

WEST NEWBURY OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

West Newbury, Massachusetts 01985

To the Honorable Board of Selectmen:

The Open Space Committee (OSC) met regularly during FY 2015. This report summarizes our key accomplishments from July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016:

- **Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) Update:** The OSC began the state-mandated process of updating the OSRP in May. The committee developed and then conducted a town-wide survey in June to gather community input on open space and recreation priorities. Surveys were mailed to all households in West Newbury and available online. A total of 323 residents completed surveys. The revised OSRP can be a planning tool for town departments and is a requirement for certain grants the Town may seek.

- **Collaboration on Open Space Issues:** The OSC functioned as a resource for and consulted with various town boards, committees and diverse other groups on a broad range of topics related to open space and trails. These groups included the Board of Selectmen, Conservation Commission, Town Counsel, Community Preservation Committee, Page School, the state Department of Conservation and Recreation, Essex County Greenbelt Association (Greenbelt), Essex County Trail Association (ECTA) and the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC).

- **Chapter 61 Lands:** The OSC focused on Chapter 61 (a state program to facilitate land preservation by taxing land at its current use - forest, agriculture or open space/recreation - rather than on its potential highest use). The OSC recommended to Selectmen a protocol to use when they are notified that town Chapter 61 land is being withdrawn from the program or about to be sold for non-Chapter 61 purposes. Several Chapter 61 parcels came before the committee this past year including property on Kimball Road and several parcels on Turkey Hill Road. In these cases, the OSC recommended that the Town not exercise its right of first refusal. In December, OSC members also attended a workshop on Chapter 61 offered by Greenbelt.

- **Priority Parcel Management:** OSC members toured several large parcels on the Priority Parcels List that were listed or going to be on the market. The committee conferred with Greenbelt on strategies for protecting these parcels. Members also worked with MVPC to create a map of Chapter 61 land in West Newbury.

- **Trail Management:** The OSC continued its work on trails in various locations, including coordinating permitting for new trails at River Hill and finalizing trail layout at Ocean Meadows. It worked with ECTA on a plan for Riverbend, where Page School students integrate studies with the outdoors as part of their STEAM program.

- **Trail Hikes:** The OSC, assisted by Greenbelt and ECTA, held its 6th annual fall trail hike in October 2015 in the South Street Woodlots, a Greenbelt property. A group of 38 enjoyed the hike, including a number of first-timers on our trails. The OSC and Greenbelt also co-sponsored and co-led a well-received hike at Riverbend in late June.

- **Open Space Library Exhibits:** As part of its community outreach efforts, the OSC continued exhibits centered on open space and land usage in West Newbury as well as the Town's growing trail system. Notable were exhibits on Chapter 61 land programs and easements plus the "Take a Walk in Our Town" series. Special thanks to the G.A.R. Library for hosting our exhibits.

- **Website Enhancements:** The OSC website was updated throughout the year to remain current. It offers extensive information and resources such as trail maps and descriptions, photographs and the Town's OSRP.

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Riverbend and its trails support the Page School STEAM curriculum and help students learn.



Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Committee,

Patricia Reeser and Jean Lambert, Co-Chairs, October 23, 2016