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Conservation Commission Minutes 09/22/2011

Arlington Conservation Commission
Walking Book Subcommittee
Minutes
September 22, 2011

The Walking Book Subcommittee meeting was called to order at 8:00 p.m. in the second floor conference room of the Town Hall Annex. Present were David White, Eileen Coleman, Ann LeRoyer and Michelle Durocher.

Discussion Topics & Decisions

At the last meeting, Subcommittee members had taken responsibility for particular sections of the text or agreed to perform certain assignments. Members informed each other of their progress toward section revisions and assignments.

Members reviewed a draft town-wide map of protected open spaces in Arlington produced by the Arlington GIS Coordinator, Adam Gurowski. Adam solicited feedback from the group for improvement of the map. Given the level of detail already contained in the town's GIS and Adam's willingness to work with the subcommittee, it appears that all the maps in the Walking Book revision can be derived easily from the town's GIS.

The Subcommittee had brainstormed at the last meeting to suggest alternative ways to arrange the book in order that it would be most useful to today's likely audience and to incorporate new materials into the text. In revisiting this topic, the Subcommittee decided that neighborhood-based chapters would be most useful. Members annotated a map to identify 7 sections of town. The sections are defined by geographic boundaries, such as significant roadways that create natural boundaries and in small measure topography. Members divided up responsibility for updates to each section.

The Subcommittee decided that the revised text should include references to significant assets in more than one section in order to link information wherever it is applicable; for example, providing a list of parcels along the Minuteman Bikeway or parcels that create linear parks. The group agreed that providing listings, such as town-wide playgrounds in an at-a-glance chart form, would allow specific parcel characteristics to be highlighted while also including text describing a site within the neighborhood section to which it belongs.

To suggest a possible model for how we might format at-a-glance listings within the Walking Book, Ms. Coleman presented a playground chart originally produced by another group in town, Arlington Family Connection. The Subcommittee supported using the format as a model and adding whatever columns would be relevant for us in creating lists of related parcels. The Subcommittee envisions creating Appendices that would list parcels of similar types to allow citizens interested in particular kinds of parcels, such as playgrounds, historic sites, etc.

The Subcommittee agreed that using small icons to represent parcel characteristics or activities that would be possible within a given parcel would be a nice visual cue for citizens wanting to quickly glean information about specific sites. Members looked at two models for ideas to consider, one from the Trustees of Reservation and one from a Massachusetts hiking book. The group identified an initial list of characteristics that would be useful to highlight; it included wheelchair access, birding, boating, skating, etc.

Next meeting

The Subcommittee identified Thursday, October 27, 2011 as our next meeting. An alternate date of Tuesday,

November 1 was identified as a possible back-up date if something arises to create a conflict with 10/27.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Michelle Durocher