

AN INVITATION TO HELP PLAN FOR THE FUTURE OF WENHAM;

WHAT IS AN OPEN SPACE PLAN AND WHY DO WE NEED ONE?

Submitted by the Wenham Open Space and Recreation Committee

By Chris Gajeski, Chair

Wenham residents are encouraged to come to the first interactive Town Forum on Open Space and Recreation on November 2nd.

Wenham's Open Space and Recreation Plan dates from 2001. The Wenham Open Space and Recreation Committee (OSRC) is beginning the much-needed update of the 2001 Plan to create a plan for approval by the State. We need your input.

An Open Space and Recreation Plan is a blueprint for progress; it establishes priorities and identifies actions over a seven-year period that will guide the Town on matters involving open space. It is a critical tool for creating an inventory of a community's protected land and water areas and for identifying undeveloped parcels. Based on community values and input, all ages have a stake in this Plan and everyone can participate in its development. The OSRC is also working closely with the Economic Development Committee on this initiative.

One of our tasks is to look at land parcels that are classified under Massachusetts General Law Chapter 61, which allows properties used for recreation, agriculture, or forestry to receive reduced tax assessments. This classification gives the Town the right of first refusal if the property is put up for sale and the use changes, as was the situation with the Lakeview Golf Course Property.

An approved Plan will make Wenham eligible to apply for grants administered by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, Division of Conservation Services. These are valuable funding opportunities for land acquisition and preservation.

Community goals from the 2001 Plan and 2013 partial update include: to maintain the rural, historic, small town character of the Town; to protect water resources; to protect wildlife and plant habitat; to maintain and encourage the use of land for agriculture and forestry; to provide recreational facilities and opportunities for all citizens; to protect scenic vistas; and to develop and sustain the Town's commitment to carrying out this plan.

Participate in a conversation about open space and recreation needs, goals, and priorities. Some topics we will explore: (1) Are the goals and vision statement of the attempted update in 2013 still aligned with community sentiment?; (2) What areas of town should Wenham protect? Should they be protected for open space or used for recreation? Or both?; (3) What kinds of public recreation does Wenham want? Does

Wenham need more recreational facilities or different activities?; (4) What are Wenham's most important natural resources? How can we preserve or promote them?; and (5) What are the town's priorities over the next seven years?

Help develop your plan for the future of Wenham and its residents. Come to the Public Forum to provide your input on Thursday, November 2, 2017 at 7 pm at the Hamilton-Wenham Public Library 14 Union Street, South Hamilton, MA 01982. You can also weigh in through the community survey, which will be compiled from your input and released in early November. Check the Town website www.wenhamma.gov for further information or contact Margaret Hoffman, Planning Coordinator at 978-468-5520, ext. 8. The Town of Wenham has contracted with The Ciccolo Group, LLC to develop this new Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Most importantly, please help spread the word!