

TOWN OF NEWINGTON
OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

January 11, 2024 - 6:30 P.M.

Town Council Chamber, Room 103 - Town Hall, 200 Garfield St.
This meeting will be presented as a Zoom Webinar/Hybrid Meeting.
Information on how to attend will be posted on the Town website at:
<https://www.newingtonct.gov/virtualmeetingschedule>

AMENDED AGENDA

I. ROLL CALL

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

III. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

IV. ADOPTION OF REGULAR MEETING DATES 2024

Documents:

[2024 PROPOSED OS MEETING SCHEDULE.PDF](#)

V. PUBLIC COMMENTS

VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Approval Of Minutes From Regular Meeting 10.12.23

Documents:

[OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE MINUTES 10.12.23.PDF](#)

VII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Criteria For The Acquisition Of Open Space

Documents:

[OPEN_SPACE_ACQ_CRITERIA 1-11-24.PDF](#)

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

IX. COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS

X. ADJOURN

**2024 Meeting Schedule
Open Space committee**

Meets quarterly on the 2nd Thursday at 6:30 p.m.

Apr 11	July 11	Oct 10	Jan 09, 2025
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**NEWINGTON OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE
Meeting Minutes
October 12, 2023**

Chair Gia Pascarelli called the regular meeting of the Newington Open Space Committee to order at 6:30 pm in Town Council Chambers, Room 103 of the Newington Town Hall, 200 Garfield Street, Newington, CT. This was a hybrid webinar/meeting.

Commissioners Present:

- Gia Pascarelli
- Bernadette Conway
- Gail Budrejko
- Sandra Austin Goldstein
- Mitch Page

Town Staff Present:

- Paul Dickson, Town Planner
- Erik S. Hinckley, Asst. Town Planner / ZEO

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 Town Clerk

I. ROLL CALL

The presence of the above members was noted.

II. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Commissioner Budrejko’s motion to accept the agenda as presented was seconded by Commissioner Austin Goldstein, and approved unanimously. (Pascarelli, Conway, Budrejko, Austin Goldstein, and Page)

III. Election of Officers

A. Election of Secretary

Commissioner Conway’s nomination of Commissioner Conway as secretary was seconded by Commissioner Budrejko. No other nominations were made, and the nomination was closed unanimously. (Pascarelli, Conway, Budrejko, Austin Goldstein, and Page)

IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. April 13, 2023

Commissioner Budrejko’s motion to approve the minutes as presented was seconded by Commissioner Conway, and approved unanimously. (Pascarelli, Conway, Budrejko, Austin Goldstein, and Page)

VI. NEW BUSINESS

a. Criteria For the Acquisition Of Open Space

Town Planner Dickson introduced the list of acquisition criteria, which has been narrowed down through working with the Commission. The level of priority and interest weights the criteria. Mr. Dickson then displayed and presented the rough draft to discuss the criteria for acquiring open space. He noted that the list is a rough draft and open for edits and discussion.

The document's purpose was discussed as an opening statement of priorities for Newington as our highest priority. The criteria could be broken down further into a rubric for grading possible parcels for acquisition.

The document's purpose was further discussed by the committee, as well as the possibility of bringing the document before the Town Council in the future. Mr. Dickson noted that, at this point, the document is the Committee's document and could be brought forward to the Council in the future.

The past process of purchasing Newington open space properties was discussed, and there was a suggestion to look at ways properties were acquired in the past and look for creative ways to acquire properties in the future.

Discussion continued on the criteria in regard to the content. It is presented regarding the public-facing document, which may be more general and digestible. In contrast, the Committee could maintain a second document with all the bullet points. The content of the criteria and its applicability to grants was discussed.

The Committee continued to discuss the criteria, notably the preservation of Cedar Mountain and additional criteria regarding ecology and pollinator pathways. The opportunity to collaborate with other town committees and agencies to repopulate areas with indigenous plants to increase pollinator pathways and habitat was discussed.

The Cedar Mountain trap rock ridgeline and its importance to the habitat and the community were discussed. Past surveys were also discussed regarding the preservation of open space being a top priority and the incorporation of these surveys, the history of preservation, and Newington's preserved resources into the document.

The level of development of Newington in regard to its surrounding communities and the state was discussed, and the opportunity to include this in the document. The Committee discussed the process and how this document and criteria could be worked into other regulations, such as the Zoning Regulations.

The Committee discussed the importance of open space, the value it provides, and how it is marketed to current and future residents. Mr. Dickson presented the grant criteria and discussed how it related to the proposed draft. The Committee discussed the plans for the document and its incorporation into other Town documents.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

VIII. COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS

Commissioners Budrejko and Conway commented on the updated list.

IX. Adjourn

Commissioner Budrejko's motion to adjourn the meeting was seconded by Commissioner Austin Goldstein, and approved unanimously (Pascarelli, Conway, Budrejko, Austin Goldstein, and Page). The meeting was adjourned at 7:47 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Dickson
Town Planner

Criteria for the Acquisition of Open Space

The Town of Newington is highly developed, with nearly 90 percent of the land area developed or committed. With little remaining open space, the parcels have considerable significance with regard to the opportunity to enhance and expand existing open space. The community's desire to preserve open space is exemplified in surveys ranking it as the top community issue in the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) and the annual Town Community Assessment Survey. Preserving open space can help protect environmentally sensitive areas, provide wildlife habitat, preserve land for recreational uses, protect community character, and enhance quality of life.

Open space is considered land free from intense development and where the natural or cultural characteristics of the landscape are predominant. The POCD identifies the existing dedicated and managed open space and sets forth the following goals and objectives for acquiring additional open space.

- Create a Town-wide open space network.
- Protect environmentally sensitive areas.
- Protect the small-town character that is here now and provide a sense of space and relief from intensive development.

Purpose of Open Space Selection Criteria

The Open Space Committee wishes to establish open space selection criteria for the orderly acquisition of open space. The following documents and policies should guide the criteria: Newington's Plan of Conservation and Development, Connecticut Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program (established pursuant to C.G.S. §§7-131d to 7-131k, inclusive), Open space corridor (Greenways) program established pursuant to Public Act 95-335, and the Recreation and Natural Heritage Program (as amended by Public Act 98-157).

Newington's criteria for open space will strategically align with 'The Green Plan,' thereby contributing to Connecticut's statewide open space objectives, where municipalities hold a pivotal role. As the committee prepares these criteria, it aims to take into consideration state-provided funding opportunities. This commitment not only supports the State's vision for a diverse and accessible environment but also significantly contributes to establishing a framework for future funding of open space projects through grants.

Proposed Criteria for the Town of Newington

Open space provides many environmental, economic, and cultural functions and benefits. To evaluate the benefit of acquiring a particular property, the Town must determine which of these functions provides the most significant benefit.

Not all properties are available for purchase at the same time. Thus, the opportunity for a specific acquisition could be lost. Priority must be given to properties that meet the criteria

when they become available for purchase. It is recognized that these criteria may be subject to differing interpretations and weight, depending on the nature and circumstances of various opportunities to acquire open space. The following functions of open space and other strategic aspects should be considered in identifying high-priority lands for acquisition. Potential open space should **provide a valuable resource for recreation, wildlife habitat, forestry, fishing, or other natural resource initiatives**. The criteria below are grouped relative to the benefits they provide and are often intrinsically linked.

1) Natural Resource Protection Open Space Functions

a) Habitat

- Protect the habitat of plant and animal species that are threatened, endangered, or of special concern.
- Protect native ecological communities that are unique or uncommon and represent relatively undisturbed native ecology.
- Protect and enhance wildlife corridors, including preserving open space and agricultural land that aids wildlife migration including pollinator pathways.

b) Natural Systems

- Protect lands that preserve high-quality natural waters and drinking water resources.
- Protect natural lands with high carbon storage/sequestration value, such as core forests and wetlands.
- Protect a naturally occurring feature such as a river, stream, ridgeline, inland wetland, estuary, or geological feature such as the Cedar Mountain traprock ridge.
- Protect sites with steep slopes and sites that protect against soil erosion.

2) Quality of Life Improvements, including recreation and education opportunities

- a) Provide high-quality, passive, or active recreational uses.
- b) Provide a linkage between existing open space, create or contribute to a developing or existing greenway, and offer recreation or non-motorized transportation opportunities.
- c) Preserve and enhance local agricultural heritage.

3) Strategic Planning and Objectives

- a) Preserving open space in the Cedar Mountain Desirable Open Space Area.
- b) Protecting habitats vulnerable to climate change, such as forested swamps, areas near freshwater wetlands, core forests, and riparian lands near cold water streams.
- c) Ensuring the site's ability to be perpetually preserved, predominantly in its natural, scenic, and open state.
- d) Assessing the impact on existing businesses, homes, or other establishments, considering potential displacement.
- e) Evaluating development pressure on the parcel.
- f) Gauging the required investment and physical alterations to the property's natural systems to enable passive outdoor recreation.