



TOWN OF SHUTESBURY

Ad Hoc Town Common Beautification Planning Committee

I. Purpose & Mission

The purpose of the Committee is to facilitate a community-driven design process to reimagine the Shutesbury Town Common (including town common proper and the area behind town hall). The Committee aims to transform the space into an accessible, vibrant "Third Place"—a central gathering spot outside of home and work where residents of all ages can gather, reflect, and thrive.

The initiative focuses on enhancing rural character and ecological preservation while inviting modern, passive community use. All work must strictly honor and preserve the dignity and accessibility of the existing Veterans Memorial as the primary anchor of the Common. The Committee acts as an advisory body to the Select Board and the Town Administrator.

II. Scope of Work & Responsibilities

1. Community-Led Co-Design & Engagement

Design and execute a robust public visioning process starting in Fall 2026 to capture input across diverse demographics (including families, seniors, youth, and veterans).

Engagement strategies must include:

- **Town-Wide Surveying:** Distribute physical and digital surveys to quantify resident priorities and desired amenities for passive recreation.
- **Co-Design Circles & Listening Sessions:** Host a minimum of two (2) public workshops featuring interactive tools—such as "dot voting" and interactive mapping—to gather qualitative feedback on preliminary visual concepts and mood boards.

2. Key Stakeholder & Regulatory Consultation

Consult directly with the Shutesbury Historical Commission, Conservation Commission, Recreation Committee, and the Town Veterans' Agent/Veterans groups. Ensure early alignment with local operational needs, historical guidelines, and environmental standards.

3. Master Plan Development

Develop a phased Passive Recreation Master Plan prioritizing non-structural and low-impact improvements.

- **Core Features:** Explore elements such as winding ADA-compliant crushed bluestone paths, native MA pollinator gardens (designed to attract dragonflies), strategic clusters of bee hotels, watering spots (pebble basins), and durable reflection seating.
- **Design Flexibility:** Evaluate various path layout concepts (e.g., Rustic Stone Dust Meander, Historic Flagstone Pavers, Boardwalk & Meadow Trail, Historic Brick & Granite Crossing).
- **Future Capacity:** Designate a clear "ghost footprint" within the master plan to preserve open spatial capacity for potential future community features.
- **Site Comparisons:** Conduct site visits to at least two (2) comparable Massachusetts municipal commons to evaluate design approaches, material durability, and layout effectiveness.

4. Sustainable Funding & Budget Strategy

Formulate a strategy aimed at achieving a **0% impact on the town's operational budget** and avoiding increases to local property taxes.

- Prepare a formal Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding application under the Open Space & Recreation and Historic Preservation buckets for the 2027 Annual Town Meeting.
- Outline supplementary non-CPA funding options, including state/environmental grants, corporate sponsorships, and community fundraising campaigns.

III. Legal Guardrails & Compliance

The Committee's proposals must adhere strictly to statutory and regulatory boundaries:

- **MGL Article 97 (Open Space Preservation):** Maintain the natural, scenic, and open condition of the land for passive outdoor recreation. Ensure "No Net Loss" compliance by offsetting any minor structural footprints with enhanced natural resource and landscaping value. No permanent changes to land disposition or active recreational conversions will be pursued.

- **MGL Chapter 40C (Historic Districts):** Coordinate closely with the Shutesbury Historical Commission to ensure all visual textures, path materials, and seating preserve the historic character of the Town Common.

IV. Composition & Membership

The Committee shall consist of **five (5) voting members** appointed by the Select Board:

- Five (5) residents-at-large (with preferred backgrounds in landscape design, master gardening, historic preservation, or community organizing).
- **Ex-Officio (Non-Voting):** The Town Administrator or designee, providing project management support and procurement guidance.

V. Timeline & Key Deliverables (The Road to 2027)

The Committee shall follow the schedule below for the FY27 funding and approval cycle:

- **August 2026 (Phase 1 - Initial Planning):** Formally organize the committee, elect officers, establish liaison links with town boards, and publish library display concepts/mood boards.
- **Fall 2026 (Phase 2 - Community Co-Design):** Host public listening sessions, issue town-wide surveys, and run "dot voting" design workshops.
- **October 15, 2026:** Retrieve updated CPC Determination of Eligibility (DoE) application forms upon public release.
- **November 2026:** Present a mid-point project update and summary of community feedback to the Select Board.
- **December 10, 2026:** Submit the formal DoE form to the CPC for review at their December 17 meeting.
- **Winter 2027 (Phase 3 - Final CPA Application):** Finalize design specifications, cost estimates, and support letters based on DoE approval. Submit the full CPA Grant Application package by **February 4, 2027** (for CPC vote on March 4, 2027).
- **May 2027 (Town Meeting Approval):** Present and advocate for the recommended Town Common Warrant Article at the Annual Town Meeting.

VI. Term of the Committee

This Committee is temporary. Following the conclusion of the May 2027 Annual Town Meeting and the submission of a final summary report to the Select Board, the Committee shall automatically dissolve unless explicitly extended by a vote of the Select Board.