

MEETING NOTES

Subject: OSRP Meeting with Commission on Disability (Meeting #7)

Project: **Town of Lexington
Open Space & Recreation Plan (OSRP) – 7-Year Update**

Project No. 22021.00

Issue Date: 18 August 2022; Rev. 19 August 2022

Meeting Date: 16 August 2022

Prepared By: Olivia Messenger, Landscape Designer

Distribution: Melissa Battite, Town of Lexington
Amber Carr, Town of Lexington
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Christine Dean, Town of Lexington
Karen Mullins, Town of Lexington
James Robinson, Town of Lexington
Austin Hochstetler, Zec Eight Insights
Meg Buczynski, Activitas
Olivia Messenger, Activitas

Attendees: Commission on Disability; Project Team except Karen M., and Peter C.; and Public

GENERAL

7.0.01 The following Meeting Notes are compiled from a scheduled public meeting with the Commission on Disability (COD) conducted via Zoom with the Town of Lexington (TOL), Zec Eight Insights (ZEI) and Activitas (ACT) for the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) 7-Year Update Project. This discussion was an agenda item on the scheduled COD Meeting.

7.0.02 The items and comments are not listed in order of the discussion, but are grouped by topic for easier reference and interpretation.

DISCUSSION

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7.1 INTRODUCTION

7.1.01 *Melissa Battite began the discussion explaining that the Town is completing the 7 year update of the Open Space and Recreation Plan and noting that input from several commissions including the COD are of utmost importance to developing the plan for the next seven (7) years.*

7.1.02 *Meg Buczynski, Activitas, began the presentation providing an overview of the OSRP process including data gathering through documents, public input, and commission/board input; and information through the public survey. Meg then reviewed how the OSRP defines goals for the next 7 years and our desire in this meeting is to determine if there are items that the COD sees as important to open space / recreational areas that may*

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make sense to incorporate into this next plan.

7.1.03		<i>Meg provided an overview of the ADA Access Self Evaluation which is an important part of the OSRP. This self evaluation will help determine if there is an appropriate level of access and amenities at the spaces overseen by the Conservation and Recreation Departments. Using this information, the OSRP may devise additional goals or recommendation on future projects to potentially undertake.</i>
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7.1.04		<i>Meg passed the presentation to Austin Hochstetler of Zec Eight Insights (ZEI) to lead the COD through the Goals Discussion.</i>
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7.2 GOALS DISCUSSION

7.2.01		<i>Austin led the COD through a discussion on four (4) questions. The following are the questions and comments received from the COD and public who attended the meeting.</i>
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7.2.02		<i>Question 1: What does the definition of disability mean to you?</i> <i>Many of the COD members weighed in on this topic. Historically the word disability has been linked to physical and "seen" disabilities. The COD would like to see the Town of Lexington, and society in general, give greater recognition and consideration to "unseen" disabilities such as, but not limited to, sensory, neuro-divergent, cognitive, and psychiatric disabilities. It is important for all people to have a general/better understanding of the variety of disabilities that have an impact on a person's ability and quality of life.</i>
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7.2.03		<i>Question 2: Given your definition, what does it mean for parks, trails, facilities, and open space to reduce barriers and promote use for people with disabilities?</i>
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The COD stated that by eliminating conflicts of accessibility it will make all people feel welcome to enjoy a space. The COD noted that it is important to find the right compromise of eliminating barriers and promoting spaces to best promote a space. Examples included:

- Using trail materials to help visually impaired person's have better awareness of other approaching through use of sound.*
- Discussion on electric-bikes and whether they should be allowed on the bike path – there are pros and cons to this discussion.*
- Providing adequate parking and space to allow people to move in and out of vehicles easily.*

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- *Providing additional benches to allow more space for rest on trails.*
- *Provide improved signage to assist people in understanding a space.*
- *One COD member noted that the 3rd Avenue Complex is a great example of good surfaces and sidewalk widths to promote accessibility through the complex.*

The COD noted that the Town certainly still has challenges with accessibility, but that many of their spaces have greatly improved. Examples of improvement include: Library, Cary Hall, New Fire Station, etc. The COD also noted that many of the playgrounds around town have greatly increased in accessible equipment to allow for use by children of all abilities. Examples of continued challenges include storefronts along Mass Ave, parking along Mass Ave, and Town Hall to an extent, although it has gotten better.

7.2.04

Question 3: Goal #3 in the 2015 OSRP stated, "Promote public use of recreational facilities and open space among a wide variety of user types." Specifically, there was an objective to provide increased access to programs and facilities for residents with disabilities in compliance with ADA standards. How do you feel this objective was met over the last seven years? Where can improvements be made?

Austin (ZEI) made the statement that based on the discussion it appears that the majority of disability related improvements have been related to mobility, and the "seen" disabilities, but less so on the less visible or "unseen" disabilities. The COD agreed and noted that they would like to see more emphasis / pro-activeness on providing inclusion on projects, especially with in regards to the "unseen" disabilities. This is being done well for children, but not as well for adults.

The COD noted that there is often a disconnect between inclusion opportunities and perceived aesthetics of a design. The COD states that these can be achieved together and that the mindset that it is possible truly needs to be nourished.

7.2.05

Question 4: What are the trends, challenges, and hot topics within the disability community that we need to ensure are incorporated into this OSRP update?

The COD noted that community goals often have an unforeseen affect on the disability community. For example, there is a goal to reduce single use vehicles by providing increased community transportation (Lexpress). However, due to a disability there may be a real need for a person to prioritize a single occupied vehicle and there needs to be a level of understanding of the affect on the disability community as the goals are

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communicated.

A hot topic with the COD is Universal Design. This focuses on encouraging designs to exceed the minimum standards set forth by law/code, but to truly consider proactive measures of inclusivity. For example, when a new house is built, incorporating ramps or level access points to the home and eliminating barrier of entrance.

7.2.06 *The meeting discussion wrapped up noting that if Commissioners think of items that could be important and/or helpful to the Open Space Plan, please do not hesitate to reach out to the Project Team. All additional comments can be submitted through the Town website:
<https://www.lexingtonma.gov/1337/Open-Space-and-Recreation-Plan>*

7.3 CLOSING

7.3.01 *The meeting discussion wrapped up noting that if Commissioners think of items that could be important and/or helpful to the Open Space Plan, please do not hesitate to reach out to the Project Team. All additional comments can be submitted through the Town website:
<https://www.lexingtonma.gov/1337/Open-Space-and-Recreation-Plan>*

1.4 NEXT STEPS

7.4.01 *ACT and ZEI will review comments from the meeting to bring to the next discussion potential goals for the OSRP that may want to be included.*

NEXT MEETING

7.5 *The next meeting will be the 8/223/22 meeting with the Conservation Commission and the Recreation Committee from 6:30-7:30pm via Zoom.*

The preceding meeting notes represent our understanding of the information exchanged. Please notify us of any misunderstandings or required interpretations, within five days, as we will proceed on the basis that these items are agreed to by all parties.

Respectfully,

ACTIVITAS

Megan Buczynski, PE

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Distribution: All Present
(via email)

Attachments: