

Open Space Preservation Committee
(Conservation Commission and Parks Advisory Committee invited)
Tuesday, January 16, 2018
Minutes
Mansfield Community Center, Community Room
7:00p.m.

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 pm.

2. Roll Call

OSPC members: Jim Morrow (chair), Vicky Wetherell, Quentin Kessel, Ken Feathers, Michael Soares.

Parks Advisory Committee members: Sue Harrington, Julia Barrett, Eric Apgar.

Town Staff present: Jennifer Kaufman.

3. Review of Minutes

The minutes of December 19, 2017 were approved as written.

4. Opportunity for public comment

No members of the public were present.

5. New Business

• Southworth Preserve Trail Layout/Uses

Members of OPSC, PAC, and the local biking community (Bike Mansfield, NEMBA) went on a field trip on December 9 to review the proposed trail. Most of the trail will be located on DEEP-managed land just east of Chapins Pond. Its trailhead on Dodd Rd and spurs to connect to trails in Mansfield Hollow SP will be constructed in Southworth Preserve (town open space). In addition to being a foot path, the trail will allow bike use on designated sections on Southworth Preserve to connect to multi-use trails in MHSP. NEMBA has experience training volunteers and building/maintaining such trails, and their active support of the project is appreciated.

OSPC and PAC supported recommended that:

- the trail's start after leaving Dodd Rd be reconsidered in order to reduce its somewhat steep descent (or ascent).
- signs are posted to identify the multi-use and footpath-only trails, and to explain trail safety and etiquette for all users.

Additionally, we support the idea of constructing, and some point the future, a universal-access trail along the field's west edge to a viewing area for Chapins Pond.

• Simpson Grant Award

Jennifer Kaufman informed us that the town's application was approved for funds to aid the acquisition of the 114-acre Simpson property (parcel# 19.70.12-1). The funding is through the OSWA Grant Program managed by DEEP and provides 60% of the appraised value (remaining costs are covered by the town's Open Space Acquisition Fund). OSPC is sincerely grateful to Jen, the Simpson family, and the many people who assisted with the grant and project planning to preserve this property as open space.

OSPC will submit comments from its Executive Session of October 18, 2017, which will include an update from town staff on efforts by Joshua's Trust in this part of Mansfield. As

required, the Town Council has scheduled a public hearing for February 26 to hear comments on the property's acquisition as open space.

6. Communications

- PAC is holding a guided walk on winter animal tracking for all ages. It will take place at the Mansfield Community Center on January 28, 1-3pm.
- North Frontage Rd field trip – A field trip was scheduled for January 20 at 10am.
- Minutes (*in packet*)

7. Collaborative meeting with Joshua's Trust

At 7:30, representatives from JT joined the meeting (Karen Zimmer, Paul Pribula, Michael Hveem, Nancy Silander, Ann Dunnack, Julia Rogers, Dan Donahue).

Agenda: 1. Introductions

2. JT's Strategic Plan – Adopted in 2017, the new plan shares a number of priorities and goals with Mansfield's *Plan of Conservation & Development*, including: permanently preserve designated open space, partner with other organizations and communities, create/support opportunities for our communities to enjoy and connect with open space, incorporate the challenges of climate change in planning and program development, maintain and increase resource capacities (volunteers/interns, funding, programs).
3. Mansfield Open Space Program challenges and needs – An ongoing challenge is stewardship of its open space (JT shares this but has developed a successful program and trains and coordinates volunteers to care for properties owned by JT, as well as to annually visit those still privately owned with easements held by JT.). For town open space, the stewardship activities currently underway have been coordinated by Jennifer Kaufman with volunteers and public works. JT's new volunteer coordinator has increased the capacity and expectation of its stewardship program. In this way, site projects are done primarily by hand. To address these respective needs, the idea to "barter" stewardship resources (JT's volunteers, town public work's equipment) was proposed and well received. On a somewhat related topic, JT's internship program was mentioned throughout the meeting. MOSP would benefit from offering internships similar to what JT has begun and recently expanded. Interns for the town have already been essential to creating and updating GIS maps, and it is possible that JT can assist us in developing an internship program.
4. Opportunities for collaboration
 - a. Land protection projects – OSPC/PAC and JT agreed that potential priority areas are: northeast Mansfield, where the town is working to acquire the 114 acres (see *Simpson Grant Award* above); Mansfield Center, from roughly Schoolhouse Brook Park to Lions Memorial Park which includes and large number of open spaces managed by the town, JT, and DEEP (and with future connections to the library and Southeast Elementary School). There is also interest in reviewing and improving the overall connectivity of open space throughout Mansfield.
 - b. Outreach/education – Guided walks and similar programs are already organized by the town (PAC) and JT, and it seems that innumerable opportunities exist for the all interested to provide our communities with more educational materials (online and handouts), events, guided programs and presentations, volunteer opportunities, etc.

- c. Reaching out to other partners – Other partners to consider: Friends of Mansfield Hollow State Park, organizations/agencies currently promoting forest conservation and management (The Last Green Valley, NRCS, US Forest Service), neighboring towns and conservation commissions.
 - d. Other – A recurring theme was communication. From a capacity-building standpoint, many comments were made that both JT and the town staff/committees would benefit from regular communication. This would be valuable for general updates on all topics, as well as sharing specific or time-sensitive information (such as grant announcements, new invasive species found). JT is actively reaching out to staff and committees in the towns it has protected open space to learn more about their conservation activities and priorities. Communication was also discussed in regards to the community, so that messaging and information to the community are consistent and strengthen each other's outreach efforts. Jennifer Kaufman raised the point that many of the properties protected by the town and JT have good stories to tell, about the property as well as the people involved: owners who donated or protected their land, volunteers who have given years of service to open space programs, and volunteers and owners who continue have and continue to take care of these properties.
5. Next steps – Michael Hveem, JT Executive Director, and Jennifer Kaufman agreed to be the respective points-of-contact moving forward.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Michael Soares
Secretary