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GOAL A: Identify and seek to preserve significant open space, cultural, and recreational resources that will sustain the quality of life within the town.

Objective 1: OSIC interfaces with other town entities.

OSIC sees interactive communication and effort with other town boards and local groups as critical to accomplishing the goals and objectives of this plan. Formal sign-off procedures in decisions regarding the Town's right of first refusal in land transfers and changes of use will ensure that multiple town entities will have the opportunity to evaluate the lands. OSIC is interested in seeing the Town develop a Comprehensive Master Plan and to develop innovative growth management strategies, but encourages the town to spearhead these efforts.

Objective 2: Identify and prioritize lands/properties of significant natural, agricultural, recreational, and cultural value

Based on knowledge gained while implementing the goals and objectives of the prior OSRP, OSIC will develop criteria for ranking its priorities for targeted acquisition, passive and recreation, access, or other land and resource protection. Among these criteria will be consistency between the affordable housing production strategies and the goals and objectives of the open space and recreation plan. These priorities will aid the Town in evaluating lands crucial to the current vision for open space protection and recreational opportunities. Concurrently the committee will identify sources of funding for land acquisition and/or strategies to improve public access. The committee will support the Town in working with landowners to either protect land for agriculture, access, or conservation purposes, or encourage environmentally sensitive development (such as Open Space Residential Design) with the least impact on open space and with considerations given to set aside land and/or provide easements for agriculture, conservation, and/or recreation.

Goal B: Develop a master plan for East Lake Waushacum that addresses watershed protection, pollution control measures, and town resident recreational opportunities.

Objective 1: Explore the requirements for establishing a watershed district.

Given the complexity of water quality management problems affecting the lake, the Conservation Commission, the East Lake Waushacum Association, and OSIC plan to explore the requirements for establishing a watershed district for the lake, to serve as a vehicle for management of nutrient enrichment, siltation control, and non-point source pollution, and to protect the upland watershed and wildlife habitats from encroachment.

Objective 2: Gather information on existing surveys of biodiversity, water quality, and other metrics, of the lake watershed resources.

The Conservation Commission, the East Lake Waushacum Association, and OSIC will compile existing surveys on biodiversity, water quality, and other metrics of the lake watershed resources in support of establishing a watershed district and strategies to address water quality concerns to be funded through grant opportunities.

Objective 3: Coordinate efforts of the Recreation Department, Conservation Commission, ELWA, Police, and the DPW to enhance and improve recreational opportunities on the lake.

These entities all recognize the nature of threats to the lake and see interdependence as a means to pool their resources and tackle multiple levels of problems, both at the Sholan Park and its boat landing, and around the lake.

Objective 4: Investigate funding opportunities for infrastructure improvements for critical areas at East Lake Waushacum, such as the Community Development Block Grant Program, or the Lakes and Ponds Grant Program.

Using the Waushacum Village CDBG as a model for similar programs at the East Lake Waushacum, the Conservation Commission, East Lake Waushacum Association, and the Department of Public Works plan to identify and pursuing grant funding to address water quality issues at East Lake Waushacum (siltation and nutrient rich pollution), such as the DEP watershed protection and non-point source pollution programs and the DHCD Community Development Block Grant program. These groups plan to investigate strategies to improve the wastewater and stormwater infrastructure for critical areas at East Lake Waushacum, exploring the potential of improved technologies. OSIC will support these efforts through research prior grant applications that were not

funded and assess whether improvements can be made to these funding requests, as well as assisting with identifying funding opportunities.

GOAL C: Broaden local community and regional awareness of the value and importance of open space, and natural and cultural resource areas.

Objective 1: Develop programs that foster a sense of community and promote the value and importance of open space as well as natural and cultural resource areas.

OSIC hopes to promote public involvement in planning and implementing the open space and recreation vision by tapping local and regional resources to coordinate public information forums or workshops addressing a range of topics affecting the Town's development and natural resources, such as environmental concerns, pertinent conservation issues, capacity building, protecting agriculture, improving public access and HP accessibility, and trails development. OSIC will consider innovative strategies to involve Town residents in the planning process, taking advantage of the internet as an interactive forum tool, and a means of showing current recreation, conservation, scenic vistas, and historic resources and opportunities.

Objective 2: Support the role of Agricultural Commission in its efforts to sustain working farms through promotion of farmer's markets, harvest fairs, town fair, and other educational events.

OSIC plans to support the Agricultural Commission as it develops a map of the local farms that highlights what they sell and the local farming history. OSIC also plans to guide farmers to state resources aimed at building local markets for agricultural products, such as restaurants and cafés seeking to create farm to table experiences. Educating the public about the new agricultural bylaws would be part of the public education forums described in Objective 1.

GOAL D: Improve communication, planning, and coordination with related entities regarding open space and recreation needs and issues.

Objective 1: Share the Open Space and Recreation Plan goals with land trusts, adjoining towns, cultural groups, regional and state entities (such as watershed associations, lake associations, regional planning commissions, DCS-DWSP, etc), and other conservation organizations.

OSIC derived great value from its participation with regional partnerships such as the alliance with open space committees from neighboring communities, Wachusett Greenways, NRW, MRPC, CMRPC and WWLP and sees these partnerships as a valuable resource for its public participation program and capacity building efforts with potential to provide speaking engagements and planning charettes. They also offer the opportunity to coordinate on projects of regional concern.

Objective 2: Explore Alternatives for Water Quality Management and Mitigation at important water resources.

Given the sensitivity of valued water resources in the Town, OSIC will focus efforts on guiding appropriate development within the recharge area of the Wekepeke Aquifer, coordinating with neighboring communities to protect the water resources and the wildlife habitat of the Wekepeke Brook. OSIC efforts will also work with the Town to research water resource systems that support anticipated growth, such as new pumping stations, extensions of water mains to subdivisions in the upland areas, and the potential for connecting into the DCR-DWSP (MWRA) water system.

GOAL E: Enhance the variety, access, and maintenance of recreation areas and facilities.

Objective 1: Work with DCR-DWSP to promote appropriate recreational activities on DCR-DWSP lands.

To address persistent community perspectives that public access policies on state-owned watershed protection properties are too restrictive, OSIC will work with the DCR-DWSP to review its 2003 Wachusett Watershed Public Access Plan and consider possible changes to the 2013 plan; and will assist in fostering communication between the public and the DCR-DWSP. OSIC hopes to identify methods to appropriately publicize the public access opportunities available on DCR-DWSP lands, and will collaborate with the DCR-DWSP to develop appropriate outdoor educational activities on Wachusett watershed lands. DCR has expressed its intent to review its education plan and determine how it can better inform residents on existing opportunities to use DCR lands. DCR plans to update its public access plan in the next few years, affording opportunities for public comment.

Objective 2: Work with regional groups and partnerships to promote, develop, and maintain regionally connected trail linkages.

OSIC has fostered the development of and maintenance of a trail system linking protected parcels of land and existing trails affording regional connections with neighboring communities for several years and will continue to do so. OSIC will work with private landowners and holders of public easements to formally obtain permissions for access. As a means of publicizing the recreational opportunities these trails provide, OSIC will continue to facilitate development of maps of hiking trails and bicycle trails, and develop a guide book to Sterling recreational, conservation and historic resources, for both print and Town website publication.

Objective 3: Encourage and support efforts to develop neighborhood playgrounds and public access areas throughout the town.

Recreational interests expressed in the public survey included creating an off road bicycle (BMX and/or ATB) trail system and a skating park for kids and novice riders, a dog friendly park and trail system, community based passive recreation space near a senior center, and access improvements to the Town Common area. OSIC will offer its support to the Recreation Department in creating a general plan to develop these recreation activities, through facilitating conversations with regional entities who can also support these efforts. Capitalizing on current efforts by SPARC at the newly developed, handicap accessible Sterling Greenery Community Park on Muddy Pond Road, OSIC will offer support for enhancing connections linking the Sterling Greenery Community Park, the Houghton/Chocksett playing fields, the abutting Conservation Commission pine woods, the "Muddy Pond Sports Fields," and, possibly, the nearby DCR-DWSP parcels (including Muddy Pond), to create a more functional park-like atmosphere.

Goal F: Support development of an ADA Transition Plan for Open Space and Recreation resources in the town.

Objective 1: Encourage the Board of Selectmen (BOS) to appoint members to the ADA Review Committee.

Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act is a priority in this plan and to this end, OSIC plans to encourage the Board of Selectmen to appoint new members to the Commission on Disability, and to clarify the status and role of the review committee. To alleviate confusion and to facilitate implementation, OSIC will encourage the Board of Selectmen to enlist support from the Massachusetts Office on Disability and the Architectural Access Board as appropriate. Observing that meeting the needs of the disabled population to the standard required by State and Federal authorities is costly, OSIC plans to monitor the progress of House Bill 1965, which proposes to fund cities and towns to comply with ADA, as it progresses through the legislative process.

Objective 2: Pursue funding to develop and implement a Transition Plan incorporating recommendations for ADA improvements at selected sites.

OSIC will aid both the ADA Review Committee and the Recreation Department in pursuit of state and federal funding (such as the Community Development Block Grant Program) to develop and implement a Transition Plan incorporating recommendations for ADA improvements to conservation and recreation properties and programs.

Objective 3: Support ADA improvements to recreational facilities and programming.

OSIC will support both the ADA Review Committee and the Recreation Department in implementing a Transition Plan for ADA improvements to conservation and recreation properties and programs. OSIC will also collaborate with the Recreation Department as it hosts a regional workshop focusing on ways to make outdoor programming accessible.

GOAL G: Ensure timely updates, revisions, and implementation of the Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Objective 1: Provide ongoing support for the existence of an Open Space Implementation Committee.

Recognizing the difficulties associated with implementing an open space and recreation plan without a budget, OSIC will assess the costs involved in implementing actions in the 2009 plan, and in producing the next five year update, in order to develop a proposed five-year budget. Developing the five-year update to the plan places significant time constraints on the membership and its ability to implement goals and objectives in the current plan, and OSIC has identified a need to budget for consultant assistance to manage the workload. OSIC recognizes the constraints on Town resources and plans to develop a fundraising strategy that supports both operating expenses of

the committee and financing of its programming and protection strategies to further its objectives in recreation. Funding for planning efforts may be available through the Land Use Partnership Act, the Community Planning Act, or a hybrid of the two; and OSIC hopes to work with the Planning Board to assess the Town's position on these Acts as the legislature considers them.

Objective 2: Develop tools to support goals, objectives, and actions in the Action Plan.

Protecting land for conservation requires funding for purchasing land and conservation restrictions. OSIC plans to Develop a funding strategy that enables the Town to protect priority parcels when they become available. OSIC will coordinate with the Conservation Commission to educate Town residents about the Commonwealth Capital fund ranking process through public forums, and will encourage the Town to invest in the Conservation Land Acquisition Fund to enable the Town to protect appropriate parcels as they become available.

Numerous objectives under these goals would benefit from professional guidance and the Action plan recommended the use of consultants to assist in accomplishing the tasks. The Board of Selectmen, in reviewing the draft Plan recommended that the Town investigate the pros and cons, costs, and benefits of hiring a professional planner versus hiring outside consultant(s) for these tasks. To this end, OSIC will work with the newly hired HR Administrator to conduct such an assessment and will use as resources the experiences of other communities. Funding for such a position would need to rely on the Town Budget, supplemented with funding for administration of grants for specific tasks.