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Barney S. Heath
Director

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 15, 2020

TO: Councilor Crossley, Chair of the Zoning and Planning Committee
Members of the Zoning and Planning Committee
Peter Doeringer, Chair of the Planning and Development Board
Members of the Planning and Development Board

FROM: Barney Heath, Director of Planning and Development
Jennifer Steel, Chief Environmental Planner

RE: **#178-20 Adoption of the Open Space and Recreation Plan Update**
DIRECTOR OF PLANNING requesting discussion of the 2020-2027 Open Space and Recreation Plan, a letter stating that the Zoning and Planning Committee reviewed the Plan, and adoption of the plan as an amendment to the 2007 Comprehensive Plan.

MEETING DATE: May 14, 2020

CC: Luis Perez-Demorizi, Open Space Coordinator
Nicole Banks, Commissioner of Parks, Recreation, and Culture
Jonathan Yeo, Chief Operating Officer
Gabriel Holbrow, Community Planner

Thank you all for your contributions at the May 7th joint ZAP/P&D public hearing/public meeting. There were a few issues raised at the meeting that are being addressed and will be reflected in the next draft.

Strategic Implementation Team

Crafting this update of the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) has been a huge task as the team worked to develop a clear picture of the City's open space resources and a clear vision for the future.

An OSRP lays a foundation for implementation and provides general guidance for the City and it satisfies a state requirement for future grant funding; an OSRP is not intended to be a detailed implementation plan. This OSRP update follows the outline required by the state. It provides baseline information and databases; it spells out broad visions; and it identifies goals, objectives, and actions desired or intended to be undertaken over the next seven or more years. The OSRP is not intended to be a detailed implementation plan for individual actions or projects. The details of implementation will require in-

depth analyses of priorities and budget capabilities, metrics of priority and success, careful prioritization, the detail action plans, community engagement, and partnerships. Implementation will, therefore, require lots more input from City staff, engaged citizens, and area experts.

The concept of the OSRP implementation management team was intended to mimic the highly effective Climate Action Plan (CAP) implementation management team: a team of City staff most intimately involved with implementation, who collectively have been tasked with helping to ensure that the CAP gets implemented. Members of that team meet regularly as group, have each taken the lead on individual aspects of the CAP, and have created working groups on individual efforts that involve citizens and experts, as needed. This team is charged with reporting progress to the Mayor and to City Council on a regular basis. The CAP implementation team efforts have been evolving as dedicated staff and engaged citizens work together to determine the most effective ways to accomplish the goals and objectives of the CAP. The crafters of the OSRP anticipate a similar genesis, and evolution, as the OSRP strategic implementation team gets established and develops pathways forward. The language of the OSRP will be edited to reflect this.

Prioritization of Actions

As noted above, this OSRP update is not intended to establish distinct priorities for all 117 proposed actions. Decisions about the timing and funding of individual actions/projects will be made with the help of the implementation team and the City departments/commissions that will be responsible for funding and overseeing those actions/projects. This OSRP update will serve as guidance to many more detailed discussions and deliberations in the future.

The language of the OSRP will be edited to appropriately reflect the current uncertainty of the timing of individual projects.

Efficient Management of Open Space Resources

The OSRP tried to reflect the interest of City staff, the OSRP Advisory Committee, and members of the public who noted that there may be opportunities to improve efficiencies in the land management and maintenance responsibilities of Conservation and Parks, Recreation & Culture (PRC). It was felt that the City should always strive to evaluate its operations and seek improvements in efficiency through open-minded, forward-looking discussions including evaluations of needs, capabilities, bidding, contracting and oversight. There is no assumption that current land management responsibilities be changed.

The language of the OSRP will be edited to remove specific suggestions for consideration and will simply note the interest in ensuring that such conversations about coordination and efficiency are held.

Public Comment

Below, as requested, are summaries of the comments from the public received to date:

- Provide permanent protection for Cold Spring Park and other city parks (this same comment was received from a number of residents)
- Complete the stone dust renovation of the Cold Spring Park Life Course trail (this same comment was received from a number of residents)
- Develop and implement priority plans to greatly reduce invasive species
- Elevate the desire for legal protections for parks
- Elevate the importance of investment in the improvement, maintenance and protection of recreation, green and open spaces, including but not limited to] natural areas, athletic fields, parks,

[the city's outdoor pool,] water resources, and the urban tree canopy. Athletic fields were top-ranked as a concern and yet aren't discussed in detail.

- Elevate the fact that nearly 70% of respondents said that the quality of parks were poor
- Eliminate the idea of transferring management of Bullough's Pond away from the PRC.
- Establish a coalition of "Friends" groups to work together and seek multiple sources of funding.
- Ensure that all laws and plans address the need for trees, habitats and an end to fossil fuel consumption
- Consider the possibility of converting Landfill area on Pine Street to a recreational area
- Consider Pine St lot, next to the Burr School, for cleanup and conversion to park, playing field, etc.
- Provide protected bike lanes on south-to-north routes in the city
- Connect Memorial Spaulding Sch. to Kennard Park via a multi-use shared path along to Dudley Rd
- Provide a sidewalk on Nahanton Street (with Nahanton Park and Heyn Conservation area and Cutler Park on the other)
- Quinnoque Road needs safer access
- Provide a sidewalk along Vine Street for safe access to Kessler Woods from Oak Hill neighborhood
- Provide a pedestrian crossing on the Sudbury Aqueduct over the T tracks next to the Eliot T station
- Lobby the golf courses for PILOT payments and suggest voluntary donation of CRs on portions of the golf courses
- Acknowledge Newton's Age Friendly designation

Please note that at the request of the public and City Councilors, the public comment period will remain open until May 18th.

We look forward to the discussion on May 19th.

Electronic Link: City of Newton Open Space and Recreation Plan 2020-2027, dated 4/30/20

<http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/planning/lrplan/os/default.asp>