

WEST NEWBURY OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

West Newbury, Massachusetts 01985

ANNUAL REPORT 2018

To the Honorable Board of Selectmen:

The Open Space Committee (OSC) met regularly during FY 2017. This report summarizes our key accomplishments from July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018:

- **Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) Update:** The OSC continued the state-mandated process of updating West Newbury's previous OSRP dated 2009. A current OSRP is a condition for certain state grants and is intended to be a planning tool for town boards, departments, and committees. A subcommittee of the OSC met weekly to revise and update the OSRP using new mapping tools, results of the 2016 town-wide survey, and resources of other conservation agencies as well as input from other town boards, residents, and OSC members. The final OSRP will be complete in late 2018.

- **Collaboration on Open Space Issues:** The OSC served as a resource for and consulted with other town boards, committees, and individuals, including potential developers, on a range of issues relating to open space and trails. One of the more controversial projects that came before the OSC would have rezoned an 80-acre "priority parcel" as a solar overlay district and would have permanently conserved about 30 acres as open space. The OSC was split on the benefits of this proposal and Town Meeting defeated the rezoning.

In addition, the OSC advised the Board of Selectmen on Chapter 61 parcels. It consulted with the River Access Committee on the feasibility of providing car-top craft access to the Merrimack River at a number of locations in town. The OSC also collaborated with the Conservation Commission and Planning Board on the Drake's Landing residential development, providing advice about optimal trail locations, design, and development. Finally, members worked closely with local land trust Essex County Greenbelt (Greenbelt) on various issues relating to critical open space parcels in West Newbury. One such plan would have involved the purchase of a conservation restriction on nine acres of farmland on Main Street using CPA funds, thus preserving a piece of the town's agricultural heritage.

- **Open Space Management:** As part of creating the inventory of priority open space parcels required by the OSRP, the OSC revised its criteria for designating land for preservation. The newly revised list of valuable open space parcels is guided by the Mass Audubon MAP PR2 along with other traditional criteria used by the committee.

- **Trail System Improvements:** With the ongoing goal of creating a town-wide network of trails, the OSC continued to plan, develop, and maintain trails. Our Conservation Commission liaison and member provided invaluable assistance to help us create a Wetlands Trail Management Plan which was approved by the Conservation Commission, Board of Selectmen, and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection.

In October 2017, the OSC sponsored its annual fall trail hike showcasing the former Walker Meadow, the latest addition to Greenbelt's West Newbury trail network. The meadow provides a link from the South Street Woodlots to the Indian Hill Reservation and the Atherton Trail Connector to Pike's Bridge Road.

- **Website Enhancements:** The OSC began to migrate content from its own website to West Newbury's municipal website. We believe this will create a more seamless portal to open space news and information. The new website will continue to offer maps of West Newbury trails and links to third-party open space and conservation resources as well as committee meeting minutes, schedules and agendas.

Visit:
wnewbury.org/open-space-committee



Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Committee,
Patricia P. Reeser, Chairman
November 2018