



Medfield Conservation Commission

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Open Space and Recreation Plan

The Conservation Commission is proposing a FY 2023 Warrant Article seeking \$25,000 to fund consultant work necessary to update and obtain state approval of the next iteration of the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan.

An Open Space and Recreation Plan has an approval life of up to seven years. The Town's current Open Space and Recreation Plan approval will expire in November 2022, and the Town will need to submit an updated and revised version of the Open Space and Recreation Plan to the State to obtain approval status for a new, seven-year period.

A state-approved Open Space and Recreation Plan supports the award of funds to the Town pursuant to specific grant types and, in addition to the purposes outlined below, helps the Town identify and manage its open spaces and develop a vision of how these integrate with other Town resources. A well-developed plan requires support and input from various stakeholders including the Select Board, Park and Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission, Department of Public Works, Public Safety, Cemetery Commission, and other public and private interests. Medfield is fortunate to have had an Open Space and Recreation Plan since at least 1974, and the various iterations of those plans over the years amply demonstrate the increasing need for technical assistance in the preparation of the next version of the Open Space and Recreation Plan. The State's approval process increasingly reflects the Commonwealth's efforts to encourage towns to respond to new federal and state statutes that redefine how we interact with and use open spaces and recreational areas.

Medfield is fortunate to have so many open space and recreation resources. Our rivers, streams, ponds, lakes, forests, farmland, fields, meadows, wildlife habitats, parks, and recreational spaces combine to create the character of our community and support the health and wellbeing of our residents. These natural resources not only offer aesthetic and recreational values, but they are an integral part of the Medfield infrastructure that supports the continued financial vitality of our town. A state-approved Open Space and Recreation Plan is a key component in protecting these resources as it provides the Town with a comprehensive, data driven tool that documents existing resources and identifies priority development, access, inclusion, and diversity goals for the community.

Examples of goals our Open Space and Recreation Plan can address include:

1. Preserving the Town's rural appeal,
2. Protecting the Town's water resources,
3. Identifying and developing links between existing and potential open spaces,
4. Identifying inclusion, access, and diversity opportunities,
5. Identifying climate change and sustainability goals,
6. Increasing awareness and use of existing open space by improving access, maintaining and expanding trails, and developing and publishing information about the Town's open spaces,
7. Investigating potential recreational opportunities,

8. Exploring funding mechanisms (i.e.: private and public grants, town funding, partnership with private entities and others) for open space projects including possible related facilities,
9. Revisiting the Community Preservation Act, and
10. Coordinating the Open Space and Recreation Plan with the Town's Master Plan.

More specifically, the funding for a consultant will not only coordinate the preparation of Medfield's OSRP based on the most current available information/data about Medfield, but also address the following standard elements:

- Regional context, population characteristics and growth/development patterns
- Identification, mapping and analysis of natural resources, and an environmental inventory
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Self Evaluation Report including an evaluation of accessibility to the Towns open space and recreational facilities and any Transition Plans.
- Goals and objectives and a detailed 7 (seven) year action plan, including land acquisition
- Analysis of Medfield's resource protection and land management needs

The review should also develop the following components to the OSRP:

- Review the community's progress toward meeting its goals set in 2017
- Review other Town documents regarding recreation and open space including the 2020 Master Plan
- Development of a template for best land management practices
- Recommend budget for the maintenance of the Towns open space parcels
- The ADA Self-Evaluation requires an assessment determining accessibility to the community's recreation and conservation programs and properties for individuals with disabilities

The Master Plan approved by the Planning Board, October 2021, offers insight into the vision(s) residents have for Medfield. Many objectives were addressed in the Plan, several of which include bike and pedestrian connectivity, enhancement of open space, updating the recreational facilities, and others that can be found in the Townwide Master Plan. The TWMP indicated that seven parcels of private land totaling 186.54 acres, that could be preserved for open space, presents an opportunity to map, and target these for future purchase or a negotiated easement.

Other challenges observed in the TWMP include, but are not limited to following observations:

- The Town owns and maintains over 260 acres of athletic fields. The concerns raised were overuse and bookings seven days a week. Opportunity exists to obtain or develop more land to expand the number of fields. McCarthy Park was an example.
- The Parks and Recreation Department budget has not increased in several years. However, demands for services, including grounds maintenance continues to increase.
- The Town has attempted to pass the Community Preservation Act three times without success. Funding through the CPA can support expansion of the recreational facilities, open space maintenance and stewardship, as well as monies required for consultancy on projects that require outside review and expertise.
- The Medfield Park and Recreation Commission hired Hunden Strategic Partners in 2017. The study offered insight into the market and the financial feasibility of a community recreation center. The impetus of the study was the limited size and aging condition of the Pfaff Center. The study concluded that the center was inadequate, and a new facility was warranted. A new facility with indoor and outdoor programs, with expanded space and programming, projects departmental revenue to increase by 350% within three years of opening.

Our review of estimated costs associated with the preparation of an Open Space and Recreation Plan that will garner state approval include:

\$20,000	Town of Stoneham (ADA costs unknown, if any)
\$37,000	Town of Walpole (inclusive of ADA Review)
\$25,000	Town of Norfolk (ADA costs unknown, if any)
\$40,000	Town of Sudbury (additional \$20,000 for ADA Assessment)
	Town of Franklin (in-house completion)

When the Open Space and Recreation Plan is approved by the Commonwealth, this provides Medfield eligibility to participate in grant applications associated with the Department of Conservation Services, for up to seven years. Several examples of grant types include, but are not limited to PARC, LAND, ORLPP and the Drinking Water Supply Grant.

The Conservation Commission is continuing its due diligence and investigating the estimated costs associated with production of an Open Space and Recreation Plan. We expect that additional information will support the requested Warrant Article Request of \$25, 000.