



MEETING MINUTES

Town of Stratham Open Space & Connectivity Plan

Steering Committee Meeting #2

Hybrid: Teleconference via Zoom & in-person at

Stratham Municipal Center, 10 Bunker Hill Avenue, Stratham NH

Date: March 27, 2023

Time: 2– 3:15PM

Introductions

Prompt: Everyone was asked to share one of their best experiences using open space (anywhere, doesn't have to be in Stratham).

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

LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	AFFILIATION	SUMMARIZED RESPONSE
Crow	Dan	Stratham Hill Park Association	Stratham Hill Park – there's also an amazing network of trails west of the Squamscott River.
Dardinski	Kate	Recreation Commission, Trail Management Advisory Committee	The NYC Highline – retreat in an urban environment.
Connors	Mark	Planning Director, Open Space Plan Lead	Park near his house in Dover. Frequenting this location made him realize how much the downtown businesses are a key component to him.
Davis	Kate	Pedestrian & Cycling Advocacy Committee	Stratham Hill Park – cross country skiing; the trail system expansion has been incredible. Memories of childhood and now sharing it with her children.
Hickey	Seth	Parks & Recreation Director	Northeast Kingdom of Vermont and riding his mountain bike at Kingdom Trails.
Hyland	Jeff	Heritage Commission; Landscape Architect	(zoom) Eastern Promenade in Portland along Bayside Trail. Connectivity is fantastic. The area has really transformed into a great corridor. Another is the lower river walk – linear green way. Woonasquatucket Riverwalk down in RI.

LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	AFFILIATION	SUMMARIZED RESPONSE
Mills	Margaret	Consultant at FBE, Project Manager	Portland Trails– connecting open space within the City! Connecting the neighborhoods with natural resources and businesses as well as a cemetery.
Saltonstall	Kyle	Conservation Commission	Own 100-acre plot in Stratham under conservation easement; Opened to public between Guinea Road and Stratham Heights Road.
Large	Sarah	Consultant at FBE, Project Manager	Rockingham Rail Trail – passing along wetlands and natural resources but also passing through and connecting towns and commercial businesses.
Roache	Tim	Citizen Rep.; Director of Rockingham Planning Commission	Sweet Trail in Newmarket and Dam Road connection to Great Bay.
Kunowski	John	Planning Board Member	(zoom) City of Boston – amazed and impressed by development of Seaport area! Formally industrial unclaimed area turned over into an extension of downtown Boston. Contiguous walkway along the waterfront in Boston.
Knab	Allison	State Representative, Select Board, and Conservation Commission	Barker’s Farm Property

Committee Members Absent:

- Mike Houghton, Select Board, Planning Board, Heritage Commission (Mike Houghton and Allison Knab will rotate meeting attendance.)
- Bill McCarthy, Trail Management Advisory Committee
- Chris Zarembo, Citizen Representative

Existing Conditions Progress Update

Recap of Meeting 1

Definitions of Open Space – word cloud generator visual

- Connectivity is a strong theme from the first meeting!
- Regional connectivity came across several times. Connectivity in Stratham and to the regional network.
- Conversation about diversity of spaces and protection of natural and water resources.
- Importance of agriculture and historical heritage of Stratham.

- Recap of Barriers and Opportunities.

Existing Conditions Update from Maggie Mills

- FBE plans to use the existing conditions or “state of the town” to develop and prioritize open space and connectivity decisions moving forward.
- Conservation File is outdated. FBE is working with Mark and Seth to update this.
- What we are seeing in Stratham - most conservation land has conservation easements but some have trails and agriculture easements.
 - a. There is quite a bit of Common Lands which are allocated for open space.
 - b. Town land may or may not have specific protections.
 - c. FBE is interested in the amenities and access available at these properties as well as use types and evidence of overuse.
 - d. Call out for interest and help from the committee to participate in inventorying the amenities and use of properties. Please reach out to Mark and Maggie if you are interested.
 - e. Connectivity is Critical! (Draft Existing Conditions Maps)
- Recreation Map / Trails
 - a. Network of trails for public use around Stratham Hill Park area.
 - b. Looking Regionally – Rockingham Rail Trail and adjacent trails in Exeter
 - c. FBE working with Seth to confirm we have the most current trails information.
- Habitat and Natural Resources
 - a. Lots of wetlands and habitat identified by NWI & NH Fish and Game Department’s Wildlife Action Plan (WAP)
 - b. A large majority of the town is within the Squamscott River watershed which drains to the Squamscott River and ultimately Great Bay. The town’s open space and resources play a big part in protecting and preserving water quality, wildlife habitat, aquaculture, and recreation at this unique resource.
- Agriculture is Central
 - a. Check in with Committee on the 8 Growers listed on Conservation Commission website
 - b. Stuart Farm is missing from the map. One of the largest or one of the largest dairy farms in the state.
 - c. Conservation Commission list of farms is likely directed at places the community can purchase produce and products, which might have exclude a few farms.
 - d. There might be community members implementing backyard growing and smaller scale agriculture that is not regulated by the town that the GIS data doesn’t capture.
 - e. Legacy Lane Farm on Route 33 might also be missing from the map. Left side of Portsmouth Ave. Mark to follow up on this.
- John asked Maggie to define importance / soils of statewide importance; the state has a definition of the types of crops that the soils are suitable for and the productivity of the soil.
- Alison mentioned Barker Farm is another to make sure is listed and on the map. It is an existing conserved property. The Conservation Commission just had a public hearing on a new proposed parcel. Standby on more news. Mark added there is a lot in the queue, but is not public at this point.

- FBE is also looking at historical resources and land use, population & demographics, and access to open space. RP&D is pulling together a summary of town and state regulations and looking into priorities of partner organizations.
- During the month of April FBE and the committee will review more existing conditions.
- Other discussions
- Mark- Great Bay: interested in thinking about Stratham's public access to Great Bay and the impacts of climate change on the bay and adjacent parcels, including sea level rise impacts along the Squamscott River.
- Tim mentioned the Tides to Storms report and GIS data that the Rockingham Planning Commission developed. He also shared there is a new hydrodynamic model being developed by the State. This will likely replace the data that the Planning Commission currently uses. Data will include currents and erosion.
- Mark noted that we should include the utility corridors and easements as potential connectivity methods.

Public Outreach Strategy Discussion

- Maggie Mills discussed FBE's Public Outreach strategy that was outlined in the proposal.
- FBE Proposed strategy – three pronged approach.
- *Targeted Outreach* – develop a list of key business and organizations and contacts to distribute information to and get feedback from. One on one conversations. A key group of stakeholders includes easement holders.
- *Digital Engagement* through photovoice. Advertise to the public the opportunity to take photos of a specific aspect of Open Space and ask them to communicate it through a photo and then follow up virtual listening session to hear their thoughts and feedback.
- Event attendance
- Races
- Youth events
- Food trucks
- Thursday night pizza
- Go to existing events to meet people where they are at!
- The committee is highly encouraged to attend these events as well.
- At today's meeting let's strategize and decide the public outreach approach the committee would like to pursue and start to plan for it.

General Committee Feedback and Discussion

- John – consider “man on the street” interviews at high track areas and times.
- Chapman Landing, Jack Rabbit Lane, etc. to get input from users right before/after they use the space! Target high volume and utilization days to get feedback from these types of stakeholders.
- Is the interest to get feedback and input from only Stratham residents? Or all users? How do we target just Stratham residents at Stratham Hill Park since it is widely used? Can we use the schools?
- One of the survey questions can be if folks are Stratham residences.

- There is value in collecting data even from non-Stratham residences. However, one aspect of not getting Stratham residence feedback is that it might be harder for get at the connectivity aspect and issues if they are out from out of town.
- Connectivity and the road network.
- Difficult to have a read on trail connectivity and the overall network because there are so many road crossings. Connectivity is via the road network / roadway connectivity is a key component to consider as well as bike and pedestrian safety. Should consider incorporating pedestrian beacons, sidewalks, and cross walks into planning.
- Portsmouth Ave is a big crossing.
- Winnicut, Bunker Hill, Stratham Heights are also major roads to consider crossings and connectivity.
- Powerlines used for connectivity? Powerline easement ability?
- Powerlines that run from Bunker Hill to Cortland run up to Stratham heights. Is there a parcel of land that is in the corridor that we should engage in targeted outreach to?

Stakeholders

- Fire department
- Considerations when accessing open space and new open space parcels... Does the access points for trails have enough space for emergency vehicles?
- Farmers
- Businesses
- Portsmouth Avenue is core business corridor.
- Farms –gauge interest in light foot traffic, dog walkers, biking allowed on property.
- Business centers
- Dog walkers / SPCA
- Schools – Safer ways for kids to get to school! Connect with parents.
- Stratham Memorial School (There is a teacher that is teaching a class on trail erosion)
- Middle School
- Acorn and Corner Stone schools
- Safe Routes to School Plan – Regional Planning Commission
- Rachel Stephens from GBNERR. Discuss access points and conservation lands along Great Bay. Gauge interest of access.
- Private property owners that help with connectivity should be targeted.
- Seniors and mobility challenged where access is challenging and an issue. Longer term bigger picture.
- Access Navigators - Tod Nanson – Mount Agamenticus example/ applicability. (Tim knows this group).

Digital Outreach

- Mark likes the idea of having an electronic place for people to visit and comment. Send out post cards and direct people to a place to comment.
- Will there be a website to direct folks to?

- Town has a webpage for the project.
- Town can use Survey Monkey as a tool for people to provide input.
- Town website, fliers, posters to advertise for photovoice event.
- Town website might have limitations on what it can do – formatting, adding to it. How are we bringing this information and plans to the public? Fliers? Pdfs for download? How will people see this information and project?
- Are we looking to hear from a lot of people or a specific targeted group?
- We need to decide as a committee where we want to put our energy for outreach. We could link to a separate webpage and push hard on putting flyers out or focus more on targeted events. Or we could focus more energy and effort to in person at events?
- Impromptu interviews.
- Likely get more responses by doing in person events rather than surveys.
- Seth has had a good response to survey monkey in town though, so surveys also viable.
- Seth recommends a hybrid and doing both. A survey and events. And advertise beforehand that we will be there to talk about this topic.
- ****Newsletters**** - Parks and Rec and Select board newsletters.
- Select board newsletter goes out every two weeks.
- Survey should be simple and targeted.
- Flyers to hang up around the community and send out postcards.

Events

- Summer Fest (July 15th) – one day family fun day sponsored by Parks & Recreation Department and Stratham Hill Park. Mostly residents (per Seth) attend.
- One mountain biking or trail running event.
- Seth notes that we could capture two events in one day – select a routine Thursday night pizza night that also has a race.
- Are there other geographic locations to target with in person events?
- Stephens Field on a weekend morning but other than that might not get many responses.
- Make these outreach events interactive – print large maps and ask people to pin stickers on a map.
- Steering Committee members join in on these events!
- Seth will send out the dates for these events so that the committee can put them on their calendars.

Next Steps

The next meeting will include an outline for the public outreach strategy and committee member sign up for events.

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