

Open Space & Recreation Plan Committee (OSRPC) Meeting Minutes

August 5, 2025, a public hybrid meeting in the Evelyn Haines Room

*** Action items and votes¹ below in bold face**

Present: John Bartlett, Jack Bowen, David Brown, Chris Clark, Marlies Henderson, Mike Parker, Mike Rosa

Virtual (phone): Maria Martin, phone connection dropped around 8 PM

Audience: Andrew Jennings

Staff: Katherine Malgieri

Rosa calls the meeting to order at 6:30 PM with roll call and saluting the flag.

- 1) No public comments.
- 2) Introductions members, welcoming David Brown (liaison for the DPW Parks / Tree Warden / Complete Streets) and Chris Clark (Commission on Disabilities) to be newly appointed voting members on the OSRPC.
- 3) Bartlett moves to approve the 7/1 minutes as presented, seconded by Bowen, motion passes **4-0-4** (Brown, Clark, Martin and Parker abstaining).
- 4) Malgieri used the Tufts UEP 2025 Spring Semester assessment report to provide handouts with proposed parcels for Conservation Protection: maps, draft warrant article and explanations. Town-owned parcels in the Concord River and Shawsheen River floodplains scoring highest for protection. In addition to the high-scoring report parcels, committee members considered Grampy's Land, Cabot Land and Stoney Dr parcels. Protection would occur first by conveying the Deed from Select Board to Conservation, and potentially later by assigning state Article 97 protection. Discussion ensued following a power point presentation.
Committee members unanimously agreed to transfer all but one of the proposed parcels, contingent upon DPW approval (members find that the approximately 30-acre unprotected portion of the former Cabot land should be reconsidered for protection after the bike path project has been completed). Bartlett made a motion to **task staff** to move forward with the steps to submit a warrant article per the discussion and presentation presented, transferring parcels from Select Board (SB) to the Conservation (BCC). The motion was seconded by Bowen, and it passed **8-0-0**.
- 5) Members agree to put this agenda item on hold for the 2026 Spring Warrant.
- 6) Jennings reports that the LRTA has suggested a bus stop near Akeson at the St. Mary's Cook St signalized intersection. This might move the next stop closer to the Ditson Park Farmers Market location. It will require more LRTA study. Bartlett moves to ask Jennings to continue the discussion with the LRTA in favor of a bus stop near the site commonly referred to as St. Mary's. The motion was seconded by Bowen, and it passed **8-0-0**.
- 7) Henderson introduces Clark's topic by admitting that the OSRPC does not have a budget, but it should hear Clark's presentation because it is the OSRPC's charge to implement the OSRP. Clark starts by saying his presentation does not reflect the COD opinion; it is his own initiative. He cites sections 7

¹ In favor-opposed-abstain

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and 8 of the OSRP². He mentions that DCR provides use of the Track-Chair in a state forest based on the DCR Universal Accessibility Plan. Discussion ensues on liability, maintenance, trail width – if the town were to take it on. Henderson suggests the state may take it on in Billerica State Forests. Bartlett says that the previous OSRP started the objective to address curbs³. OSRPC did not discuss next steps.

- 8) Henderson points out that implementing Open Space connectivity⁴, should motivate the committee to send a letter to town boards and committees, making them aware of a publicly used trail on private land. It is an essential connector; a paper street known as Toothaker. Bowen spoke with the new landowner who indicated concerns about public access, liability, dirt bikes and ATVs. Rosa suggested that the landowner might consider donating a slice of land as a right-of-way. Henderson believes that the Middlesex Canal Association has done this without success. She respects landowner rights but also mentions the fact that no-trespassing signs increase poor uses, and public access reduces poor uses. McDowell, 46 Rogers St (virtual public comment) adds a second comment of local concern in opposition to public access, and stating a nearby unused railroad track has active status. OSRPC members decide to hold off on this agenda item.
- 9) Malgieri has been in contact with the State about updating the 7-year action plan to 10-year. Typically, more public input is required, but in this case our plan dates to 2024, thus the most recent public input is still fresh. Changes are few: 'Ten' replaces 'Seven'. Short range would remain 1-3 years; mid-range 4-6 and long range 7-more. Bartlett moves to **task staff** to extend the plan from 7 to 10, Bowen seconds the motion, and it passes unanimously **7-0-0**.
- 10) Staff updates (not for discussion or votes):
 - The NMCOG Greater Lowell Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan which seeks input through a survey.
 - The Master Plan / Long Range Master Plan Oversight Committee has a tough job reviewing the implementation matrix due to having been inactive for 10 years.
 - 8/11: The groundbreaking of the Recreation Center at 3 PM (121 Lexington Rd) and Select Board meeting at 6 PM
 - 8/12: Public Safety Night (5 – 8 PM) and Planning Board meeting
 - 9/20 Yankee Doodle Homecoming
- 11) Next two meeting dates: September 2 and 30 at 6:30 PM.
- 12) Henderson moves to adjourn, Parker seconds. All in favor **7-0-0**.
Meeting adjourned at 8:12 PM

Minutes respectfully submitted by Marlies Henderson

² Documented details can be made available.

³ See also 2025 Plan, Appendix D, ADA Self-Evaluation

⁴ See OSRP Goal 2, particularly 2.3.1 and 2.4