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Council Backs Panel's Plan For Walking Trails

Project Would Link Open Space Parcels

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BERLIN -- After years of accumulating open space, the town is ready to connect the parcels with a series of walking trails.

On Tuesday, the town council unanimously approved moving forward a proposal by the conservation commission to connect 6 miles of trails in open space that stretches from Orchard Road to Timberlin Park.

"It would be of great value to people in town to fully utilize our open space," said Richard Schmidt, a member of the conservation commission and the Berlin Land Trust.

Schmidt said the commission envisions a small footpath that traverses rugged terrain and brooks among the properties. The plan includes a few small parking spaces along the trail.

The town has been acquiring open space through a combination of state and federal grants and town funds. It has acquired almost 90 acres on Orchard Road and Kensington Road. Other parcels include 10 acres on the Chamberlain Highway and 3.36 acres on Elton Road.

The 6-mile walking trail would include 2 miles on the Orchard and Kensington roads property, 2 miles in Bicentennial Park, and 2 miles in Timberlin Park.

The town will seek a federal grant of up to \$50,000 to create the trails linking the Orchard and Kensington road properties.

Preserving open space is part of the town's plan of conservation and development, and Mayor Adam Salina said the field and woodlands should be enjoyed.

"The properties are beautiful, and we want the public to have access to them for recreational use," Salina said. "You hate to buy something and just have it sit there."

The commission has asked the Connecticut State Forest and Park Association, a nonprofit group, to develop and maintain the trail. The association oversees 800 miles of such trails in the state.

The proposal trail will be reviewed by various land use boards before returning to the council for final approval.

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