

OSRC Minutes 19 May 2021

Roll call to begin meeting. Members present: Heidi Wakeman (HW), Dave Sargent (DS), Noel Mann (NM), and Mark Poulin (MP).

Staff present: Gregg Cadematori (GC), Planning; Adrienne Lennon (AL), Conservation, along with Courtney Lewis (CL) and Mark Racicot (MR) of the Metro Area Planning Commission, MAPC.

HW, read standard remote participation/open meeting statement. She announced that Liam Anastasio-Murphy (LAM) has recently been approved as a new OSRC member. We still have one opening we would like to fill. LAM joined the meeting later in the proceedings, as did City staff member, Gemma Wilkins.

1. MAPC presentation. CL spoke while presenting a slide presentation titled, "City of Gloucester, Open Space and Recreation Plan". Presentation included a review of open house findings and draft questions for a forthcoming online community survey.

CL led a consideration of impressions, pros and cons on the open house. NM noted a recurrent comments about trash. Also, she noted overall contentment with the amount of open space.

CL redirected the conversation back to process and tech tools, rather than results.

HW was positive about the online open house and qualtrics survey tool, appreciated MAPC being accessible and responsive to questions. Community members seem pleased to be engaged and asked about open space. GC noted some problems with a link provided for the survey, but also that the issues were quickly remedied. Overall, he said, the survey was accessible and easy to use.

MP posted the link and flyer for the survey to a number of sports organizations. CL clarified that the term "open house" is used intentionally and distinguishes the virtual public meeting discussion from a directed survey.

CL then reviewed the open house findings. 44 participants in the real time presentation. There 192 respondents too the questionnaire, 128 of them completing all of the questions. Respondents:

- (98%) Parks and open spaces are important, very important, or most important.
- Came from every precinct and ward. 14% of respondents live outside Gloucester.
- 53% came from households with someone 65 or older. 31% included children under 18.
- 55% have lived in Gloucester for 21 or more years.
- 71% are female. Most are caucasian.
- Most are reliant on social media or the newspaper for information about parks and open space.

- Most feel there are adequate parks and conservation areas within walking distance of their homes. Ward 2-1 respondents feel more isolated from parks and conservation lands.
- 54% drive a car to parks and open space. Some indicated that they would walk or cycle if pedestrian and cycling infrastructure were improved.
- Good Harbor Beach, Ravenswood Park, and Dogtown topped the list of favorite areas. Availability of parking affects respondents' use of open space.
- Noted the following priorities for open space:
 - Acquire lands for conservation
 - Maintain existing parks and facilities.
 - Acquire lands for storm surge and sea level rise protection
 - Improve access to parks and facilities through trails, sidewalks, bike lanes and safer crossings.
 - Acquire lands for parks and recreation facilities in areas that current lack access.
- Supported continuing the set of goals from the previous OSRP and suggested a number of new goals for the new plan.

CL continued with more notes on process. Based on input from the Open House process, we should describe our values, goals, and priorities. Our upcoming survey may focus the discussion a bit more; e.g., getting more detail on park features, amenities, and activities that are preferred. Young Legends Youth Hockey and Backyard Growers Garden club contacted CL to affirm their interests.

GC started the follow-up discussion by noting that there were too few student-age respondents or those who seemed to be speaking for children. Also, he noted that the aspirations of the respondents would cost a lot to implement, and the upcoming survey should include some willingness-to-pay questions.

AL suggested a prioritization-type question that would ask the public to suggest the top priorities for the OSRC to work on. DS agreed and suggested we have "goals" but that we need implementation strategies and certain priorities. CL suggested we identify easy wins to gain traction, and that we invest in developing a cadre of volunteers, and refinements to existing open spaces and parks. CL stated a target timeline for his development of survey questions and a review period by the OSRC, towards initiating the survey in June 2021. GC asked if MAPC would optimize the survey for smartphones. CL assured him that the survey would work on most platforms, accessible via QR code. The survey should take less than 10 minutes. These latter technology points had to do with making the survey accessible to younger people, especially students.

Mayor Sefatia Romeo-Thekken joined the meeting. She expressed support for introducing the survey via the schools. She asked if the survey would be available in languages other than English. She offered to forward the survey to people in the community who lead youth sports. Building upon the mayor's remarks, CL discussed a plan for outreach to a wide variety of community groups that may be interested in the survey. CL and AL and others discussed timing of next steps. The next OSRC meeting will be on 30 June and the survey results should be compiled and analyzed before that. A second forum would be slated for mid-July.

NM expressed concern about the completeness and correctness of the inventory of lands. GC said that city staff are working to fill in missing information and to identify acquisition and conservation opportunities. HW thanks the MAPC staff for their work in advancing our draft plan.

With the departure of MAPC staff, HW introduced LAM as a new member and he said a few words about himself. She also introduced staff GPS specialist Gemma Wilkins (GW). GW shared two slides with the committee documenting her progress in mapping open space resources and data layers. Of the 13,000 tax assessment parcels, about 2,925 are possibly open space. Further analysis and filtering have trimmed the number a bit more. MP and NM will support the effort to identify priority parcels.

HW spoke about the Community Preservation fund cycle and urged OSRC members to review the CPA fun rules and priorities. NM spoke about the apparent absence of investment by the city in the use and ecology of Dogtown and the north Gloucester woods.

HW offered to have members of the public speak to the committee. The ZOOM recording of the meeting ends abruptly at that moment, 2:00:03 on clock.