

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

RETREAT MINUTES

Saturday, July 8 8AM and Tuesday August 8, 2023 8AM

Kingsbury Room 485 Washington Street

Approved 8-24-2023

Present: Bea Bezmalinovic, Chair; Jay McHale, Vice-Chair; Lisa Collins, Secretary; Laura Robert; Michael D'Ortenzio; Brandon Schmitt, NRC Director

The July 8 and August 8 meetings were called to order around 8AM.

Public Speak: N/A

Discussion

Throughout the two-day retreat, the NRC defined the Commissions' areas of focus for the upcoming year based on the previously established long-term goals*, open space values* and five-year capital plan and overall budget. To that end, the Commission finalized the following items:

- 2024 Objectives and Actions Steps
- Commissioner Roles, inc. Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and Liaison assignments

**See Documents used at end of document*

2024 Objectives & Action Steps

1. **Protect and Enhance Wellesley's Natural Resources to strengthen their climate and natural resource benefits consistent with the stated NRC contribution to the Town's Climate Action Plan**
 - a. Explore options related to gas-powered lawn equipment
 - b. Finalize and disseminate Tree Canopy Assessment
 - c. Develop Proposal and Priorities for private tree planting initiative via Tree Bank Funds
 - d. Assess options for developing a town nursery
 - e. Encourage public and private adoption of sustainable land use practices (Simons Park, electrification conversion)
 - f. Better understand options and issues with community gardens and community farming
2. **Continue to improve the functioning of the NRC by addressing process and staffing issues**
 - a. Evaluate Wetlands Administrator Position Classification
 - b. Refine Process for Tree Hearings
3. **Improve stewardship and management of active and passive recreation space by improving use policies and planning/budgeting**
 - a. Develop Long-Term Active Recreation Capital Improvement Plan

- b. Complete Sound Policy
 - c. Complete Night use Policy for Hunnewell Track and Field
 - d. Develop plan for pickleball
 - e. Promote Zero Waste Policy for active and passive recreation
 - f. Develop storage policy for parkland
 - g. Coordinate with Recreation Commission on Morses Pond beach renovation
- 4. Protect Conservation and Open Space by identifying short and long-term conservation priorities and develop Land Conservation Plan**
- a. Finalize data verification
 - b. Conduct public outreach process
 - c. Write 1st draft of plan
 - d. Be proactive on issues affecting Town natural resources
 - e. Discuss North 40 and 125 Oakland Street
- 5. Work to protect biodiversity, health and use of Town's ponds**
- a. Provide ongoing support to Morses Pond for invasives removal and erosion control
 - b. Evaluate investment in Morses Pond and harvesting/treatment schedule and resources required to maintain water quality
 - c. Prepare for dredging at Duck, Reeds and Boulder Brook, including estimates for 24 ATM
- 6. Re-implement Encroachment Policy**
- a. Develop on-going process to search for and mitigate encroachments and learn from Env. Ed. Outreach and Compliance Coordinator.
 - b. Develop educational campaign related to encroachment and NRC/WPC/Trails

Commissioner Roles

The following roles and assignment were agreed upon:

- I. Commission structure (effective as of July 8)
 - a. Chair: Bea Bezmalinovic
 - b. Vice-Chair: Jay McHale
 - c. Secretary: Lisa Collins
 - d. Commissioners: Laura Robert and Michael D'Ortenzio
- II. Liaison Roles
 - a. CPC: Bea Bezmalinovic (effective Nov 2023)
 - b. Trails: Laura Robert
 - c. Mobility: TBD
 - d. Wetlands: Laura Robert
 - e. PFTF: Lisa Collins (effective post Field Study)

- f. 3R Working Group: Lisa Collins
- g. Climate Action Committee: TBD

***Documents used**

1. **Long Term Goals:** For reference, the following previously established long-term goals were reviewed. (Note: As defined by a previous board)
 - a. Protect existing shade trees and increase the Town's tree canopy
 - b. Improve Management/Stewardship of Town Forest
 - c. Work to protect drinking Water
 - d. Protect the biodiversity of the Town
 - e. Improve the functioning of the NRC within Town Government
 - f. Practice Climate Resilience and Preparedness
 - g. Encourage Community Engagement
 - h. Decrease the impact of exterior lighting on the natural environment in the town
 - i. Protect air quality
 - j. Reduce noise pollution
 - k. Reduce litter and plastic waste

2. **Open Space Values:** In defining open space, this plan recognizes the variety of open space that characterizes Wellesley and refers to land that is substantially in a natural state or landscaped in such a manner as to provide some or all the following open space values: (Note: As defined by the Open Space Plan)
 - a. Provides passive or active recreational opportunities
 - b. Provides habitat for native plants and animals
 - c. Can be sustained for conservation purposes in an undisturbed or minimally managed condition.
 - d. Protects water bodies or wetland resources
 - e. Protects water quality or contributes to stormwater control.
 - f. Ensures that the land will remain in farming, forestry, or recreational use
 - g. Preserves a scenic or historic view
 - h. Protects significant trees
 - i. Is adjacent to land with open space value
 - j. Provides "green features" or environmental services in built and urbanized spaces
 - k. Provides a wide variety of public benefits

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Collins, Secretary