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## **AMESBURY**

CITY HALL

1 Market Street

Amesbury, MA 01913

### **Amesbury Open Space, Natural Resources, and Trails Committee MEETING MINUTES January 28, 2026, 7:00 p.m.**

This meeting was conducted under the "Executive Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law" G.L. c. 30A, Section 20, signed on March 12, 2020.

Attending: Jonathan Sherwood, Chair; Fred Zackon; Pascal Rettig; Richard Hucksam; Craige Hird; Amanda Armington (City of Amesbury)

Absent: Michelle Faucher, Jessica Redfern (not yet reappointed by City Council)

- Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at approximately 7:06 p.m. by Chair Sherwood. The Chair noted that the meeting was being recorded.
- Minutes from October 22, 2025 and December 10, 2025 Meetings: Chair Sherwood noted that both sets of minutes had been distributed to members. Rettig confirmed that the December minutes were generated using AI-assisted transcription from the meeting recording transcript. Zackon moved to accept both sets of minutes as presented; Rettig seconded. Unanimously approved.
- Public Comment: None
- Communications: No communications received beyond items already on the agenda.
- Chair's Report:
  - Invasives Demonstration Project – Woodsom Farm
    - i. Chair Sherwood reported that verbal approval has been received from Joe Buckley at DPW for the invasives demonstration project at Woodsom Farm. Armington confirmed that DPW had no objections.
    - ii. The Committee is seeking written confirmation from DPW before commencing work.
    - iii. Due to deep snow and cold weather, field work will be deferred until conditions improve in spring. Several community members have expressed interest in participating.
    - iv. Next steps will include organizing volunteer work parties once weather permits.

- Referrals: None at this time. Chair Sherwood noted that the City Council referral regarding the Kimball Road parcel (2025-121), which had been withdrawn without prejudice in December, is expected to be resubmitted by the new City Council session.
- Other Business:
  - 2020–2027 OSRP Update / Conditional Response
    - i. Chair Sherwood reported on communications with Melissa Cryan at the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) regarding the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP).
    - ii. The revised OSRP, which the Committee had worked extensively to update in response to conditional approval comments, was never formally resubmitted to EEA. The document has been posted on the City's website since 2022, but EEA had no record of receiving the revised version.
    - iii. Sherwood sent EEA a link to the revised plan. Cryan conducted a preliminary review and removed most prior conditions but identified a few remaining items, including: verification of the inventory map with ownership and conservation/recreation distinctions; Chapter 61 land and conservation restriction listings; and documentation of public participation.
    - iv. Sherwood will review the remaining conditions, confirm whether they were addressed in the 2022 revision, and provide EEA with specific references to the relevant sections.
    - v. Armington offered to assist with map-related items if needed, noting that she or MVPC could generate updated maps.
    - vi. Cryan also confirmed that the plan is valid through 2029 based on the 2022 conditional approval, and that the Committee does not need to begin a new update process at this time.
  - Community Preservation Committee Update
    - i. Michelle Faucher was unable to attend. Chair Sherwood shared information from Faucher via email regarding the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) status.
    - ii. The CPC is still in the early stages of gathering information from stakeholder groups. The OSNRTC presentation in fall 2025 was among the first stakeholder presentations received.
    - iii. The CPC's process involves gathering stakeholder input, developing a CPA plan addressing affordable housing, historic preservation, and open space/recreation, and then soliciting project applications.
    - iv. It appears to be some time before the CPC will be ready to accept project applications. CPA funds continue to accumulate and are not subject to annual expenditure deadlines.
    - v. Sherwood encouraged members to raise awareness of the CPA program with community groups and stakeholders in the course of their regular interactions.
  - Discussion: Coordination, Planning, and Oversight with Community Groups

- i. Chair Sherwood introduced a discussion on the evolving relationship between community organizations and the City regarding work on city-owned open space properties.
  - ii. The Lake Gardner Improvement Association (LGIA) is considering restructuring to broaden its focus from Lake Gardner to town-wide open space and trail interests. This could include trail maintenance, invasive plant management, signage, and stewardship activities across multiple city properties.
  - iii. Sherwood described a trail steward program model used in Haverhill, where community volunteers monitor trails and report conditions through a simple online form, operating as a partnership between community organizations and the city.
  - iv. Rettig suggested the Committee could serve as a liaison between community groups and the City, helping to unlock community capacity for stewardship. He referenced the concept of asset-based community development as a useful framework.
  - v. Zackon emphasized the value of building a standing pool of community volunteers and an ongoing recruitment mechanism, rather than relying on ad hoc efforts for individual projects. He volunteered to help pursue that effort.
  - vi. Hucksam noted the importance of establishing a proper approval process for community groups working on city land, ensuring appropriate oversight while encouraging volunteer involvement.
  - vii. Armington noted that for Conservation Commission properties such as Deer Island, approvals could be managed through the existing ConCom process. For other city-owned land, a simpler approval similar to the DPW letter for the invasives project might suffice.
  - viii. Hird suggested the Committee could develop guidelines for trail stewardship, including standards for signage, trail maintenance, and reporting.
  - ix. No formal action was taken. The discussion will continue at future meetings as community organizations advance their planning.
- Planning Board / Conservation Commission Updates
  - i. Rettig reported that the Planning Board has been focused on traffic impacts from several major development projects.
  - ii. Discussion touched on the Riverwalk extension project, which is currently at the 10–25% design phase. A MassDOT hearing was held in December on the project to connect the existing Riverwalk to the Ghost Trail extension near Elm Street and Route 110. The design does not yet incorporate planned development in the area, including the Golden Triangle and Clark Road projects.
  - iii. Members noted that several development projects may include dedicated open space and trail connections, representing potential additions to the City's open space network.

- Motion to Adjourn: Moved by Zackon, seconded by Rettig. Unanimously approved.

Minutes approved (4 yes, 1 abstention) at 02/25/2026 meeting, respectfully submitted by Jonathan Sherwood, Chair, OSNRTC