



**Open Space & Recreation Summit
July 10, 2021**

As part of I AMesbury 2030, the Task Force held an Open Space & Recreation Summit in July 2021. Representatives from the organizations, leagues and businesses who use our public recreation spaces were invited to participate in a SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) in breakout groups for Fields & Sports, Trails, and Waterways.

Organizations invited to attend, with * next to those who were represented:

Amesbury Babe Ruth *	Clark's Pond Watershed Association *
Amesbury Chamber of Commerce	CMASS Rocket Launch
Amesbury Girls Youth Softball League *	Coastal Trails Coalition *
Amesbury Harbormaster *	Conservation Commission *
Amesbury Improvement Association *	Disc Golf *
Amesbury Jets	High5em
Amesbury LAX *	Lake Attitash Association *
Amesbury Little League *	Lake Gardner Improvement Association *
Amesbury Public Schools *	Lakes & Waterways Commission *
Amesbury Recreation *	Mass Audubon
Amesbury Soccer Association *	Open Space, Natural Resources & Trails Committee *
Amesbury Trails	Parks & Recreation Commission *
AYRBasketball *	Seacoast Flag Football *
Brewery Silvaticus *	Seacoast United Field Hockey
Bryony and Birch Studio	SUP YO
City Council *	

Please note that this was a brainstorming session and these notes will be used by AMesbury 2030 to create goals, plans and action items.

Fields and Sports

Strengths

- Landry Stadium (currently under the schools control, which is a weakness) - need to limit hours of use to 20
- Woodsom Farm
- The number / type of Youth Rec Programs
- Land available
- Existing plans / reports are great resources and have already conducted the research
- Group are already collaborating: Ongoing dialogue between groups has been helpful
- Youth sports feed Amesbury High School Sports
- Leagues / Organizations are doing a great job of maintaining the fields

Opportunities

- Discussions of having a maintenance plan / budget
- Allocating fees from rental of space back to single budget to support maintenance
- Find game space for Amesbury Youth Soccer league
- AES space is underutilized and available
- Youth Sports feed into AHS - need to continue to support high-quality programs
- Woodsom Farm - space across the street...
- Centralized scheduling system
- Better define the partnership between sports and City
- MicroFab site - opportunity for fields after it is cleaned up?
- Cider Hill / Pendergast Farm/Battis Farm - potential field locations? Public / Private partnership?
- Space in neighboring communities (i.e., field next to New Old Oak in Merrimac?)

Aspirations

- More and better fields (not 10 years from now)
- Better maintenance / management model for Landry to keep it a high-quality facility
- Better maintenance all around
- Re-established Parks Department under DPW
- Enough rectangular fields to satisfy demand (not just for soccer) - this is critical as teams are getting displaced
- Remediation strategy for existing fields
- Fully utilizing Woodsom Farm
- Better infrastructure for maintenance (irrigation, equipment, storage)

Results

- Scheduling software is being used to coordinate activities
- Property-managed and maintained fields for ALL!
- New turf at High School
- Well-maintained / controlled use of Landry Stadium
- Families with younger kids are moving to Amesbury

Trails

Strengths

- Volunteers
- Different types and abundance of spaces
- Close proximity and interconnections between the spaces Amesbury offers
- Physical beauty and connections with nature of open spaces
- Unique resources of the waterways in Amesbury
- “Water trail” opportunity of the Powow River
- Variety of uses and purposes within each space
- Disc golf course is a unique offering and provides “smart development” of a natural resource.

Opportunities

- Cleaning and maintenance of ponds in the parks to maximize usage
- Connection between Riverwalk and Ghost Trails that is currently pending grant application for next steps
- Signage for connection between lower millyard and Riverwalk
- Use established (recently completed) open space plan to meet requirements for partnering with DCR and getting funding for further projects
- Volunteerism - utilize available / willing volunteers to work on and maintain underused / poorly maintained spaces
- Partner with businesses such as Silvaticus for sponsorship of spaces and events (Coastal Trails model as example)
- Optimize budgeting / fee structure to make use / participation fees effective for maintenance
- Encourage efficient collaboration between organizations
- Maintenance of resources
- Access to Merrimack Landing Area following Maples Crossing development
- Ensuring people know who to talk to

Aspirations

- Alternate disc golf site at Merrimack Landing.
 - Improve safety at current site with proximity to playground and other fields
 - Result in smart development/utilization of the trails at Merrimack Landing
- Integrate management of open space properties - create new and revised management plans
- Trail plan for the city with mapping and signage
- Develop a navigable river trail - Dock/landing in lower millyard on river
- Finalize coastal trail connections
- Authorize a revolving account for Conservation Commission, align it with changes to fee structure

Results

- Maintenance plans in place and funded
- Documented focus and plans for resiliency
- Clear and established ownership of resources
- Universal accessibility of resources
- Increased planned events - Volunteer participation
- Annual review and recognition of progress and accomplishments
- Measure demographic participation

Waterways

The group offered concerns and aspirations for improvement and sustainability of the waterways within the city. Although there were individual representations of the lakes and open waterways the main themes were safety and sustainability. A historical perspective combined with long term vision and commerce created a cohesive group enthusiastic to meet again.

Main Themes

1. Water testing in addition to bacterial and current safety water testing is essential in protecting the future waterways
2. Addressing Climate Resiliency is essential when considering the future of all waterways
3. There is a need for Public Education Both for personal safety and protection of waterways
4. More research needed into potential funding for projects and education
5. Improved and enhanced access to waterways
6. Encourage more resident involvement

Strengths

- Management and oversight of water bodies is a collaborative effort
- Abundance of wildlife and wildlife activities within the city
- Increased public usage of waterways - Use of personal non powered watercraft and motorboating has increased within the city
 - Affecting safety of persons
 - Affects sustainability of waterways
- Wildlife and wildlife activities are a large part of recreational activities within the city and much of these activities occur on or around waterways
- Looking at Master Planning through “Lens” is both effective and proactive, however the “Lens” and need for separate **Climate Resiliency Plan** is essential

Lake Gardner

- Sanitary facilities are adequate and Port a Johns are maintained
- Increased visits and in water sports within the city
- “Beach Manager” program is working well and well received by community and first responders
- Increased Police visibility at Lake Gardner

Opportunities

- Established, dedicated people already in place
- More collaborative meetings such as this
- Shared resources for water testing other than routine Health Dept Testing
- Many miles of waterfront within city including the Merrimac
- Increased waterway activity in the Merrimac necessitating more supervisory activities
 - This could be a way to increase funding for Harbor ways/ Harbormaster Program
- Waterways are one of the most affected by global warming and should be addressed (i.e., Rise in water levels and endangered species such as mussels in ponds and lakes)
- Similar programs at all waterways locations
- Improvement of ADA accessibility at all lakes and rivers.

Lake Gardner

- Take “Beach Manager” one step further and duplicate at popular locations
- Cutting back of foliage aids patrols in viewing for any potential issues, this has had a positive response both from residents and patrols
- Recent tragedy and potential future problems at lakes and Sandbar in Merrimac

Aspirations

- Create a more cohesive program for all using Amesbury waterways to include environmental, and personal safety and sustainability of our waterways
- Testing for “natural “pollutants (weeds etc) - to include Pond at City Park Pond
- Public Education is needed in personal water safety
- Education also needed on how to protect our waterways
- Consideration for wildlife and sustainability of the wildlife within our community
- Increased Harbormaster hours and activities related to boating within the city
- Identify Water Safety leader within community to help implement CPR and water safety instruction to include environmental safety issues

Lake Gardner

- Distinction between Boat launch and Handicap Ramps (sometimes handicap access used for (small) watercraft launching
- Incorporate ongoing program for foliage removal within DPW

Results

- Follow up meetings such as today
- Establishment of sub committees
- Establishment of maintenance
- Investigation into tapping into and obtaining resources from various State and Federal Agencies for clean-up and sustainment of clear/ clean waterways
- Coordination with State, Local and Federal agencies to attain goals of sustainably clean water
- Public Service teaching potentially with reps from waterway groups PH Dept of city
- Citywide personal water safety education courses tap into Pettingill and YWCA in Nbpt. Investigate other resources within the city
- Include wildlife activities in the description of the city and work more closely with wildlife (birders)
- Creation of a small “users fee” (sticker) for boaters using the Amesbury waterways, this could include motor and non-motorized craft. If a small (launch fee is used funds could be created to support waterways programs)

Lake Gardner

- Research needed into ability to improve access through recent State funding
- Reach out to YWCA in Nbpt.
- Reinstate swim instruction at Lake Gardner / ? Camp Kent
- Investigate State and Federal financial support for foliage removal / visibility if available