

Town of Otis
Planning Board Meeting Minutes March 9, 2026

Call to order 7:00 PM

- Roll Call:

Mark Anthony-Chair

Ross Knowles

Gordon Middleton

John Fletcher

Hal Kobrin

- Approval of January 12, 2026 minutes
Gordon motion to accept, Ross second, all in favor.
- Approval of February 9, 2026 minutes
Mark motion to accept, Gordon second, all in favor.
- Public Hearing: Special Permit Towhee Trail

Matt SK, here to request a continuance to the April meeting. After discussing with the property owner we will be re evaluating the design and modifying the plans.

Hal motion to continue hearing to April 13, 2026 meeting, Gordon second, all in favor.

- Continued Discussion on Seasonal Community Designation

Mark, has been a lot of discussion but I think we need to make a recommendation to the select board.

Hal, the important takeaway is that it is up to us on how we enact it. There is a lot of potential benefits to the town and ultimately it is up to the town how we do it. I do not see any harm in pursuing it.

Ross, is against the part on shifting any tax burden to second homeowners, if this goes to town vote they would not get a vote. I do not see the benefit to this.

Mark, the town can choose to use these tools or not, everything has to go to town vote.

Ross, we currently have one of the lowest tax rates in the area

Mark, the town would have to choose to give a tax break to permanent residents and the town would have to vote on it. There is no discussion on doing this right now it would just be an option as part of the designation.

Hal, many towns have a view tax.

Mark, there are many steps that the town would have to go through to change anything on tax rates it is just an option.

Ross, I think people should all be taxed on the value of their property.

Hal, this is just a tool to balance seasonal communities with full time residents.

Ross, we are one of the highest tax states in the country.

Mark, we are at 70% of homes as seasonal homes

Hal, these are tools they are giving us, we don't have to enact them, the community can use what we think benefits our community

Ross, do not see the benefit to this designation, increasing taxes on anyone will not solve any of the town's problem.

Hal, there are many other things that the town can use

Mark, housing preference for full time residents, develop on non-conforming lots, tiny homes, exc

Ross, do we really want to allow that? We have non-conforming lots now and people are on top of each other.

Mark, for tiny homes they would still have to meet the setbacks for wells and septic's

Hal, because we do not have water and sewer the setback requirements for wells and septic they tend to self-regulate due to those requirements.

Hal, housing funds available to support bringing in people you want in your community like teachers, firefighters, exc

Mark, if we don't have a viable year-round community, we won't have the residents to open up and support businesses.

Hal, the point of government is that you pay your taxes, and the money comes back to support your community to use in specific ways. Intended to support a specific need like housing. Example, seasonal community is not balanced, how do we support the people living in the community without the people to do that.

John, overall, I think the seasonal community designation opens up a lot of opportunity for the town. In support of the seasonal community designation.

Gordon, in support of recommending it but thinks it will be a hard sell to the town as a whole at the town meeting.

Mark, there would be bylaws that have to be changed if the town were to move forward with this.

Hal, its worth moving forward to see if the town wants to do it, should get the information out to the public

Stacy, can have an info session and a fact sheet

John motion to support the seasonal community designation, Hal second, Mark in favor. Gordon in favor. Ross opposed.

- Continued Master Plan Discussion:

We had 3 responses: BRPC, inspire, imeg consultants

John, thought BRPC is best choice for the town, all proposals were pretty good. All had good experience and past performance. BRPC has been doing this for all the communities around us, we don't live in a vacuum, so we are facing the same issues as many of the communities around us and BRPC has worked on plans for those communities.

Hal, imeg and inspire mention as part of their work they would look into the region. Imeg and inspire do not have experience of working with a small town, all examples they gave were cities and big towns. Plan to host 4 steering committee meetings, that is not enough. BRPC had highest rating for me too, they are familiar with the Berkshires and our town. They are giving us 12 meetings they are in person and understand our community and the Berkshires.

John, BRPC not only wants the town to be successful but wants the region to be successful.

Ross, consultants from the south would bring in ideas that don't make sense for our community.

Mark, in agreement BRPC had best proposal and most experience in the area. The only consultant with 12 meetings and good public involvement.

Hal motion to recommend BRPC to be our consultant, John second, all in favor.

Mark, we were supposed to receive the cost proposals as well.

- Any other business old or new.

Ross, looking into downtown properties for the revitalization.

- Gordon motion to adjourn 8:23 PM, Mark Second, All in favor.