

Open Space Committee – 2011 Annual Report

The Open Space Committee (OSC) is charged with implementing the Open Space Plan presented in the town's Master Plan. That plan endorses the “village” model of town planning whereby future development ideally occurs in existing developed areas or “villages” and the outlying areas remain rural. Most master plans have this goal of balanced, wise growth; few towns achieve it.

The OSC works to communicate the many varieties of land conservation— including the most popular form in the region: privately owned land with a conservation easement deed that specifies certain restrictions on future development. Peterborough has one of the strongest traditions of families choosing to conserve their land by this means. Thirty-seven families have made that choice.

The OSC also works to fund land conservation, including purchase of development restrictions on land with the highest natural resource values and covering landowner expenses involved in conserving their land (surveys/appraisals/legal). Peterborough voters have established a generous land conservation fund.

A property's natural resource values are judged following accepted criteria as indicated in the chart below.

This past year was the town's strongest ever for conservation of natural resources. Four families placed conservation easements on their land for a total of 705 acres. Two of the easement properties received the very highest criteria ranking. They add over 600 acres to the Temple-to-Croched corridor that has been identified regionally as a priority conservation area.

Each parcel on the town's open space map comes with a story on what led to its conservation. The John Marshall Conservation Easement out Sand Hill Road on the Greenfield border is one of this year's stories. The easement's 169 acres of farmland, forest and rural vistas abuts the Wapack National Wildlife Refuge established by John Marshall's parents. A few years back John's sister Liz Marshall Thomas conserved 441 acres that also abut the Refuge.

Alexandra Marshall, John's widow, conserved the land in honor of her husband's strong connection to the land.

The Open Space Committee hangs photos of conserved properties in the Select Board meeting room at the Town House. Viewing these photos communicates how much conserved open space adds to quality of life in Peterborough.

The Open Space Committee meets the second Thursday of each month. Townspeople attendance and participation are always welcomed.

RESOURCE FEATURE	POINT SCORING
Local heritage / cultural feature	3 Has significant feature
Parcel is an important focal point of community activity (trails, etc.)	4 Is a community focal point 2 Is potential community focal point
Scenic vistas from <u>public</u> land / roadway / public waterbody	3 Exceptional scenic vistas 2 Scenic vistas / significant road frontage 1 Significant roadside stonewalls
Productive forest resources (from aerial photo)	5 Larger than 30 acres 3 Less than 30 acres
Prime / state ranked farmland soils	4 Parcel has prime ag soils

	2	Otherwise ranked ag soils
Open fields or early succession forest	4	Open area is 5 or more acres
Parcel is within a designated un-fragmented land area	3 1	NHF&G unfragmented land area 3-4 NHF&G unfragmented land area 1-2
Wetlands	4 2	With associated uplands Associated uplands on abutting land
Shoreline frontage	6 3	Significant shoreland/named waterbody Shoreland on waterbody
Aquifer	6 3	Parcel over highest yield aquifer (blue) Parcel over aquifer (yellow)
Size of parcel	6 4	> 150 acres 5 pts 100–150 acres 70–100 acres 3 pts 40-70 acres 2 pts 10-40 acres
Linkage / connectivity (parcel is adjacent to other conserved land)	6 5 4 3	Aggregate area >300 acres Aggregate 200-300 acres Aggregate 100-200 acres Aggregate <100 acres
Unique natural feature (vernal pool, heron nest, floodplain, bog, rare/endangered species, etc.)	6	One point per unique feature

Alan Bannister
 Ed Henault, Chair
 Debby Kaiser
 Liz Thomas
 Eric Thum
 Francie Von Mertens
 Alex Walker