make recommendations to the Town Council as to Open Space implications on such issues as the acquisition of real property, the sale of Town property, the protection and utilization of existing Town owned property, the financial impact of property acquisition with or without external funding sources and potential use of the Capital Improvement Fund.
4. The Open Space Committee shall consist of seven (7) members. Two (2) members shall be current Town Council members and the remaining five members shall be residents of the Town. All members shall be appointed by the Town Council. All vacancies shall be filled by the Town Council.
5. The terms of the resident members of the Open Space Committee shall be four (4) years or until their successors are qualified and appointed, and shall be staggered. Initial appointments by the Town Council shall be: three (3) residents to be appointed to four (4) year terms; two (2) residents to be appointed to three (3) year terms. The two (2) current Town Council members appointed serve until their successors are qualified and appointed.

MOTION BY: _____

SECONDED BY: _____

VOTE: _____

Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection

Criteria for the Designation of Connecticut Greenways

In 1995 the Connecticut General Assembly acted upon the recommendations of the Governor's Greenways Committee and passed Public Act 95-335, which institutionalized Connecticut's greenways program. A highlight of this legislation was the establishment of the Connecticut Greenways Council. One of the Council's duties is the development of criteria for the designation of greenways around the state.

The Public Act defines greenway as a "corridor of open space" that:

1. may protect natural resources, preserve scenic landscapes and historical resources or offer opportunities for recreation or non-motorized transportation;
2. may connect existing protected areas and provide access to the outdoors;
3. may be located along a defining natural feature, such as a waterway, along a man-made corridor, including an unused right of way, traditional trail routes or historic barge canals;
or
4. may be a green space along a highway or around a village.

In order to meet the criteria for official designation as a greenway, open spaces and/or pathways must fit at least one aspect of this definition. The critical element, however, is connectivity. While a loop trail in a public park may fit many recreational and open space needs, if it offers no opportunities for connecting to a greater system it does not qualify as a greenway. Conversely, a short segment of open space along a ridgeline or waterway may be deemed part of a greenway if future plans include its linkage to a larger system.

The process of greenway designation will require not only the involvement of the Greenways Council. It will also mean that there is a commitment on the local level to a project's long-term success as well. Officially designated recreational greenways will receive special signs to post at trailheads and road crossings; those that serve a resource protection function may also post these signs where appropriate. All of the designated greenways will be forwarded to the Office of Policy and Management for inclusion in future revisions of the State Plan of Conservation and Development, and will also be incorporated into any greenway plans developed by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.

Greenways can be much more than linear open spaces. They can be the links from city to country, from village to village, from state to state. They can reconnect people to their communities, to rivers, fields, and hillsides, enhancing the sense of place that helps define the quality of life in Connecticut. It has been said that greenways connect the places we live with the places we love. It is the hope of the Connecticut Greenways Council that the designation process will help in the development, enhancement, and preservation of those places.

The following are the suggested criteria for the designation of greenways in Connecticut. The Greenways Council and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection may designate such areas as they deem fit these criteria. Municipalities, non-profits, or other sponsoring agencies may submit projects to the Greenways Council for designation.

Criteria for the Designation of Greenways in Connecticut

In order to be considered for official greenway designation, a project must meet at least one of the following criteria:

1. The corridor connects existing open space, trail segments, historical/cultural assets; provides alternative transportation opportunity; may be of varying lengths, but connects neighborhoods to schools, town centers, parks and recreation areas, transportation centers, or open spaces.
2. If the greenway is a municipal project, it must be included in local plan of Conservation and Development (or in the next revision thereof), and must be endorsed by the local government through a municipal resolution or compact;
3. If the greenway is a regional project, it must be included in plans of relevant Regional Planning Agency, or Council of Governments, with endorsements by the affected municipalities; or, an inter-municipal compact may be developed between towns;
4. If the greenway is a non-governmental project, it must be sponsored by organization with proven record of land use protection/recreational use, or with proven resources needed for project success; licensing, easements, or other agreements for use of state, municipal, or private land must be on file; it must be endorsed by the local government through a municipal resolution or compact;
5. The segment submitted for designation may be a key link in an emerging greenway, either for conservation or recreation purposes;
6. Once designated, such greenway shall be reflected in the State Plan of Conservation and Development as revised by the Office of Policy and Management and in any state-wide greenway plan developed by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.
7. Greenway designation may be revised by The Greenways Council should the designated use change.

Content last updated November 17, 2014