# Open Space Committee

**Regular Meeting**

October 7, 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, Chair of Conservation, Tony Braz, Chair of Zoning Commission, Tyler Archer, Member At-Large, Helen Peterson, Member At- Large and Erin Leavitt-Smith, Planning Commission.

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

**III. Public Audience**- None

**IV. Open Space July 8, 2026 Minutes**

Ms. Peterson asked that the July minutes be amended to reflect that the "May 6, 2026" minutes were approved at that meeting. Mr. Archer asked that on Line 14 and Line 30 there is reference to an "eagle scout", however that should read "boy scout". Ms. Peterson also asked for a spelling error changed on line 59, the word should read "town".

**V. Simsbury Open Space draft**

Ms. Masino shared that there were two pieces they talked about last time, one was the agricultural lease policy and the subdivision policy that Mr. Archer brought up, they should be in this comprehensive document. She shared that the subdivision policy is already a Town policy so they will just copy and paste that in. For the agricultural lease policy, the main document is the lease agreement between the farmer, and the Town and the attachment is what they are expecting to be happening on the Town land and an RFP. She suggested that they just excerpt what ultimately ends up being the appendix because they aren't going to put in the RFP or lease agreement in the Open Space Plan, it would just be what are the policies for how they are taking care of the land. The policy they still have in draft form is the mowing policy. Ms. Winters shared that they should identify what the purpose of the fields are. At this juncture, they need to get a map to identify the fields. She thought it might be best to get together a group of the pollinator people and Audubon people to assist in making field use suggestions to the Town. The term practices or policy for the agricultural policy was discussed. Ms. Peterson commented that it is referred to as land use "practices" in the documents that exist so there should be some

consistency. Ms. Winters shared that one says "Agricultural Land Use Agreement Policy" and the other says "Town of Simsbury Agricultural Land Use Practices". She would hope, however, that it is a policy rather than a practice. Ms. Winters questioned if they need the Board of Selectmen to say it is a policy rather than a practice. Ms. Masino suggested they use whatever is on the document now and then when they present it they make a list of little tweaks. Ms. Winters shared that there are a list of measurables. Mr. Archer asked how many farm leases they currently have. Ms. Masino shared five. Ms. Leavitt-Smith commented that the Town is supposed to be ensuring that the farmers are compliant with the Agricultural Land Use Agreement. Mr. Archer shared that as long as it is Town policy and that gets attached to the lease, he doesn't think it matters what it is called. Mr. Braz shared that if they would like to add something with respect to tree maintenance or if there are things they would like to see from the conservation perspective they can send to he and George McGregor and they will send them on to the consultant and they will work them in as possible.

Ms. Masino shared that they talked about the mowing and native plant policies so they can include both of those drafts. Mr. Archer shared that he did catch that there are two references to the Agricultural Committee, if it doesn't exist, he suggest they replace it with something else for the time being. Ms. Leavitt-Smith suggested just to do Open Space. Ms. Winters suggested they could send it to Conservation. Ms. Leavitt-Smith asked if it was something Conservation would do. Ms. Winters commented that it is something that could be learned. Ms. Leavitt-Smith commented that they don't want to take things on that's out of the purview. Ms. Masino shared that "stewardship and soil health" are some of the purviews. Ms. Leavitt-Smith and Ms. Winters agreed that if that's the purview then it should go to Conservation. Ms. Masino asked with regard to the policy, are they just going to leave it "Agricultural Committee" and have it be part of Conservation. Ms. Leavitt-Smith and Ms. Winters commented to just change it to "Conservation". Ms. Masino stated that Mr. Archer brought up the subdivision item at the last meeting, she edited it after the last meeting and put subdivision up as number three as one of them as she believes they are Town code things. Mr. Archer commented that it just depends on how this is organized and where the subdivision requirement is, typically it is in Town Zoning Regulations or in the Town Subdivision Regulations, it might not be in the Town code. Ms. Leavitt-Smith believes it would be under Planning as she believes that the subdivision regulations talk about that.

Ms. Masino shared that she was going to turn in the list of properties that they had and maybe give them to the assessor, but she did not arrive in time. Ms. Leavitt-Smith asked if she was all set with the draft. Ms. Masino shared that if other people had edits, they could do that. She was going to try to wordsmith it a little bit more and at the bottom of the overview, she was going to put in a tagline and the website and then compile the documents, which are already existing, that is kind of the front piece and then there is the inventory. The inventory is a larger project. Ms. Leavitt-Smith shared that they have been talking about the inventory for months, do they know what they need to fix on the Open Space inventory list. Ms. Masino shared that she first wants everyone to agree that there are errors before telling Town staff they are doing something. She shared that there are some that are miscoded, but they haven't done that punch list yet.

## VI. Arboretum update

Ms. Winters shared that Michelle Jenks is working on some things, she wants to add and delete some things, so it is still a work in progress. Ms. Peterson asked if Ms. Winters had

contacted Mr. Powell. Ms. Winters shared that that was for a tree identification, the people who were supposed to identify it couldn't, so it is just going to be "Pinus SP". Ms. Masino shared that in the meantime, she did take a sample and brought it to a professor at Trinity, and she guarantees she is going to be able to identify it. Ms. Masino shared that this will not hold up the application process because they have more species than they need. They also have a person that will handle the annual event, which is one of their requirements. Ms. Winters will see where Michelle is on the paperwork. Ms. Masino shared they will be sending in two photos also and this will register the arboretum officially with the Morton Arboretum, which is the overarching body that oversees accredited arboreta and that gets them a level one designation and they just keep it in database and they send an update once every five years. She shared there are between 11-18 arboreta in Connecticut. Ms. Leavitt-Smith suggested reaching out to Simsbury Media once they receive the designation for some publicity.

## VII. Invasives

Ms. Winters shared she continues to do invasives with Simsbury Land Trust. They did some work on the Onion Mountain Trail, and they are going to go back to that one. The Land Trust made a booklet that they have mailed to everybody in Town. They would like to go in with the Town to reprint it. It would be the Open Space Committee, as they have a budget, and the Land Trust going half and half and then they could have the booklet available for every application that comes before Zoning and Conservation and Planning.

Ms. Leavitt-Smith made a motion to pay for half the reprinting of the invasive pamphlets up to $2500. Mr. Archer seconded the motion. The motion passed with all in favor.

## VIII. Zoning Regulations Update

Ms. Masino shared that she sent the Committee what she sent in, she wasn't sure if Conservation is going to send something in. Mr. Braz shared that it is his understanding that it has been shared with the consultants. Ms. Winters believes it wasn't shared with Conservation as she thought Brittany was going to bring it back to conservation. Mr. Braz shared that he would ask George McGregor as work remaining says "provide requirement standards" so it is on the radar screen. Ms. Winters shared that Conservation was going to review it and then send it as a recommendation. Mr. Braz suggested to email George McGregor and ask for an update.

Ms. Masino asked if the Committee had heard about the effort called the "Knotheads" over in the Canton area that is about knotweed. Ms. Winters shared that they asked her if they wanted to be a part of it.

Ms. Masino shared that she shared what she sent to Zoning. She also contacted Jamie to find out what sustainability sent in to see where there was overlap. She may send a follow up about critical habitats because most of sustainability's recommendations are about tree protection.

## IX. Other Business

Ms. Masino shared that she did contact Mr. Roy to see if he knew about the historic tree walk because she thought they could co-advertise the historic tree walk along with the arboretum downtown. She shared the Mr. Roy's recollection was it was QR codes that you get on your

cellphone and it will tell you what you are looking at and that it morphed into more of a history walk than a historic tree walk and that it is not functioning right now.

Ms. Masino shared that they have the confirmed American chestnuts in Town and they have been coming and collecting the nuts every year, she is unsure if they collected the nuts this year but it is too late to do so.

Ms. Peterson asked on the subject of impervious surface not being in the glossary. Mr. Braz shared that it is something they discussed, they got an update from the consultant as to where they are on drafting the revised regulations. He said if there is specific language the committee would like to see around that they can send it in to George McGregor. Ms. Masino shared she has been asking around for specific language that would help their zoning regulations in terms of what's the best language they can put in to protect their aquifers; however, she hasn't gotten any good answers yet. Mr. Braz commented they should have a final draft for consideration in February.

## X. Events

Ms. Masino shared that the next film in the Forest Film series is October 22 at the library with a reception beginning at 6:00 p.m.

## XI. Adjourn

Without objection the meeting was adjourned at 6:11 pm