

**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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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