

2022 Annual Report for Open Space Committee

Activities in the past year of the Open Space Committee continued to progress the recommendations of the Open Space Plan. The committee researched the conservation protections currently in place for the Town Forest. The deeds to the five parcels that make up the original Town Forest lands dated back to the 1920's and 30's and were obtained to investigate whether these parcels are protected by Article 97 under the Smith v. Westfield case. Town Council was asked to review the official history of all land acquisitions in the Town Forest. The OSC is awaiting a final memo recommending action to be taken for future conservation protection.

At the Fall Town Meeting on October 25, 2022, the Town adopted new language in the General bylaws designating the Open Space Committee as an official town committee. The committee is to be made up of seven members appointed to two-year staggered terms whose purpose is oversight of implementation of the Open Space and Recreation Plan. Additionally, a budget of \$3000 was approved via vote at the April 17, 2022 Town Meeting to be used for tree removal.

The field near Emory Street (also known as Carriage Town Park) has been identified by the committee as a suitable space to develop accessible community gardens and other recreational facilities to foster a sense of community in Merrimac. The BOS was in favor of surveying members of the community concerning possible uses for this space.

For community engagement activities, the Committee sponsored an ecologist-lead walk in the Spring on the McLaren and Marshview Trails with focus on flora and fauna. In the Fall the committee conducted a trail maintenance day for major trails in the Town Forest. Trails were re-blazed using paint to minimize plastic and harm to the trees and new trail signs were posted. The Winter Street kiosk was refreshed. New maps have been requested from MVPC to reflect the updated trail system. Several downed trees were cleared by the committee. Planning is underway for an Edibles Walk with a local **ecologist** to be held in the Fall of 2023.

The Committee also educated the community on open space resources and needs by hosting a booth at Old Home Days and maintaining an informative and frequently updated web page link from the Town website.

Thank you to our volunteers who help us monitor and maintain the trails.

Respectfully submitted by:

Carrie Rennie, Chair

Lucy Abisalih, Vice Chair

Dawn Ackerman

Mary Ann Glennon (Appointed March 2022)

Jennifer Mansfield (Appointed March 2022)

Brian Mulvany (Appointed March 2022)

Susan Simmons

Sandra Venner