

Parks & Open Space Committee
Thursday, November 20, 2025, at 7 p.m.

MINUTES

PRESENT: Olivia Dwyer, Brooke Paries, Frank Krueger, Larry Hartson, Sarah Duhaime, Tim Rowland, Knut Sauer, Andrew Hamlin

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Town Parks Updates

- Trash cans and porta potties have been removed for winter; all park water features have been winterized.
- Brooke reported good reviews of trash cans in 2025 with no issues.

3. Dog Park Updates

- ***Fiscal Sponsor:***
 - Still seeking a fiscal sponsor. AdkAction and Adirondack Community Foundation were discussed but are not options at this time.
 - Committee members were encouraged to ask the Town Board to include the dog park as a line item in the town budget.
 - i) Councilman Sauer stated he thinks the Town could be the fiscal sponsor.
 - Received advice from nonprofit professionals that municipalities may be eligible for larger funding sources than nonprofits.
 - Reached out to the Joshua Fund; no response yet.
- ***Town Role & Liability:***
 - Unclear what Town Board's intended level of control is.
 - Discussion emphasized that the Town owns the land and holds liability regardless of sponsorship or lease status.
 - Concern expressed about placing ownership burdens (leases, insurance) on volunteers.
 - Liability insurance for a standalone nonprofit could range from \$10,000–\$20,000+ annually.
- ***Consensus:***
 - The dog park should remain a town-owned and town-managed facility, even if volunteers assist with operations.
 - A formal Town Board resolution is needed to explore a site and obtain cost estimates.
- ***Funding & Support Ideas:***
 - Potential funding sources include occupancy tax, Adirondack Community Foundation Generosity Act grants, and DEC SmartGrowth program.
 - Suggestion to name the dog park to generate interest and donations; question raised about whether the Town has a naming policy.

- “Jay Bark Park” suggested as a working name.
- **Rules & Licensing:**
 - Dog licensing must be valid from the owner’s home municipality, not just the Town of Jay.
 - Rules regarding vaccinations, neutering, etc., will be required.

4. Recreation Economy for Rural Communities (RERC) Program

- Federal shutdown has ended; EPA offices are back open.

5. Grants Update – NYS Environmental Bond Act (Land Acquisition)

- Informational webinar scheduled for December 3.
- Potential project interests:
 - Hamlin Mountain access (Frank and Knut to contact landowner)
 - Lincoln Hill access
 - Multi-use path from Jay to Upper Jay (noted need for a “cheerleader” to move project forward).

6. Comprehensive Plan — Questions to Discuss:

- What we thought we knew going into the process:
 - Interest in Hamlin Mountain, Lincoln Hill, river trails, and underused land (e.g., kids’ activities, fishing at Rome Dam).
Recognition that Jay has significant natural resources but lacks visible outdoor recreation infrastructure (“no welcome mat”).
 - Covered Bridge complex is accessible and welcoming.
 - Children’s playground is fenced and well-suited for young children.
 - Fewer trail options compared to neighboring towns.
 - Need for nearby recreation options (dog park, courts, playgrounds).
 - Outdoor recreation and tourism are major growth sectors in the Adirondacks.
 - Concern that Jay is missing economic benefits from projects like Four Peaks if access is elsewhere.
 - Towns that invest in recreation tend to succeed more than those relying on declining industries.
- What people told us during the process:
 - Strong enthusiasm for recreation improvements (“Let’s do it!”).
 - Survey results indicated recreation is a top priority, alongside affordable housing.
 - Identified need for accessible walking paths, particularly for seniors (e.g., around Au Sable Forks).
 - Dream big; community-centered, accessible, and nature-focused recreation.
 - Emphasis on safe, human-powered access close to nature.
 - Interest in big-scale projects: Pedestrian bridge across Ausable River below where the forks meet to create a loop route connecting Jay and Black Brook sides of the hamlet; multiuse, off-road trail from Jay to Upper Jay; Four Peaks multiuse trail network.

- More awareness and easily accessible information about Community Garden, Henry's Trail, and other recreation assets in use now.
- What we learned from the process...
 - Community outreach is ongoing, time-intensive, and essential.
 - Implementation requires sustained participation.
 - Comprehensive plans are difficult to execute without dedicated committees or working groups.
 - Need to focus community priorities and hold the Town Board accountable.
 - Importance of long-term (10–20 year) planning.

7. Committee Business

- Need for additional recruitment to the Parks & Open Space Committee.
- Agreement to hold an organizational meeting **Thursday, January 22, 2026** with an open-house format.

8. Parks & Trails Day 2026

- **Spring Volunteer Cleanup on Saturday, April 25, 2026.**
- **Potential Project Sites & Tasks:**
 - Henry's Trail: raking and clearing
 - The Grove Ball Fields: leaf raking near fences; weed removal in parking lot
 - Douglas Memorial Park / Covered Bridge: cardboard weed barrier (instead of fabric), staked with landscape staples
 - Children's Playground: power washing and weeding
 - Jay Mountain Trailhead: signage installation (operations backlog noted)
 - Additional Needs:
 - Poison ivy spraying with advance public notice
 - Request permission for volunteer work on state land (requires supervising forester approval)
 - Trail work such as side-cutting or drainage clearing
- **Support & Coordination:**
 - Andrew to contact DEC forester regarding Jay Mountain.
 - Possible tool loan programs through ADK Trails Program or local lending libraries.
 - Outreach to Au Sable Forks Free Library and Town of Black Brook.
 - Create a signup list with sites, tasks, and ideal number of volunteers per site.

9. Next Meetings

- **Thursday, December 18, 2025**
- **Thursday, January 22, 2026** – Organizational meeting with open-house format

10. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

- Parks & Trails Day 2026 — SPRING VOLUNTEER CLEANUP
 - Save the Date: April 25, 2026
 - Review suggested project sites:
 - i) Henry's Trail
 - (1) Rake and clear trail
 - (2) Rake leaves by fences of ball fields
 - (3) Weed removal in parking lot
 - (4) WHEN WE SPRAY POISON IVY? Warn people.**
 - ii) The Grove ball fields
 - iii) Douglas Memorial Park / Covered Bridge
 - (1) Cardboard instead of weed fabric for weed barrier; stake with landscape staples
 - iv) Children's Playground
 - (1) Power washing
 - (2) weeding
 - v) Jay Mountain Trailhead (no sign at parking)
 - (1) Operations was backlogged heavily on getting new signs produced — is there a sign ready to be installed? Let land manager know we want to help!
 - (2) Get request to do volunteer work on state land — signed off by supervising forester **make request ASAP**
 - (3) Come up with a trail project either sidecutting or clearing drainages
 - (4) Andrew can contact Carol White with ADK — Trails Program had a tool loan program (**Essex County SCWD? Keeseville lending library?**)
 - vi) Wells Memorial Library

List of sites, projects under sites, ideal number of people for each site, people sign up to distribute people around.

Reach out to: DEC for Jay Mountain (Andrew has name of forester—**will reach out to DEC**); Au Sable Forks Free Library; Town of Black Brook

Next meeting: Thursday, Dec. 18; Thursday, Jan. 22 (organizational meeting—open house feel!)