Open Space Committee

Work Group Meeting

September 2, 2026 – 5:00 P.M.

Simsbury Town Hall – Main Meeting Room

933 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury, CT 06070

MINUTES

I. Attendees were Chairwoman Susan Masino, Margery Winters, First Selectman Wendy Mackstutis, Helen Peterson, and Culture, Parks and Recreation Director, Tom Tyburski

II. Chair Masino called the meeting to order at 5:03pm.

III. Open Space Minutes

Approved without objection

IV. Simsbury Open Space draft

Still updating information with additional details and policies. We will include the draft version of the native plan policy and mowing policy. For some areas mowing in spring is preferred but it challenging due to mud conditions. Related to this, for some areas it was noted that a property could be mowed half of the area each year (preferred) OR the entire property every other year. Mapping would be needed to determine which properties would be suitable for which timing and kind of rotation.

V. Arboretum update

Additional details and materials were received from Michele Jenks about multiple topics, including the tree species and planting plans. We now identified the rest of the species except for one pine. Michele Jenks noted that while friends of Schultz Park could not take on an annual event associated with the Arboretum there was an offer from Bill Gleason, who is part of CT Notable Trees to do tours of the park. Volunteers with the Notable Tree Society came to evaluate the white fringe tree, which appears to be within the five largest in the state and will likely be added to their database. The weeping Norway Spruce is already in the CT Notable Tree database. This “tree tour” spurred the memories of Helen Peterson and Tom Tyburski about a Simsbury Tree Walk. It is searchable on the web and was a downtown tree walk that you could take with information provided via your phone. The previous information / site is no longer accessible. More information is needed about this, and

if perhaps this could be updated and advertised along with the Arboretum eventually. Susan Masino will check with Tom Roy the tree warden for further insight.

Michelle Jenks also noted that label removal is a priority for the trees that have the labels attached to them. They were part of a grant but have not worked out.

It was confirmed that we have more than enough trees (~40) on the list to qualify for a level one Arboretum (25 required). We have one pine that remains unidentified. We cut down a sugar maple and plan to allow a seedling to grow in its place, and there is a plan to plant a White Oak and a verified American chestnut. We have not included the shrubs yet in the inventory and that list is pending, not urgent.

Margery Winters offered to try and have someone update the map.

VI. Agricultural Policy Discussion:

Margery Winters asked if we were following our policy with annual soil tests, etc. and who would be responsible for that. It was also noted that the town manager's office is responsible for receiving the soil tests.

There was consensus that we would extract the policy/stewardship parts that are in the town's agricultural lease form and include that in the Simsbury open space document.

VII. Invasives:

Removal events ongoing via Simsbury Land Trust. The Simsbury Land Trust is reordering the invasives booklet and mobilizing it. Margery Winters offered to do more presentations.

Susan Masino's idea of an invasive team that could go out and evaluate someone's yard and identify and give advice to homeowners was rejected (liability, etc.) in favor of mobilizing a better PR campaign about invasives. Suggested culture, parks, and rec distribution, and using other town mechanisms like the Town Manager's Report, First Selectmen Newsletter.

VIII. Other business:

Susan Masino noted that she was sending suggestions re: zoning updates as an individual and would share with the Open Space Committee; Margery Winters said the Conservation Commission might write suggestions to zoning also.

IX. Events:

"The Lost Forests of New England" is the first film in the monthly Fall Old Forest series. All are on Thursdays and the first one is September 17 at the library. Reception 6 pm film at 6:30.

Susan Masino requested that Open Space Committee be a sponsor of showing a new film called Econoclast either at the library (awaiting response) or at the Grange on September 28. The Sustainability Committee was also asked about sponsoring and they will be discussing. The film time is not determined yet but it was noted that Monday evening clashes with the Board of Selectman meeting. There was consensus on sponsoring.

X. Adjourn:

Without objection the meeting was adjourned at 6:02 pm