

2020 West Newbury Open Space Town Report



To the Board of Selectmen:

The Open Space Committee (OSC) met regularly during the 2020 fiscal year. Members met in person until March, 2020 when COVID-19 forced committees and boards to assemble remotely. This report summarizes its accomplishments and challenges from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020.

The preservations of Brown Spring Farm and the River Road Preservation Area highlighted 2020. River Road was acquired by Essex County Greenbelt in October, 2019 and paid for from Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds and donations. That was followed by the purchase of an agricultural preservation restriction on Brown Spring Farm, which was sold to farmer Chris Grant in late December. Also in February, the OSC voted to cosponsor with Greenbelt a request for \$175,000 in CPA funds toward preserving 38 acres comprising the Artichoke River Woods Preservation Area. Besides offering great recreational opportunities, conserving this land will help protect the town's wells. Town residents approved the request at town meeting in June. The OSC also submitted a town meeting warrant article for Article 97 protection for 116 acres of town-owned property at Brake Hill.

The creation of an All-Access trail was hatched over the course of several meetings. Under consideration were short stretches of the River Trail in Riverbend and the trail/roadway along Mill Pond. Specifications such as a hard pack surface and gentle grades allow people of all ages and abilities to enjoy West Newbury open spaces.

The OSC sponsored its first walk to identify invasive species in the town as part of an effort to combat climate change and promote native plants. This was the first step in creating a standing committee dedicated to the eradication of invasive species. Instruction was offered about how to use a smart phone app, iNaturalist, which enables users to share information about biodiversity and learn about nature. In the same vein, members of the OSC worked with the Dept. of Public Works to establish a town field mowing schedule that preserves pollinators and native plants critical to a balanced environment.

The OSC proposed the part time position of trail manager to oversee maintenance of the town's extensive trail network. As such, the Board of Selectman approved a two-hour a week position.

The OSC submitted a lengthy letter detailing the potential damage to open space and wetlands by the massive 40B project proposed for Coffin St.

Visit:
wnewbury.org/open-space-committee



Respectfully submitted,

John Dodge, chairman

