



# **Town of Westminster Public Forum on Open Space & Recreation**

**October 20, 2020, 7:00PM  
Westminster Senior Center**

## **Forum Agenda**

- Sign In
- Welcome and Introductions
- Program Outline for the Evening
- Review Westminster's current inventory of recreation areas and open space land holdings
- Review and Discuss the Town's Goals for Open Space and Recreation
- Evening Wrap-Up and Next Steps

## **Forum Summary**

The forum began promptly at 7:00 PM with 23 people in attendance. After a round of introductions, the Town Planner went over the following topics:

- The reasons for having an Open Space & Recreation Plan.
- The State grants that Westminster can apply for if it has a State-approved Open Space & Recreation Plan.
- Provided a summary of the Town's most significant open space areas.

### *Protected Public Recreation and Conservation Land*

<b>Land Parcel</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Manager</b>	<b>Uses</b>	<b>Zoning</b>
Leominster State Forest	State	DCR	Hiking, bicycling, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, fishing, swimming, picnicking, rock-climbing	R-II
Wachusett Mountain State Reservation	State	DCR	Hiking, cross-country skiing, fishing, swimming, picnicking	R-II
Wachusett Mountain Ski Area	State	Wachusett Mountain Association	Skiing	R-II
Westminster State Forests	State	DCR	Hiking, snowmobiling	RI - III
High Ridge Wildlife Management Area	State	DFW	Hiking, hunting, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, snow shoeing	R-II
Muddy Pond Conservation Area	Town	Conservation Commission	Hiking, picnicking, cross-country skiing, snow shoeing, fishing hunting	R-II
Parker Hill	Town	Conservation Commission	None	R-II
Hager Park & Rambler Area	Town	Hager Park Commission	Woodlot Management, hiking	R-I
Crocker Pond	Town	Board of Selectmen	Swimming, non-motorized boating, fishing, hiking, picnicking	R-II
Fitchburg Water Supply Lands	Fitchburg	Water Dept.	Water Supply and Protection	RI-III

- Provided a summary of the Town's recreation programs.

-- Summer Recreation Program – 6 week program for children ages 5-12 held in the Westminster Elementary School Gymnasium.

-- Halloween – The Recreation Committee promotes tick-or-treating and works to help collect and redistribute candy to high volume areas around Bacon Street.

-- Christmas Tree Lighting – The Recreation Committee works to bring area organizations together to celebrate an annual Christmas Tree Lighting on Academy Hill.

The Recreation Committee assists and promotes the following town recreation programs:

- Youth Basketball League.
- T-ball, Softball and Cal-Ripken/Babe Ruth League Baseball.
- Youth Soccer.
- Oakmont Chargers Youth Football and Cheer Squad.
- North Central Mass Youth Lacrosse.
- A Youth field hockey program.
- The Parks Committee maintains four baseball fields and basketball court.

- Provided a summary of privately-owned recreation sites.

*Unprotected Private Recreation Land*

<b>Land Parcel</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Manager</b>	<b>Area (acres)</b>	<b>Uses</b>
Westminster Country Club	Ellis Road	Westminster Golf Course, Inc.	LeBlanc	110	Golf, cross-country skiing
Woods of Westminster	Bean Porridge Hill Road	Bartkus	Barrows Prop	218	Golf
VFW Park	Main Street	VFW	VFW	6	Little League
Westminster Sportsmen's Club	Ellis Road	Westminster Sportsmen's Club Inc.	Private	55	Fishing, swimming, picnicking, snowmobiling
Westminster Rod and Gun Club	Knower Road	Tophet Fish & Game Club	Private	22	Fishing, hunting
Rice Meadow Fly Fishing Club	Notown Road	Rice Meadow Fish & Game Club Inc.	Private	19	Fishing

- Provided a summary of who owns open space in Westminster.

Summary of Protected Open Space	
Summary of Open Space	Acreage
<b>Permanently Protected</b>	
<b>Municipal</b>	
Cities of Fitchburg & Gardner Water Depts.	1701.7
Town of Westminster (Conservation)	829.0
Town of Westminster (Recreation)	345.7
Town of Westminster (Cemeteries)	45.7
<b>Private</b>	
Dean Hill Road (APR)	91.0
<b>Non-Profit</b>	
North County Land Trust	160
<b>State</b>	
Division of Conservation & Recreation, and Fish & Wildlife	4004.6
MassHighway	28.5
<b>Total Permanently Protected Land</b>	<b>7205.4</b>
<b>Land Under Temporary Protection</b>	
Chapter 61 A Agriculture	619.7
Chapter 61 B Recreation	551.3
Chapter 61 Forest	451.6
Subtotal	<b>1622.6</b>
<b>Total Acres of Land Having Some Level of Protection</b>	<b>8828</b>
<b>Total Acres of Land in Westminster</b>	<b>22,720</b>
<b>% of Permanently Protected Land in Westminster</b>	<b>31.7%</b>
<b>% of Land Having Some Level of Protection in Westminster</b>	<b>38.9%</b>

- Went over the two types of land protection: permanent versus temporary.
- Discussed how the Town acquires land.

- Went over the Town's criteria for acquiring new open space lands.
  - Parcel is large enough and flat enough to support new athletic fields.
  - Parcel would complete protection around shoreline of a major waterbody.
  - Parcel would link to other conservation properties.
  - Parcel would help create a greenway along significant rivers and/or streams.
  - Parcel would provide a link to the Mid-State trail system.
  - Parcel would protect a large amount of soils best suited for agriculture.
  - Parcel would protect a critical stream, river or tributary.
  - Parcel would protect a critical wetland.
  - Parcel would protect the habitat for rare and endangered species.
  - Parcel falls within the State's BioMap resource areas.
  - Parcel is necessary for protection of a public drinking water supply.
- At this point, the attendees discussed the six goals the Town has established for open space & recreation:

Goal One: Protect, conserve and enhance Westminster's farmlands and forestlands as "working landscapes" which are vital to the Town's rural character.

Goal Two: Protect and preserve the cultural resources that are vital to the Town's rural character.

Goal Three: Provide a broad range of recreation opportunities for all age groups and abilities.

Goal Four: Identify and prioritize lands for acquisition.

Goal Five: Increase public awareness of open space and recreation resources.

Goal Six: Increase communication and coordination among town boards and with town residents.

There was a general consensus among the attendees that the goals are valid and worth pursuing.

In terms of how to achieve these goals, the attendees offered the following suggestions:

- Pursue State grants for open space acquisition and new park construction.
- Continue to work with our regional land trusts: North County Land Trust and Mount Grace Land Trust.
- Work with the Land Links program.
- Update the Town's open space and trail maps on a regular basis.
- Put the Town's open space and trail maps on-line for easy public access.
- Enact a Demolition Delay Bylaw to protect historic structures.
- Identify historic and cultural properties and their ownership.
- Sponsor a Town of Westminister Cultural Resource Day.
- Find new land for athletic fields and children's playground.
- Document institutional knowledge of long-time Town staff and board members so that it does not disappear when personnel moves on.
- Create a single link for Recreation Resources on the front page of the Town's website that will pop up a page containing the Town's various open space and recreation maps, programs, trail resources and recreation areas.
- Designate a Town Webmaster that will coordinate and update all of the Town's various web pages.
- Tap into Westminister's youth for help with open space & recreation projects.
- Make use of interns for help with open space & recreation projects.
- Have the Town sponsor a Volunteer day that will enable citizens to help with open space & recreation projects.
- Have the local schools sponsor a Town Government day to provide students with a civics lesson on how their town government works.

The forum concluded with a reminder to attendees to complete the on-line survey on open space and recreation found on the Town's website:

<https://www.westminster-ma.gov/home/news/recreation-and-open-space-survey-2020>

The Open Space & Recreation Plan Update Committee will sponsor another public workshop early in the New Year once a full draft of the updated Plan is ready for public review.

# **Presentation of the Town of Westminster's Draft Open Space & Recreation Plan**

**Monday March 1, 2021 at 7:00 PM**

The Town has completed an update of its Open Space & Recreation Plan and we are ready to share it with you!

Please participate in this public forum and....

- Learn what the Town has for recreation facilities.
- Learn what the Town has for open space land holdings.
- Hear the Town's goals for open space and recreation.
- Hear the Town's 7-Year Action Plan for open space and recreation.

All this and more will be discussed at the public forum.

Due to the pandemic, this will be a remote participation ZOOM meeting. To join the meeting, **just follow the instructions at the bottom of the page.**

If you would like to review the draft Plan prior to the meeting, just go to the Planning Department webpage and click on the link entitled "2021 Draft Open Space & Recreation Plan". If you would like to receive a paper copy of the Plan to review, just contact Town Planner Stephen Wallace ([swallace@westminster-ma.gov](mailto:swallace@westminster-ma.gov) or 978-874-7414) and you will be provided with a copy.

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Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/98205013529?pwd=ZTcwQllsMWFBbnd6WW8vUS9hWGszdz09>

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