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James Freas, AICP
Director

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 10, 2020

TO: Board of Selectmen

FROM: Marianne Iarossi, Open Space Planner/Conservation Agent

CC: Martin Kessel, Open Space Advisory Committee
James Freas, Director of Community & Economic Development

RE: Draft 2020 Open Space & Recreation Plan Update – ready for review

Meeting Date: June 15, 2020

The Open Space Advisory Committee and Community & Economic Development have been working on updating the Town of Natick's Open Space & Recreation Plan (OSRP). The OSRP is a crucial guiding document in the community that inventories the Town's open spaces and recreational amenities, tracks accomplishments made since the last OSRP Update, and establishes an Action Plan of goals, objectives, and projects.

The OSRP is required to be updated every seven years in order for the Town to be eligible for related State grants and funding. Natick's 2012 OSRP expired in June 2019. Over the past few months, we have been working hard on the 2020 OSRP Update. Most of the 2012 OSRP is still valid today. Areas that have been updated include:

- population demographics,
- inventory of lands (new lands have been protected), and
- the Action Plan (projects have been completed, new projects have been added).

The first phase of outreach surrounding the 2020 OSRP Update was conducted in April/May. Outreach included a variety of methods in order to obtain feedback on the open space and recreation environment in Natick and the Draft Action Plan. Public input received from that phase has been incorporated into the Draft 2020 OSRP.

The Draft 2020 OSRP is now released for public review and comment through June 30th. We would like to request the Board of Selectmen to provide comments on the draft plan and additionally provide a letter of review/endorsement.

We will be in attendance at the June 15th Board of Selectmen meeting to provide more information and next steps on this process. If you have not already done so, please review the short video from the first phase of outreach at www.tinyurl.com/NatickOSRP. Attached to this memo is the Draft Action Plan. Thank you.

2020 Natick OSRP - Seven-Year Action Plan (2020-2027)						
#	Objective	Action	Lead Agency	Other Agencies	Possible Funding	Target Date
Goal 1: Protect Natick's open spaces, including waterbodies, woodlands, farms, and parks, that can be enjoyed by future generations						
1.A.1	A. Protect privately held open space through acquisition, conservation/agricultural restrictions, easements, and other means	(1) Pursue opportunities for land protection especially those properties identified on the "Open Space Interest List"	ConCom	OSAC	FAR Stabilization Fund; Mitigation; Grants: LAND, PARC, LWCF	Ongoing
1.A.2		(2) Update the "Open Space Interest List"	OSAC	CED	-	Ongoing
1.A.3		(3) Review the Tax Title list for land protection opportunities	CED	OSAC	-	Annually
1.A.4		(4) Keep track of Chapter 61 properties and ensure OSAC and ConCom are notified of "right of first refusal" events	CED	Assessor	-	Annually
1.A.5		(5) Secure open space as part of the permitting process	PB	ZBA, ConCom	-	Ongoing
1.B.1	B. Permanently protect public and quasi-public open space	(1) Preserve open space in perpetuity held by the Town which are not already protected	OSAC	BOS	-	2022-2023
1.C.1	C. Develop internal revenue streams for open space protection	(1) Seek payments to the FAR Stabilization Fund and other mitigation from developers	PB	ZBA, ConCom	-	Ongoing
1.C.2		(2) Consider adopting the Community Preservation Act (CPA)	BOS	All	-	2021-2027
1.D.1	D. Develop and maintain zoning and land use tools to protect open space	(1) Ensure that new zoning bylaws encourage the set aside of open space, trail easements, FAR Stabilization Fund payments, etc.	CED	PB	-	Ongoing
1.D.2		(2) Require submission of a digital conservation/trail easement boundary plan once it is recorded as part of the permitting process	CED	PB, DPW GIS	-	Ongoing
1.D.3		(3) Update Aquifer Protection District Bylaw	CED	PB	-	2021
Goal 2: Enhance, steward, and restore existing natural resources, open spaces and recreational facilities						
2.A.1	A. Improve existing fields and recreation facilities	(1) Make necessary improvements to South Natick parks (Grove Park, Multi-purpose Courts, etc.)	Rec & Parks	-	MVP Grant; PARC Grant; Town budget	2022
2.B.1	B. Develop town-owned land or secure additional land for fields and recreation activities	(1) Create pocket parks with priority for densest neighborhoods	Rec & Parks	CED	Mitigation; Grants; TT list for ops	2025
2.B.2		(2) Create community gardens with priority for densest neighborhoods	CED	Rec & Parks, ConCom, NCOF	Grants; TT list for ops	2024
2.B.3		(3) Recreate field adjacent to Natick Community Senior Center	Rec & Parks	Senior Center	Town budget	2021
2.B.4		(4) Identify public non-motorized boat storage and boat launch opportunities at Lake Cochituate and the Charles River	Rec & Parks	-	-	2026
2.B.5		(5) Improve public access to Morses Pond	ConCom	OSAC	Town budget	2024
2.C.1	C. Develop baseline inventory and encroachment monitoring program for conservation lands	(1) Develop a baseline inventory and address encroachments at each Conservation Commission owned property	ConCom	-	Town budget	2020
2.D.1	D. Develop Land Management Plan for conservation lands	(1) Develop Land Management Plan for Conservation Commission owned property including invasive species, ecological habitat improvements, annual budget requirements, etc.	ConCom	TaFS	Town budget	2021
2.E.1	E. Engage residents, businesses, and other groups as active stewards or sponsors	(1) Develop a Trails and Land Stewards program including a database of active stewards assigned to each open space/trail, an online steward sign-up and report a problem form, tracking of stewardship hours, etc.	TaFS	OSAC, CED, ConCom	-	2021
2.E.2		(2) Engage volunteer groups in open space and trail work	OSAC	TaFS	-	Ongoing
Goal 3. Preserve and protect the town's water supply, wildlife, and other natural resources						
3.A.1	A. Improve ecological habitats	(1) Develop Invasive Species Management Plan for the Hunnewell Town Forest	ConCom	-	CISMA grant	2020
3.A.2		(2) Work towards eradication of invasive species in the Hunnewell Town Forest	ConCom	-	Town budget; CISMA grant	Ongoing
3.A.3		(3) Develop invasive species public education campaign surrounding their identification and eradication	ConCom	-	Town budget; Educational grants	2024
3.A.4		(4) Establish a pollinator garden program. Install one new pollinator garden	ConCom	Sustainability Com	Town budget; Grants: CISMA, MHMGP	2025
3.A.5		(5) Install three new green infrastructure projects on Town-owned land as recommended in the 2018 Lake Cochituate Watershed-Based Plan and the 2018 CRB (MVP) Plan	CED	ConCom, DPW, Sustainability Com	Town budget; MAPC Mini-Grants	2021-2027
3.B.1	B. Limit use of toxic substances on natural resources town-wide	(1) Develop a discouraged and recommended list of herbicides, pesticides, and fertilizers. Share the list on the Town website, social media, with permit applicants, with landscaping companies, etc.	ConCom	BOH, Building Dept, DPW	Town budget	2024

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3.B.2		(2) Establish a residential public education campaign surrounding toxic uses, their impact on natural resources, stormwater's role, lawn size, etc.	ConCom	BOH, Sustainability Com	Town budget; Educational grants	2026
3.B.3		(3) Pilot a goatscaping project on Town-owned land targeting invasive species removal	ConCom	Rec & Parks, NCOF	Town budget	2021
Goal 4. Provide a system of walking and bicycle trails that connect our open spaces and provide a way to travel throughout the town						
4.A.1	A. Acquire land or secure easements to provide continuous walking and bicycling trails, to be used both for recreation and transportation	(1) Explore use of utility easements and paper streets for trails	CED	OSAC	-	2023
4.A.2		(2) Improve and expand open space access points prioritizing residential neighborhoods and connections shown in Map 7.10 in the Natick 2030+ Plan	CED	DPW, PB, ZBA, ConCom	Mitigation; Town budget	Ongoing
4.A.3		(3) Explore options for additional Lake Cochituate trail access especially along southeastern and southwestern edges	TaFS	CED	-	2025
4.A.4		(4) Complete Takawampait Trail	TAFS	CED	Town budget	2026
4.B.1	B. Develop and mark new and existing trails	(1) Develop and implement trail construction standards, including marking, bridges, signage, walkways and surfaces, etc.	TaFS	OSAC, ConCom	-	2022
4.B.2		(2) Add new Henry Wilson trail sign on Route 135 and historic markers/signage along trail	TaFS	OSAC	Town budget	2021
4.B.4		(3) Complete Sudbury Aqueduct from Cottage Street to the Sherborn Town Line	TaFS	CED	Town budget; MassTrails Grant	2023
4.B.5		(5) Develop last Cochituate Rail Trail segment from the current proposed terminus to the MBTA Station	CED	-	MassTrails Grant	2022
4.B.6		(6) Connect north Pickerel Pond with south Pickerel Pond via a boardwalk trail system	ConCom	TaFS	FAR Stabilization Fund; LWCF Grant	2022
4.B.7		(7) Develop parking area and improve trail head for the Pine Hill area, Winter Woods, and Pickerel Pond	ConCom	-	Town budget; Grants	2021, 2023, 2025
4.B.8		(8) Collaborate with neighboring communities to develop Charles River Blue Trail	ConCom	Rec & Parks	-	2026
4.B.9		(9) Continue to implement offsite wayfinding signs to trails, kiosks at trailheads, pet waste bag dispensers, etc.	TaFS	OSAC	Town budget	Ongoing
Goal 5. Increase awareness, appreciation, and use of the town's open spaces, trails, natural resources, and recreational opportunities						
5.A.1	A. Use marketing tools to publicize the location, amenities, and availability of open spaces	(1) Update town-wide open space and trail maps and provide them online and in print. Place at strategic locations in town.	OSAC	CED, TaFS	Town budget	2024
5.A.2		(2) Sponsor trail walks and canoe or bicycle trips to introduce people to the available opportunities	TaFS	OSAC	-	Ongoing
5.A.3		(3) Participate in Natick Days and other town events to promote these resources	OSAC	CED, TaFS	-	Ongoing
5.A.4		(4) Optimize cross-promotion of events among the open space and trails related organizations in town	OSAC	All	-	Ongoing
5.B.1	B. Promote universal access for trails, recreation facilities, and conservation areas	(1) Create a fully inclusive park and playground	Rec & Parks	Disability Com	PARC Grant	2025
5.B.2		(2) Indicate accessibility levels in brochures, maps, and other public materials and provide them online and in print.	OSAC	CED, TaFS, Disability Com	Town budget	2024
5.B.3		(3) Conduct additional open space and trails promotion/outreach to Environmental Justice neighborhoods	CED	OSAC, TaFS, NAHT	Town budget	2024
5.B.4		(4) Consider joining the "10-Minute Walk Campaign" to commit to ensure all residents are within a 10-minute walk to an open space/park.	CED	Town Administrator	-	2021
5.B.5		(5) Improve 1-2 trails to be more mobility-impaired accessible (flat, stable walking surface)	TaFS	OSAC, ConCom	-	2022
5.C.1	C. Promote coordination among the various town boards, commissions, and departments responsible for open spaces	(1) Track progress on this Action Plan and report annually to relevant Town boards and committees	OSAC	CED	-	Annually
5.C.2		(2) Encourage communications among boards, committees, neighboring communities, and other related organizations.	CED	OSAC	-	Ongoing