



## MEETING MINUTES

Town of Stratham Open Space & Connectivity Plan

Steering Committee Meeting #1

Stratham Municipal Center, 10 Bunker Hill Avenue, Stratham NH

Date: February 13, 2023

Time: 2– 3:30PM

### I. Introductions

Prompt: Everyone was asked to share their name and affiliation as well as what they would like to see the Open Space & Connectivity Plan accomplish. Additionally, members were asked to share their definition of open space.

**Table 1** lists each attendee and a short description of their response.

LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	AFFILIATION	SUMMARIZED RESPONSE
Bell	Forrest	Consultant at FBE, Owner	N/A
Crow	Dan	Stratham Hill Park Association	Stratham Hill Park as Connectivity ‘Hub’; Regional Connectivity
Dardinski	Kate	Recreation Commission, Trail Management Advisory Committee	Quality of Life and Opportunities for Recreation; Preserve Agricultural Heritage; Increase in Protection; Diversity in Open Space & Recreation
Connors	Mark	Planning Director, Open Space Plan Lead	Community is Surprised by What Stratham Has – How Can We Connect People Better; Awareness of Private Septic & Well
Davis	Kate	Pedestrian & Cycling Advocacy Committee	Connectivity of Open Space and Connection with Safe Road Crossings
Hickey	Seth	Parks & Recreation Director	Home Access to the Open Space Network; Regional Connectivity
Houghton	Mike	Select Board, Planning Board, Heritage Commission	Heightened Awareness of Open Spaces; Engagement with the Community and Understanding of What They Want
Hyland	Jeff	Heritage Commission	Environmental Resources/Squamscott River; Drinking Water; Preservation of Historic Land/Viewsheds; Benefits Diversely Held Between People and Environment
Mills	Margaret	Consultant at FBE, Project Manager	N/A

LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	AFFILIATION	SUMMARIZED RESPONSE
Saltonstall	Kyle	Conservation Commission	Open Space Parcels for Ecosystem Services; Change is Inevitable – Ensure Change We See is What We Want
Whitman	Steve	Consultant at RP&D	N/A

Committee Members Absent:

- Allison Knab, State Representative (Mike Houghton and Allison Knab will rotate meeting attendance.)
- John Kunowski, Planning Board
- Bill McCarthy, Trail Management Advisory Committee
- Tim Roache, Citizen Representative
- Chris Zaremba, Citizen Representative

## **II. Workshop on Barriers & Opportunities to Open Space Planning**

Barriers

- Restrictions on conservation easements (e.g., public access).
- Landowners don't want public access.
- Lack of consistency in easement language.
- Lack of community support, including funding.
- No comprehensive vision for open space.
- State restrictions related to connectivity (e.g., road shoulder widths).
- Landowners are not interested in easements.
- Environmental barriers (to recreation, e.g., wetlands).
- Development sprawl.
- Lack of inter-agency coordination.
- High property values.
- Challenges with agricultural land abutters.

Opportunities

- Natural environment and agricultural landscape with interspersed residential development (i.e., access).
- Connectivity to youth and recreation community.
- Five functioning agricultural operations.
- Retain into the future and/or grow.
- Many parcels with agricultural potential/farmland soils.
- Educated Population – Likely receptive if given a vision.
- Rockingham Trail
- Lots of long-term residents with institutional knowledge.

- Farms and views that are highly valued and support for local farmers.
- Route 33 corridor project (land use flexibility and heritage).
- Easements with open space potential.
- Have an existing trail agreement template.
- Previous successes with open space to build upon.
- Open space as a “third place”. Civic cohesion.
- A lot of outreach opportunities and events (e.g., races, youth events, food trucks (May 6), Thursday night pizza).
- Opportunities for connecting with the local schools through trips and activities.
- Branding.

### **III. Project Timeline and Tasks**

Maggie Mills gave an overview of the project schedule and tasks, attached as Appendix A.

### **IV. Existing Conditions Inventory**

The group discussed the existing conditions “State of Open Space” topic outline. Suggestions included:

- Remove “City” from Parks & Open Space under Land Use.
- Change language to represent “Pocket Parks” with a less urban term.
- The Heritage Commission has a detailed survey of historic places back to 1950. Recently completed and available as Excel and Report.
- Add “Utility Corridors” and the restrictions on abutting use.
- Include “State Regulations” under the “Town Regulations” header.
- Town needs a literal inventory of protected places with easements and restrictions on each (the existing database was updated within the last few years).

### **V. Next Steps**

The next meeting will include a presentation of gaps identified during the existing conditions review and discuss Outreach and Engagement Plan. Mark Connors will send out a doodle poll for times.

*Meetings of the Stratham Open Space & Connectivity Plan Steering Committee are open to the public.*