



TOWN OF NORWELL

345 Main Street
Norwell, MA 02061

Open Space & Recreation Plan (OSRP) Implementation Committee

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, June 7, 2023 at 5:00 pm
in person and via Zoom

Committee Members present: Wendy Bawabe, Fred Bousquet, Heather Hanley, Stacey Minihane, Ilana Quirk, Will Saunders, and Marynel Wahl

Committee Members not present: John diFrisco, George Grey, Justin Ivas, and Steve Ivas

Also present: Vincent Bucca

The meeting was **called to order** by Wahl at 5:02 pm.

Ms. Wahl announced that all votes will be roll call votes as some of the meeting participants are using remote access software. The meeting is being recorded and the audio file will be available upon request. It was noted that this meeting will be conducted pursuant to the Executive Order dated March 12, 2020 suspending certain provisions of the Open meeting Law, Gen. L. c. 30A §20 et seq. and 940 CMR 29.01 et seq extended to March 31, 2025.

The **agenda** was accepted as written. (*Hanley motioned, Quirk seconded, all in favor*)

The **minutes** for the March 29, 2023 meeting were approved as written. (*Bawabe motioned, Quirk seconded, all in favor*)

It was noted that there will be a Conservation **Commission Information Session on July 25th** at 6:00 pm at the NPL. Also there will be a **Conservation Day on August 19th** (Saunders is trying to bring back this annual event after it stopped during COVID).

The **Action Item** for this meeting is:

NATURAL RESOURCES & BIODIVERSITY:

5.17: Develop a forest management plan, with a particular focus on fire risk management. (Vin Bucca, Lead)

Forest Management expert and Norwell resident Vin Bucca presented much information to the Committee, including many useful hand-outs. His goal (and the goal of the OSRP Action Item) is to proactively try to get the Town of Norwell to have forestry management. His biggest concern is with Wampatuck State Park—he believes it is “a disaster waiting to happen” if forest management doesn’t begin soon. He shared a report from the Mass. Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) about the fire concern in state parks. Will Saunders also mentioned there have been 3 fires in state parks already this season. Bucca has concerns that in the past, the State has created plans but they are put on the shelf—never to be implemented—until they become out of date. In summary, Bucca notes the “forest needs a haircut” to prevent catastrophic fires.

There was discussion about potential grants to pay for a management plan to be written, and grants that might fund the labor for the forestry management and fire equipment.

It was noted that the following hurdles are in the way of the Town having a Forest Management Plan:

- Limited time by the Conservation Agent to coordinate the process
- Differing opinions by the Norwell Police, Fire, Water Department, Tree & Grounds Department, and Select Board regarding what is needed (but it was noted that DCR could mediate this conversation)
- Chainsaw use on Town lands and potential liability issues
- Money!

Bucca recommended a forester named Phil Benjamin, who has helped to create Forestry Management Plans for other communities. It was determined that Saunders should ask Benjamin for a proposal for writing a plan so that we can assess possible funding sources to pay for his services.

Bucca has the following immediate recommendations:

- Have a “Norwell Conservation Corps” or a Trail Crew begin to cut off low-lying branches—he suggests starting at Miller Woods
- Purchase a Bio Char Kiln (about \$2,500) to burn brush (currently, he notes, the Tree & Grounds Department pays about \$30K/year to get rid of brush!)

The following Action Item is the topic for next month’s (July) meeting:

NATURAL RESOURCES & BIODIVERSITY:

5.19: Develop an invasive species management program. (Stacy Minihane, Lead)

Minihane and Ben Margo will do a presentation on this Action Item.

To conclude the meeting on a truly depressing note, Saunders informed the group about **Beech Leaf Disease**, which has come north and is ravaging the beech trees in town. He guestimates that about 50% of the trees in Norwell are beech. This disease kills the leaves on the trees, and the trees will die after a few seasons of continued attempts at leaf re-growth. If a solution is not found, all of the beech trees in Norwell will be dead in 10 years. He equates this new problem and its potential catastrophic results to Dutch Elm Disease.

Bawabe noted that she is working with Town Administrator Darleen Sullivan, Town Clerk Pat Anderson, and George Grey on the updated **Brand Guidelines** so that they can be completed before the move to the new Town Offices. She showed the group the latest iteration and will update everyone at the next meeting.

The meeting was **adjourned** at 5:45 pm. *(Hanley motioned, Saunders seconded, all in favor)*

It was decided that the next meeting would be on **Wednesday, July 25th at 5:00** pm via Zoom and in person at the Norwell Public Library.

Respectfully submitted,
Wendy Bawabe, OSRP Implementation Committee

ACTION ITEM	RESPONSIBILITY	DONE
Send final minutes from 3/29/23 to Town Clerk	Bawabe	✓
Write a proposal to Phil Benjamin	Saunders	
Prepare for July meeting on invasives	Minihane & Margro	
Post the next meeting	Wahl	
NOTED FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS, STILL TO BE WORKED ON...		
Send bench specs to Bawabe for Branding Guidelines	Saunders	
Create an online document listing small Town projects that could be eligible for grants. Share this doc with appropriate parties and Committees.	Wahl	
Create a comprehensive list of grant opportunities	Bousquet & Hanley	
Continue to work on Branding Guidelines	Bawabe	
Consider historic properties in town and send email to Bawabe regarding your “Top Five” for Façade Preservation	EVERYONE	
Review the competing lists of land categories and try to get a better number of preserved Town land	Grey & Saunders	