

MEMORANDUM

TO: Conservation Commission
FROM: Maureen O'Meara, Town Planner
DATE: December 11, 2012
SUBJECT: Greenbelt Plan Update

Introduction

The 2007 Comprehensive Plan recommends that master plans, such as the Greenbelt Plan, be updated every 7 years. See the excerpt from the Comprehensive Plan below:

58. Review the master plans overseen by the Conservation Commission and the Fort Williams Advisory Commission every 7 years, to insure that the plans are being implemented appropriately.

The current Greenbelt Plan was adopted in 2001. Especially after most of the priority trail connections in the 2001 plan have been completed, the Conservation Commission is undertaking a new priority setting effort, which will include updating the Greenbelt Plan.

2001 Plan

The 2001 Greenbelt Plan has been consulted when the town evaluates opportunities to obtain additional public open space. The plan includes both policy guidance and recommendations for expansion of greenbelt trails into specific locations. The plan is organized to include the following:

- Summary
- Vision and Goals Statement
- Potential Trails Map
- Greenbelt Trail priorities and recommendations

The commission should discuss if this structure will be used for the new plan, especially in the context of the recently adopted Open Space and Greenbelt Management Plan and the anticipated recommendations from the Future Open Space Preservation Committee Report.

Factors to incorporate into a new plan

The 2001 Greenbelt Plan served as a jumping off point for a decade of Conservation Commission activism in expanding the greenbelt trail network and elevating the conditions and maintenance of the trails. The expectation is that the Greenbelt Plan update will provide similar guidance and inspiration. Some of the new elements that this plan should include are:

- Open Space and Greenbelt Management Plan - This plan was completed by the Conservation Commission and adopted by the Town Council in 2012. It sets out comprehensive management policies and responsible parties and includes an annotated inventory of town open space and updated greenbelt map. This plan should be one of the building blocks of the new Greenbelt Plan.
- FOSP - The Future Open Space Preservation Plan was completed in October 2012 and Town Council review will begin in January, 2013. If adopted essentially as drafted, there will be an expanded role for the Conservation Commission. The FOSP report recommends:
 5. FOSP recommends that the Conservation Commission duties and authority be revised as necessary to task it with primary responsibility for preparing and submitting open space evaluation and preservation recommendations to the Town Council. Conservation Commission membership should be increased to 9 to improve its capacity to perform its expanded duties.
- New trail map. The current Greenbelt Trails map includes trails and open space acquired since the 2001 plan was prepared. This expansion of the network will open up new opportunities to expand the greenbelt trail system.
- Maintenance capacity. Two years ago, the town funded a seasonal position at the Department of Public Works that has dedicated time to greenbelt maintenance. The Conservation Commission has witnessed a wholesale elevation of greenbelt trail conditions. This new capacity may open up new possibilities as the greenbelt trail system is reviewed in light of the new plan.

Draft Plan update Schedule

Below is a suggested workplan for completing the 2013 Greenbelt Plan.

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| December, 2012 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approve plan outline• Review/revise Vision statement (incorporate new factors as needed) |
|----------------|---|

- January, 2013 •Review/revise goals
(update/new factors)

- February, 2013 •Review current greenbelt map with 2001
recommended trail extensions,
•suggest new extensions, remove any extensions
(incorporate discussions with property owners, new
factors)

- March, 2013 •Review draft plan
•Approve map
•Identify top priorities

- April, 2013 •Recommend 2013 Greenbelt Plan to Town Council

2001 Greenbelt Vision Statement

Below is the 2001 statement:

**Vision and Goal Statement
Cape Elizabeth Greenbelt Plan**

Greenbelt

Trail: A blazed or trodden path, located in a natural area, of minimum sufficient width to be passable by a single individual, but may also include improved facilities such as bridges and boardwalks and, in more developed areas, sidewalks.

Vision: To establish a town-wide network of greenbelt trails by connecting the Town Center to important open spaces currently owned or to be acquired and all neighborhoods through a hub-and-spoke system. A greenbelt trail shall be located within a comfortable walking distance to all neighborhoods by creating, marking, mapping, and maintaining trails which provide legal public access, at least a portion of which will be handicapped accessible. Preserved open space and visually attractive areas of Cape Elizabeth will be made more accessible to the public by the greenbelt trails.

Some revisions to consider include:

1. Eliminate the trail definition. This is now covered by the Open Space and Greenbelt Management Plan.

2. Discuss the hub and spoke system description. At your last meeting, you generally agreed to keep this. Confirm.
3. Expand open space component. The current plan focuses on trails. In this function, new “potential “ trail locations were identified. Do you also want to identify either generally or by parcel, land that should be acquired for open space that may not be specifically for trail access. This specifically applies to agricultural land or viewsheds. (See FOSP report)
4. Reword handicapped accessible to talk about the balance between respecting the “spirit” of accessibility for differently-abled individuals and preserving the “nature” characteristics of trails.

Next meeting

The January meeting will focus on reviewing the Goals in the 2001 plan.