

FRANKLIN PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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MEMORANDUM

TO: FRANKLIN CONSERVATION COMMISSION
FROM: BRYAN W. TABERNER, AICP, DIRECTOR
RE: PROPOSED PROCESS - OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN UPDATE
CC: JAMIE HELLEN, TOWN ADMINISTRATOR; AMY LOVE, TOWN PLANNER;
BREEKA LI GOODLANDER, CONSERVATION AGENT/Natural Resource Protection Manager;
ALECIA ALLEYNE, ASSISTANT TO TOWN ADMINISTRATOR
DATE: November 3, 2022

The Department of Planning & Community Development (DPCD) has begun the process of updating the Town's 2016 Open Space & Recreation Plan. The purpose of this plan is to create a document through a public input process that will guide the Town of Franklin in its continuing efforts to maintain and enhance the open space and recreation resources in community. As with the last two updates (2008 & 2016) the OSRP will be developed in house primarily by DPCD staff, with substantial assistance from other departments and committees/commissions. As with the 2016 OSRP update, the Conservation Commission will be the lead local agency for the OSRP update process. Below is outline of the OSRP Update process.

Preliminary Work. In October 2022 DPCD staff began to perform preliminary work necessary for the OSRP update process. This work includes assessment of the status of the implementation of the OSRP's goals and objectives, and updating data within the document, including demographics, zoning, and land use. The 7- Year Action Plan (Section 9) of the 2016 OSRP is attached for you reference.

OSRP Staff Working Group. A working group of Town staff from various Departments is being formed, and will include representatives from Planning, Conservation, Administration, Recreation, GIS Department, Engineering, Public Works (Grounds Division), Building Commissioner, Facilities, Schools and Senior Center. Certain staff members have a fairly limited part in the Plan update process, while more than half will likely be needed to stay involved for four or more months. Town Planner Amy Love will take primary responsibility for management of the Staff Working Group's activities. The Working Group will hold their kick off meeting on November 9, 2022.

Conservation Commission Meetings. As lead agency, the Conservation Commission will hold ongoing OSRP Update meetings during regular Conservation Commission meetings, approximately once a month starting in November 2022. Breeka Li Goodlander will take the lead providing the Commission with technical and administrative support; she will be assisted by the Planning & Community Development Director, and other DPCD staff as needed.

Public Input Process. In order to complete a plan that represents the opinions, desires and needs of the community the Commission and DPCD should attempt to gather information in a variety of ways from as many residents and organizations as possible. The OSRP Update process involves obtaining substantial input from many Town officials, nonprofit and government organizations, and the general public. DPCD recommends the following public input process:

Stakeholder Meetings. As mentioned above, the Commission will hold monthly OSRP update meetings. The Commission will invite other Committees, Commissions and Boards, as well as state agencies and nonprofits to meet and discuss their needs and concerns. Representatives from the following organizations will be invited to attend: Recreation Advisory Board, Community Preservation Committee, Commission on Persons with Disabilities, Council on Aging, Agricultural Commission, Community Garden Committee, Planning Board, School Department, Massachusetts agencies, interested community organizations, and possibly others.

Public Hearings. DPCD recommends holding three public hears during the public input process. The proposed hearings are summarized below:

Public Hearing 1 - 2016 OSRP Review and Current Priorities	February 2023
Public Hearing 2 - Goals & Objectives for 2023 OSRP	April 2023
Public Hearing 3 - Draft 2023 OSRP Review	June 2023

Community Survey. A survey will be distributed in order to understand the needs and concerns of the residents of Franklin. DPCD recommends using the same questions asked during a 2015/2016 OSRP survey. Ideally the survey would be distributed before the first public hearing listed above, and survey results would be presented at the second public hearing.

Public Comment Period. Once the 2023 OSRP Public Draft is developed, DPCD will implement a month- long public comment period, which will include Public Hearing 3 mentioned above, to gather input regarding the Draft plan.

Written Public Input. DPCD will create an OSRP Update page on the Town's website. At any time during the Plan update process individuals will be able to complete an online form to provide the Commission and Town staff with comments and or suggestions on related issues. In addition to submitting input through the online form, input can be submitted by email or letter. All input received will be seriously considered during the plan development process.

Timeline. DPCD expects the OSRP Update to be completed, adopted by Town Council, and approved by the State by September 2023. A proposed timeline is attached.

Relationship to Other Comprehensive Planning. Once the bulk of the OSRP Update work is completed, DPCD will begin a similar process to update the 2013 Master Plan. All input received during the OSRP update process will be utilized during the Master Plan process, which will serve to streamline the master planning work related to natural resources, open space preservation, Town recreation property improvements and other facilities and services. We expect to request that Town Council create a Master Plan Committee during the first quarter of FY24.

Please let me know if you have questions or require additional information on any of the above issues.

Attachments.

Attachment A: 2016 OSRP Section 9 - 7 Year Action Plan

Attachment B: OSRP Update Proposed Schedule

SECTION 9: 7-YEAR ACTION PLAN

The Goals and Objectives are not listed in a descending priority order, but were listed to allow continuity with the 2008 OSRP; e.g. Goal 1 is the same in both plans, with new goals and objectives listed “at the end”. The Action plans do have some priority attached however in that the items that are “on-going” are anticipated to be potentially acted upon during the life of the Plan. The items with specific years attached to them will be acted upon in the years indicated and thus an item with an anticipated completion in the first year of the plan is of a higher priority than one from the last year of the plan.

FRD Franklin Recreation Department
 DPCD: Franklin Department of Planning and Community Development
 DPW: Franklin Department of Public Works
 DCR: Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation
 FBRTC: Franklin Bellingham Rail Trail Committee
 CC: Franklin Conservation Commission
 FSD Franklin School Department

GOAL 1: Increase public awareness of open space and recreation opportunities in Franklin.

Objective 1.1: Install signage at those open space and recreation areas that have not yet been addressed, including but not limited to signage identifying unique flora and fauna, both native and invasive, walking/hiking trails, bike paths and bike lanes.		
ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	SCHEDULE
1.1a Identify open space and recreation areas where signage is needed. Determine verbiage, design & materials for each sign (wooden plaque, metal, plastic) and placement for each designated open space & recreation area Approve signs Create signs- Funding: General Fund/ Gift Account Install signs- Funding: General Fund/Gift Account	CC Franklin Design Review Committee DPCD; Contract private sign-maker make signs. DPW, CC, DPCD; Contractor.	On-going On-going On-going On-going
Objective 1.2: Create educational and/or outdoor programs to educate citizens about the environment and natural habitats in Franklin		
ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	SCHEDULE
1.2a Complete flora and fauna inventory of recreation areas in town, and examine history of the areas development and create program based on this information.	DPCD, FRD, CC	2016-2017
Objective 1.3: Assist schools and other organizations with environmental science, conservation and sustainability education.		
ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	SCHEDULE
1.3a Compile list of open space habitats, and classifying the areas (i.e. wetlands, elm bank, etc.) that would provide good educational opportunities.	CC in conjunction with DPCD	2016-2017
1.3b Find a knowledgeable instructor to develop an overview description summary of each type of habitat example. Funding: Conservation Fund	Science instructor in FSD; knowledgeable Franklin resident, consultant	On-going

1.3c	Set up Wilderness class through Lifelong Learning,FRD.	DPCD, FSD, FSD	On-going
1.3d	Apply for grant money to develop environmental/natural habitat educational program.	DPCD, FSD	On-going
1.3e	Develop environmental/natural habitat educational program for citizens; include community garden, food grown locally.	FSD, FRD	On-going
1.3f	Schedule educational programs – monthly, quarterly.	FSD,FRD	On-going
Objective 1.4: Encourage volunteer efforts to steward natural resources and sponsor town events to promote appreciation, awareness and utilization of open space to foster a community sense of identification with the land and resources.			
ACTIONS		RESPONSIBILITY	SCHEDULE
1.4a	Formalize partnerships with local public schools to secure student interns for general help and outreach coordination	FSD, CC,FRD	On-going
1.4b	Develop a volunteer program to undertake activities such as coordinated clean-ups and reporting the condition of trails and walks in open space areas.	CC,FRD	On-going

GOAL 2: Preserve and enhance existing Town open space resources.

Objective 2.1: Provide access to open space and conservation areas throughout town for residents of all ages and levels of ability.			
ACTIONS		RESPONSIBILITY	SCHEDULE
2.1a	Prioritize list of non-compliant land.	CC	On-going
2.1b	Prepare a parking study assessing existing parking capacity at open space and recreation areas throughout the town.	FRD, Building Department	2017-2018
2.1c	Plan and design access improvements at priority properties. Construct handicap accessibility at conservation and open space areas that are not ADA compliant. Funding: Conservation Fund	CC Town Contractor	On-going 2018
Objective 2.2: Create a plan for prioritization and acquisition of Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B properties.			
ACTIONS		RESPONSIBILITY	SCHEDULE
2.2a	Catalog, evaluate, and prioritize Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B lands in order of priority for acquisition by Town for preservation	CC; DPCD	On-going
2.2b	Contact and work with relevant organizations regarding acquisition of available Chapter 61 properties.	CC; DPCD	On-going
2.2c	Contact owners of Chapter 61, 61A and 61B properties to ascertain future plans for properties.	CC; DPCD	On-going
2.2d	Purchase priority Chapter 61, 61A and 61B properties	CC; DPCD; Metacomet Land Trust	On-going

2.2e	Increase the Open Space Fund to at least 2 million dollars to ensure money is available for the purchase of priority open space properties.	Town Council	On-going
Objective 2.3: Prioritize land owned by the Town and managed by the Conservation Commission for development and approval of conservation restrictions to ensure the land will be permanently protected.			
ACTIONS		RESPONSIBILITY	SCHEDULE
2.3a	Create a list of significant land parcels that may be lost as open space if not permanently protected	CC; DPCD	On-going
2.3b	Establish procedures and guidelines to use to prioritize protection of significant land parcels.	DPCD; CC	2016-2017
2.3c	Transfer Town owned tax title and unresolved parcels to CC for designation as conservation lands and permanent protection	Town Administration, DPCD, CC	On-going
Objective 2.4: Increase permanent funding to preserve, maintain and increase open space resources.			
ACTIONS		RESPONSIBILITY	SCHEDULE
2.3a	Investigate grant funding	CC; DPCD	On-going
2.3b	Evaluate local fee and tax structures to create a permanent revenue stream	Town Administration	On-going

GOAL 3: Maximize recreational opportunities to meet the community's evolving needs by maintaining current inventory of facilities and programs and by providing new facilities and programs for both active and passive recreation.

Objective 3.1: Maintain and improve current recreation areas and provide new recreation opportunities for residents of all ages and levels of ability.			
ACTIONS		RESPONSIBILITY	SCHEDULE
3.1a	Increase handicap accessibility at recreation areas that are currently not handicap accessible or ADA compliant	ADA Commission CC, FRD	On-going
3.1b	Provide recycling receptacles at all recreation areas to encourage green initiatives.	DPW; FRD	On-going
3.1c	Developed new acquired open space at 864 Lincoln Street for access to Charles River	DPW; FRD	2017
Objective 3.2: Increase usage of existing recreational space and modify existing recreational space as the needs of the Town require and evolve.			
ACTIONS		RESPONSIBILITY	SCHEDULE
3.2a	Create shaded areas at existing playgrounds	FRD DPW CC	On-going
	Add flower gardens, fountains, sitting and picnic areas at existing playgrounds	FRD DPW	On-going
3.2b	Create passive recreation area out of a portion of the Town-owned Pond Street Property (former sewer beds), including a portion of its wooded area along Pond Street.	DPCD, CC, DPW,	2016-2017
3.2c	Construct bathroom and concession facilities at Dacey Field Recreation Area.	DPW, FRD	2018-2019
Objective 3.3: Develop access points for canoes, kayaks and boats to utilize the Charles River and Mine Brook and work with proponents of the Charles River Meadowlands to interconnect these access points.			

ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	SCHEDULE
3.3a Post signage along roads where waterways can be accessed.	Franklin Design Review Committee, DPW CC	On-going
3.3b Develop canoe and boat launches along the Charles River in the northern portion of the Town	FRD DPW, CC	On-going
3.3c Coordinate with the Towns of Bellingham & Medway for access improvements to the Charles River Meadowlands including but not limited to signage, purchase and development of parking areas, trail development and low impact site amenities.	DPCD, CC, Charles River Watershed Association	On-going
Objective 3.4: Increase connectivity to and between Franklin's recreation areas, conservation areas, and open space including safe walking and bicycle linkages		
ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	SCHEDULE
3.4a Identify major roadways, recreation and conservation areas where bike lanes would be appropriate.	DPCD; FRD	On-going
3.4b Construct bike lanes at major roadways, recreation and conservation areas.	DPCD; DPW	On-going
3.4c Host fundraising events at recreation areas to provide area residents a chance to socialize and improve the recreation area closest to their neighborhood.	CC FRD	On-going
3.4d Assess properties to determine suitability for future conservation land or additional recreation area.	CC, DPCD, CC	On-going
3.4e Prioritize lands that have been determined as suitable for future use as conservation land or additional recreation land.	CC, DPCD, CC	On-going
3.4f Acquire land adjacent to existing recreation areas that may be suitable for future conservation land or additional recreational area.	Town Council; CC; DPCD;FRD	On-going
3.4g Inventory town sidewalks for area when they are needed for connectivity with open space and recreational facilities especially between the Beaver Pond Recreation Area and the State Forest	DPW	On-going
3.4h Investigate opportunities to purchase railroad Rights-of-Way as they become available	Town Administration	On-going
3.4i Utilize the Spring Street Right of Way to create a walking/bike trail between Rt. 140 and the SNETT	DPW	On-going
3.4j Increase access a=to the town property along Mine Brook on Grove Steet	DPW	On-going
Objective 3.5: Work with DCR and others to continue to increase access to and implement improvements of the SNETT and State Forest Trail system .		
ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	SCHEDULE
3.5a Limit/restrict use of motorbikes.	Franklin Police, DCR	Ongoing
3.5b Advocate for and obtain resources including public and private funding, materials, and volunteer hours required to plan, design and engineer, and construct the SNETT, Franklin State Forest trails, and related recreational and alternative transportation resources.	CC; FRD; DPW; DPCD, FBRTC	Ongoing
3.5c Advocate for and obtain support for the SNETT from Town residents, agencies and officials, community organizations, State and Federal agencies, and	FBRTC, DPCD. DCR	Ongoing

	others to assure incremental development of the SNETT and related recreational resources.		
3.5d	Develop a phased approach to plan, design and engineer, permit and construct the SNETT, Franklin State Forest trails, and related recreational and alternative transportation resources.	DCR, DPCD, CC	Ongoing
3.5e	Prepare preliminary cross section of trail, and other presentation materials for marketing and information purposes.	FBRTC, DPCD, DCR	Ongoing
3.5f	Design and install safety and informational signage and additional safety elements at crossing on Grove Street near entrance to SNETT.	DPW	2017
3.5g	Develop plans for Phase I improvements, including creating a smooth gravel/stone dust path within SNETT right of way and on adjacent Franklin State Forest trails, and install bollards and or gates, and signage.	DCRE, FBRTC	2017-2018
3.5h	Identify points of historical interest along SNETT and adjacent trails (e.g., Wadsworth Farm, Wadsworth diaries), and create and install signage and interpretive markers and displays to highlight.	FBRTC, DCR	2017-2018
3.5i	Plan and implement on-road and off-road bike route(s) to connect SNETT with the Upper Charles Rail Trail and other regional and local trails.	CC, DPW, PD, DPCD	Ongoing
3.5j	Develop preliminary plans for the acquisition and use of adjacent properties in order to expand the regional trail network and connect the SNETT to downtown Franklin. These properties include, but are not limited to the CSXT property between the Downtown area and the entrance to the SNETT at Grove Street.	DPCD, FBRTC	Ongoing
3.5.j	Advocate funding approval for Prospect Street Tunnel included in Environmental Bond Bill 4375	DCR, FBRTC, DPCD	2016-2017
3.5	Develop and implement plans to install interpretative and wayfaring signage for the SNETT	DCR, FBRTC, DPCD	2016-2017
Objective 3.6: Seek out a site and develop a youth center to provide a meeting place for teens to congregate and participate in indoor sports, gaming and conversation. .			
ACTIONS		RESPONSIBILITY	SCHEDULE
3.5a	Determine ways to raise alternative funds to utilize for the development and operational functions for a youth center.	FRD	On-going
3.5b	Develop indoor programs for youth and teens to be implemented at the youth center	FRD	On-going

GOAL 4: Protect natural, historical, and cultural resources and maintain Franklin's New England character.

Objective 4.1: Preserve natural resources for the protection of priority habitats so as to enhance biodiversity which will help sustain native plant and wildlife species and improve the quality and health of natural infrastructure.		
ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	SCHEDULE
4.1a Work with the Division of Wildlife and Fisheries regarding priority habitats in Franklin.	CC	On-going

4.1b	Plan list of actions needed to protect priority/unique habitat areas in Franklin.	CC, DCR	On-going
	Implement actions needed to protect priority/unique habitat, including installing barriers/fences if warranted.	CC, DCR	On-going

Objective 4.2: Seek Adoption of Community Preservation Act

ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	SCHEDULE
4.2a Educate community regarding Community Preservation Act (CPA) via public meetings, press releases, CPA related fact sheets, public access station, and the Town's website.	Town Administration	On-going
4.2b Work to have CPA on Town ballot.	Town Administration	On-going

Objective 4.3: Implement growth management techniques that will help to preserve the Town's natural, historic and cultural resources.

ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	SCHEDULE
4.3a Update zoning regulations to incorporate growth management techniques into the town bylaws.	DPCD	On-going
4.3b Incorporate the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Smart Growth/Smart Energy and Sustainable Development Principles as part of Franklin's Best Development Practices.	DPCD, all Town entities	On-going
4.3c Promote mixed-use development in commercial and Downtown areas to ensure best use of properties.	DPCD	On-going
4.3d Revise and adopt the Franklin Best Practices Manual	DPCD, Planning Board, CC	2016-12017

GOAL 5: Preserve and Protect the Town's Water Resources.

Objective 5.1: Prioritize water bodies in Town for ecological studies to determine overall health of the water body and long term management strategies and programs.

ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	SCHEDULE
5.1a Identify water bodies and secure owner's permission for study	CC	2017
5.2b Secure capital funding	Town Administration	2016-2019
5.2c Develop and solicit RFQ/RFP for necessary work	CC	2017
5.3d Conduct studies	CC	2017-2019

Objective 5.2: Implement recommendations in DelCarte Ecological Study.

ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	SCHEDULE
5.2a Secure capital funding	Town Administration	2016-2019
5.2b Develop and solicit RFQ/RFP for necessary work	CC	2017
5.2c Obtain necessary permits	CC	2017
5.3d. Implement permitted activities	CC	2017-2019

Objective 5.3: Minimize the use of pesticides and salt to maintain the health of the Town's surface and ground water resource areas.

<i>ACTIONS</i>	<i>RESPONSIBILITY</i>	<i>SCHEDULE</i>
5.3a Work with land use boards and commissions to promote the use of salt alternatives on paved areas	DPCD	On-going
5.3b Work with land use boards and commissions to decrease the use of pesticides within private developments	DPCD	On-going

Proposed Open Space Recreation Plan Update Schedule

	Oct 2022			Nov 2022			Dec 2022			Jan 2023			Feb 2023			Mar 2023			Apr 2023			May 2023			Jun 2023			Jul 2023			Aug 2023			Sep 2023			Oct-23		
DPCD Staff 2016 OSRP Implementation																																							
DPCD Staff Data Update																																							
Staff Working Group Kickoff Meeting					x																																		
Regular Staff Working Group Meetings						x		x		x		x		x		x			x						x				x										
Conservation Meeting - Project Introduction					x																																		
Regular OSRP Update Committee Meetings								x		x			x			x			x			x			x			x						x					
OSRP Citizen Survey																																							
Public Hearings														x					x							x													
ADA Self Assessment																																							
Goals & Objectives Development																																							
Draft OSRP Development																																							
Draft ORRP Public Comment Period																																							
State Draft Plan Review																																							
Preliminary Final OSRP Development																																							
Conservation Commission OSRP																																				x			
Town Council ORRP Endorsement																																				x			
State Approval																																							x