

2010 Annual Report Sterling Open Space Implementation Committee

The Open Space Implementation Committee (OSIC) updates the town's Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP). A state-approved Open Space Plan makes the town eligible for many state and federal grants involving historic preservation, open space acquisition, and development of recreation facilities. An approved Open Space Plan also improves the town's Commonwealth Capital Score; important criteria for state grant eligibility regarding transportation and development. Finally the Open Space Plan constitutes a major element for a Town Master Plan. Sterling has not had a Master Plan since the 1960's. Completion of the Open Space Plan is a major step towards completion of a Master Plan, should Sterling decide to go forward with this endeavor.

OSIC also works with town boards and related local and regional conservation or agricultural entities to implement the recommended actions in the Plan addressing town natural resource, recreation, and management needs.

State Approves Sterling's OSRP Update -- The highlight of 2010 for the Committee was final state approval of the Sterling Open Space and Recreation Update. At the end of February, OSIC submitted a revised 7-year Action Plan to the state Division of Conservation Services and by the end of March had submitted a final update of the entire Open Space and Recreation Plan. In May of 2010, the town's update and 7-Year Action Plan on the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) was approved by the state Division of Conservation Services. Copies of the final plan were burned on to CD disks and a limited number of hard copies were distributed to the Board of Selectmen, Recreation Department, Conservation Commission, Planning Board and 2 copies to the Public Library. The plan was also posted on the Sterling website and announced in both the Meetinghouse News and the Holden Landmark newspapers.

Other Activities:

Conservation/Recreation Guide and Mapping Effort – With the OSRP Update approval, OSIC turned its attention resuming the previous project of a guide (online) to Conservation and Recreation areas open to the public. Some members are interested in creating guides with maps on these properties, while others are gathering baseline data on public properties open to recreation.

Support Letter for MassHistoric Grant – In April, OSIC submitted a letter of support for a grant application being made to MassHistoric for funding the repairs at the American Legion Post #189. This would be the second phase of a rehabilitation project concerning the flooring structure of this historic building. This letter is in keeping with the Sterling Open Space and Recreation Plan's goal to support efforts to protect historic buildings—this building is located in a designated Historic District. The Legion ultimately withdrew this grant application as they were not as fully prepared to go

forward with the full project. The Legion did receive a smaller grant which allowed them to make some minor, but critical flooring repairs.

PARC Grant Support Letter – OSIC provided information and suggestions to the SPARC park group as it prepared a grant request request to the Division of Conservation Services (PARC grant) for equipment to finish the final stage of the play area. OSIC also provided a letter of support for this grant in July. Again, this action is in alignment with the Open Space and Recreation Plan’s goals regarding the need for supporting recreational facilities in town. Unfortunately, funding did not come through for this project.

Ethics Training for Committee Chair and Members —New regulations regarding Ethics and the Open Meeting Laws required training that Chair Marion Larson attended during the winter. All Committee members were notified to take the online training.

Government Study Committee Interview—In March, the Government Study Committee as part of its charge to assess town boards and committees submitted a questionnaire to OSIC and later interviewed the Chair as a follow-up to the questionnaire.

Committee Membership – Bob Authur has joined OSIC having expressed an interest in assisting the Committee on trail maps on lands open to the public for recreation. The Committee has lost Conservation Commission member Sue Valentine as a member. Her presence, experience, and information about Con Comm activities will be missed. It is hoped that someone else on the Conservation Commission will fill her place.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marion E. Larson
Chairman, Open Space Implementation Committee