



Londonderry Open Space Task Force
Tuesday, April 7, 2011
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1 Present: Dana Coons, Vice Chair and Planning Board Alternate Representative; Art Rugg, Heritage
2 Commission Representative; Marty Srugis, Solid Waste Advisory Committee Representative; Lisa
3 Whitemore, Budget Committee Alternate Representative; Representative; Jeff Locke, At-Large
4 Representative; Tim McKenney, At-Large Representative;

5
6 Also present: John Vogl, GIS Manager; and Jaye Trottier, Administrative Assistant

7
8 Absent: Mike Speltz, Chair and Conservation Commission Representative; Lynn Wiles, Secretary and
9 Planning Board Representative; and George Herrmann, School Board Representative; Bill Manning,
10 Recreation Commission Representative; John Curran, Budget Representative; Bob Saur, Londonderry
11 Trailways; and Stella Tremblay, Legislative Representative

12
13 D. Coons called the meeting to order at 7:10 PM. He asked members for comments or corrections
14 regarding the minutes of both the February 3 and March 3, 2011 meetings. Seeing none, he entertained
15 a motion to accept the minutes of the February 3 and March 3, 2011 meetings. A. Rugg so moved. M.
16 Srugis seconded. The motion was approved, 6-0-0.

17
18 D. Coons asked members if they would be available to attend an open meeting for residents on May 25,
19 2011. This meeting had been a part of the original OSTF work plan and was to take place in April, but
20 was postponed until May in order to have more data available beforehand from the Open Space survey,
21 SWOT analysis and Delphi process. The goal is to gather as much of an audience as possible to collect
22 public input about conservation and the Open Space Plan. Members discussed various ways to publicize
23 the meeting in order to achieve a high attendance, including the use of the local access channels, the
24 Town website and press releases. Since a majority of Task Force members said they would be able to
25 attend (some via email before this meeting), D. Coons asked the secretary to reserve the Moose Hill
26 Council Chambers for 7 PM on May 25 in order for the meeting to be televised.

27
28 Stewardship of open space was the first topic of the meeting. D. Coons asked members to begin
29 thinking about their own impressions of what "stewardship" means and what the Town should be doing
30 to maintain open space. He also asked that they seek out the opinions and impressions of other
31 residents, neighbors, etc. M. Srugis said his overall concept of preserving open space means that the
32 land is left in its natural state. D. Coons responded with an example of maintenance where a utility
33 easement must be mowed regularly and kept clear of growth. J. Vogl added that specific stewardship
34 activities are based on the various types of ownership (conservation easement, deed restriction, outright
35 ownership, etc). D. Coons added that residents need to be educated about those differences, including
36 what uses are permitted on different properties. M. Srugis said it would be especially helpful to provide
37 information at the individual sites, perhaps with signage or a kiosk, to define what uses are allowed
38 there. T. McKenney pointed out, however, that when residents were asked in the Open Space survey to
39 rank 11 separate conservation goals, the choice of "supporting outdoor recreation in a natural setting"
40 only ranked at #5. A. Rugg stated that the more access residents have to conserved land in a
41 recreational sense, the more appreciative they will be of the Town's assets, and the more likely they will
42 be to support the overall Open Space Plan. L. Whitemore remarked that those she knows with
43 conservation land abutting their properties are very appreciative of the fact that they can make use of
44 nearby trails, adding that perhaps this can be weighed against concerns others have expressed



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45 previously about security in secluded areas/trails. J. Vogl noted that the survey produced several
46 comments about having improved signage and access with regard to trails in town. The concept of
47 maintenance in the form of logging or mowing, however, was not mentioned.

48
49 A. Rugg noted that trash is an ongoing issue in town and when it occurs on conservation land where it is
50 visible to the public, they tend to believe the Town is not fulfilling its responsibility with regard to
51 stewardship. T. McKenney suggested sponsorship of conservation areas in town, similar to the stretches
52 of highway that are “adopted” by businesses or individuals who maintain them. M. Srugis further
53 suggested proposing that concept to the Beautify Londonderry organization and the new “anti-litter”
54 subcommittee of the Solid Waste Advisory Committee since they already have the kind of resources and
55 contacts needed to initiate such an idea. If local businesses sponsored individual pieces of open space,
56 they could benefit from the show of community support, while the cost of providing items such as trash
57 bags would be minimal. Their involvement could also boost volunteerism.

58
59 The Task Force next discussed the results of the Open Space Survey (see attached). Two hundred and
60 thirty five responses were received from the public. While the survey was not as scientific as it was
61 hoped to be because of budgetary restrictions, J. Vogl said that the results still appear to demonstrate a
62 fair cross section of the public, ranging from some proponents to some opponents and a significant
63 amount of residents in between. To prevent multiple responses from any one user of the online survey,
64 the OSTF utilized the ability to track the IP addresses of respondents. They had decided that up to three
65 “hits” from any one address would be reasonable to allow more than one family member to complete
66 the survey. J. Vogl reported that he saw no abuse in terms of multiple submissions.

67
68 A review of the 21 survey questions created the following comments and possible conclusions:

- 69
70 **1. Have you visited the following town conservation or recreation areas in Londonderry? If so, how**
71 **often?**
72
73 ○ Some areas such as the Ingersoll/Bockes Forest receive very low use and are not well known. In
74 contrast, the Musquash Conservation Area, Moose Hill Orchard easements, and various
75 recreational fields are more highly visited and are widely known.
76
77 ○ Those areas that are not well known could benefit from promotional/educational efforts.
78
79 **2. Are there other places you use for outdoor recreation?**
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81 ‘Big hitters’ include:
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83 ○ Town Center/ Schools (school trails/gasline, fields, Presbyterian Church)
84 ○ Nelson Field
85 ○ Backyard/Own Neighborhood
86 ○ Woodmont Orchards
87 ○ Rail Trails (Derry/Windham, Derry Bike Loop, Albuquerque Ave bike trail)



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- 88 ○ The interest in the rail trails suggests that tying into the Derry/Windham/Salem trail is worth
89 pursuing
90 ○ In prior years, there had been a call for more recreation fields in northern, southern and
91 central Londonderry. The degree in interest and use reported in the survey seems to
92 indicate that the demand has been met. In fact, the interest in trails seems to indicate a shift
93 towards a different kind of outdoor recreation.
94

95 **3. Please rank the following conservation goals in the order most important to you.**

- 96
97 ○ The results seem to confirm the same ranking the OSTF arrived at through the Delphi
98 process performed at the March 3 meeting.
99 ○ Water quantity and quality in particular is the top ranking goal for both the OSTF and survey
100 respondents.
101 ○ Members interpreted the high ranking of water quantity and quality as a reflection of their
102 dependence on private wells. Londonderry has no real outside water source, aside from the 25%
103 of residents who are serviced by Manchester or Pennichuck Water Works. This leaves
104 Londonderry with a great interest in protecting its supply and quality, especially as future growth
105 increases demand.
106 ○ The low ranking (11 out of 11) for “Providing at least 10 acres of open space within a 10
107 -minute walk for each Londonderry resident” may suggest that this “10 to 10 ideal” is losing
108 support. It could also be, however, that people are not familiar with the overall concept or
109 where those 10+ acre parcels are.
110

111 **4. How important is it that the Town commit resources (financial, regulatory or otherwise)**
112 **towards the following goals?**

- 113
114 ○ Preserving adequate drinking water quality/quantity is again the top priority.
115 ○ Its importance is further demonstrated by the fact that 74% rated it “very important” as opposed
116 to 15% rating it only “somewhat important.”
117 ○ Combined with some comments found later in the survey, the scoring of “Preserving land to
118 store storm water and prevent flooding” suggests it is fairly important to residents.
119 ○ Preserving land to maintain historic structures in their appropriate context had the lowest rating.
120 ○ Aside from historic structures, a super majority of respondents rated all categories “somewhat”
121 or “very” important. While there are distinct priorities, this demonstrates that the majority of
122 issues are important nonetheless.
123 ○ “Preserving land to support animal habitat & connections between habitat patches” rated higher
124 in the survey than in the OSTF Delphi exercise. This coincides with one member’s experience of
125 seeing a decline in the presence of wildlife in their neighborhood after development impeded
126 natural corridors for wildlife movement.
127 ○ “Keeping natural views in their present form” did not rank as highly as one member expected,
128 but people still seem to enjoy the scenic views and want them to be maintained.
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130 **5. Please rate the goals and approaches you think the Town should pursue over the next five**
131 **years to preserve nature's values and benefits in Londonderry.**



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- Promotion, education, and limiting development were all popular choices.
- One example of an opportunity for education could come from the overwhelming support that “The Town should limit development on sensitive natural habitats.” Residents could learn what areas are sensitive and why they are important to preserve.
- The proposed Woodmont Commons project may have had some influence on the responses, i.e. concerns about the pace and style of development in town.
- The largest share (43.7%) disagreed with the statement that “The Town should stop conservation purchases for the next five years.” Fifty six percent, however, either "agreed," "somewhat agreed," or “somewhat disagreed.” If those who only “somewhat disagree” are simply unsure, it could be said that some residents do not readily see the value of specific purchases.
- The above interpretation could be combined with the majority of agreement that “The Town should do more to promote the locations and uses of existing conservation/cultural areas” to suggest that promotion and education are key.
- Strong support for the regulatory approach can be seen in the high rating of both “The Town should limit development on sensitive natural habitats,” and “The Town should strengthen land use regulations in favor of natural resources.”
- The majority of support for “The Town should attempt to add to existing conservation areas” (69.6% total of “agree” and “somewhat agree”) seems to be confirmed by the 66.8% who “somewhat disagree” and “disagree” with “The Town should stop conservation purchases for the next five years.”
- While the above indicates support for the Open Space plan to “stay the course,” high marks were also shown for the goal that “The Town should put more resources into monitoring/maintaining its existing conservation areas,” suggests a shift to the funding of stewardship instead of acquisitions.
- Maintenance may be highly ranked, however, there is a fairly even split as to whether staff should be added to perform those duties. This most likely reflects the difficult economic times and choices that were made for the Town’s FY11 budget.

6. Is enough being done to maintain conservation lands in Londonderry?

- There appears to be a three-way split between agreement, disagreement, and those who are unsure. This may reflect a mix of a concern for an increased tax burden along with a lack of education about what has been accomplished by the Open Space Plan. There may still be support for the purchase of particular pieces of land if they were to suddenly become available, but there may be an equal amount of support for simply maintaining what already exists and educating the public about it.
- If question five demonstrated support for more maintenance of existing open space while not showing as much support to add staff to do it, perhaps the answer is to reallocate existing funds and resources. It could also indicate a need to be more creative about marketing and education to address those who are unsure of their answer.
- As population density increases, so too will the need for open space for recreational needs. People will be more likely to appreciate the open space they have as density and development



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175 increase. Trails have recently been added to the Musquash to accommodate the increased use
176 being seen now.

- 177 ○ Using existing resources and relying on volunteers will most likely need to take the place of
178 adding to the tax burden to accomplish the above. Yet volunteers can only provide so much help
179 with maintenance. Some professional guidance is also needed to make an informed
180 maintenance plan. Education and marketing would also aid in creating interest.

181
182 **7. What more should be done?**

- 183
184 ○ There were repeated comments about:
- 185 ● Planning: Strategic, long range planning and funding, identifying priorities, cooperation,
186 maintenance plans, mitigation
 - 187 ● Funding: Budgeting, using volunteers, etc.
 - 188 ● Education & Promotion
 - 189 ● Regulation (development controls)
 - 190 ● Improve access/trails
 - 191 ● New acquisitions
 - 192 ● Stewardship
 - 193 ● General opposition (i.e. 'nothing more should be done')
- 194 ○ There is a strong resistance to expansion; there are only 2,000 acres of buildable land left in town
195 yet development is inevitable, particularly with the impending expansion of I-93. How will that
196 growth and associated density be managed? What kind of an impact will there be on the limited
197 water supply?
- 198 ○ The new Planned Unit Development (PUD) and its requirement for open space may be a key
199 answer. This tool is being implemented for the Woodmont Commons development. Similarly,
200 the Chinburg development on parcel 16-38 is applying a conservation subdivision that trades
201 reduced lot sizes for increased, contiguous open space.
- 202 ○ Perhaps there should be a focus on adjusting zoning regulations to allow higher density wherever
203 possible. Achievements in European cities where rezoning has allowed for higher density to
204 meet demand, coupled with their lower expectation for the kind of personal space that
205 Americans are accustomed to, may provide a worthwhile example.

206
207 **8. What should be done differently?**

- 208
209 ○ Many answers correspond to those in question 7.
- 210 ○ The purchasing of conservation easements is questioned several times because some
211 respondents ask that if high enough amounts are being spent on them, why is the Town not just
212 buying the land outright? What are taxpayers getting for that amount being spent when the
213 town still does not own the land?
- 214 ○ Conversely, an outright purchase means there are no longer any taxes paid to the Town. Again,
215 the value is not particularly clear to many respondents because the benefits are not readily
216 apparent to them.



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- 217 ○ Some past purchases such as the Estey easements and the proposed Mack acquisition that fell
- 218 through on map and lot 10-15 were controversial for some people because of the amounts
- 219 spent/to be spent in a tough economy.
- 220 ○ Education about the benefits of easements vs. outright ownership is needed since each is
- 221 appropriate in different circumstances.
- 222 ○ There is frustration for some residents about “missed opportunities,” e.g. Woodmont Orchards.
- 223

224 **9. Are there particular scenic views in Londonderry that you believe should be preserved as open**

225 **space?**

226

227 ‘Big hitters’ include:

- 228 ○ All apple orchards
- 229 ○ Woodmont orchard
- 230 ○ Town Center
- 231 ○ Pillsbury Road
- 232 ○ Mammoth Road
- 233 ○ Rockingham Road
- 234 ○ Farms and hayfields
- 235 ○ South Road
- 236 ○ Meetinghouse Hill
- 237 ○ Rolling Meadows
- 238 ○ Kendall Pond area
- 239
- 240 ○ The popularity of Apple Way and the orchards demonstrates that past open space purchases
- 241 were appropriate
- 242

243 **10. Where should money for future preservation of nature's values and benefits come from?**

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- 245 ○ There is a definite preference to fund open space in ways other than through town bonds. (i.e.
- 246 with ‘other people’s money’).
- 247 ○ The choice of the Land Use Change Tax was not as high either in favor or in opposition as was
- 248 expected.
- 249 ○ Grants scored highly; however, they are still funded by all American taxpayers and are often
- 250 conditioned upon future funding from Londonderry taxpayers. An example would be
- 251 Londonderry Trailways’ attempt to obtain a grant to extend the sidewalk on Pillsbury Road; it
- 252 was conditioned upon making all connecting trails to that sidewalk accessible throughout the
- 253 year, which would place a financial burden on the town to maintain the trails and sidewalk.
- 254 ○ Grants will be fewer and farther apart and although only a third of respondents favor open space
- 255 bonds, the fairest way in terms of taxation to fund open space would be through bonds.
- 256 Stretching payments over 20 years means that those who reside during that time period,
- 257 whether they stay or move, are paying for the open space from which they benefit.
- 258 ○ What would the responses look like if “full grants” had been separated from the choice for
- 259 private donations?
- 260 ○ If residents want to acquire a particular piece of land, should they expect others to pay for it?



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- How realistic is the survey with only 230 respondents answering this question?
- Conversely, out of those 230 respondents, only 11% chose not to fund preservation at all.

11. **Are you willing to pay more in taxes to support future conservation purchases?**

- Although there was a majority who favored paying more in taxes, there was somewhat of a three-way split as seen in question 6.

12. **Currently, the Town spends 2.7%* of its budget on conservation. What percentage would you be willing to see it spend? (*includes debt service on open space bonds and existing conservation commission line items)**

- If one adds up the non-blank responses and removes the three outliers (33.5%, 25%, 20%) the average is 2.702%. This would indicate that open space efforts should “stay the course.”
- If there is not as much of a willingness to support an open space bond right now, the level of support demonstrated through this average may translate into supporting a bond every other year as opposed to every year.

13. **Are you willing to pay more in taxes to support increased stewardship of existing conservation land?**

- Along with questions 6 and 11, there was a majority (in this case, for “no”), although it is a more or less a three-way split with no overwhelming support for any.

14. **Currently, the Town spends 0.06%* of its budget on stewardship (on maintenance/ management of conservation land). What percentage would you be willing to see it spend? (*Includes average annual spending from the years 2002 to 2009).**

- The average of all non-blank responses is .6%, an increase by a factor of ten. Even including the blank responses, the average is still .4%.
- While stewardship is held as a higher priority, it is unclear whether the above increase translates into an increase in taxes or a redistribution of current funding.
- Bonds passed for Open Space purchases cannot be used for things other than the acquisitions themselves. Redistribution to other efforts would require a vote at Town Meeting, but going forward, that flexibility could be a consideration.

15. **Do you own your home or rent?**

- The majority of respondents own their own home (98.7%). This is consistent with 2000 census data.

16. **How many people live in your household?**



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- 304 ○ The average household size of respondents 3.3. This is again consistent with the 3.05 taken from
305 the 2000 census.

306
307 **17. What is the source of your household's drinking water?**

- 308
309 ○ Seventy seven percent of respondents draw water from wells, which is extremely close to the
310 75% seen in the 2000 census.

311
312 **18. Which age group are you?**

- 313 ○ Unlike questions 15-18, the average age of respondents (41.3) was higher than the population at
314 large based on the 2000 census.
315 ○ Perhaps an older demographic is slightly more conscientious about the workings of local
316 government

317
318 **19. How many school-aged children live in your household?**

- 319
320 ○ Approximately half of respondents have one or more school-aged children in their homes, which
321 is very close to the 52% in the 2000 census.

322
323 **20. How long have you lived in Londonderry?**

- 324
325 ○ Nearly three quarters of respondents have lived in Londonderry for at least 11 years, with more
326 than half of those residing here for more than 20 years.
327 ○ The notion that Londonderry has a transient population is not reflected by these results.
328 ○ Although the average age of respondents is 41.3 years, the high number of respondents having
329 been in town more than 10 years could also be a reflection of people who have grown up in
330 town.

331
332 **21. How long into the future do you expect to continue to live in Londonderry?**

- 333
334 ○ The overwhelming majority plans to stay in Londonderry, so perhaps their appreciation for their
335 surroundings will translate into continued and/or future support of open space purchases and
336 stewardship.
337
338 ○ The fact that the average age of respondents was higher than the population at large may be the
339 reason for the numbers seen in question 20 and 21.

340
341 J. Vogl then reviewed three maps with Task Force members that are based on the Delphi process that
342 took place at the March 3 meeting (see attached). Each uses the data generated through that process
343 but identifies where the various features fall on the town's landscape in three distinct ways. The
344 resulting information will aid the Task Force in their next undertaking where they will attempt to identify
345 what parcels are left to protect and how much they would cost. This will eventually help answer the
346 question "how much is enough?"
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348 The first, a “Co-occurrence of Natural Resource Features,” simply shows those places where features
349 overlap in a one-to-one comparison. Each feature receives a score of “1,” regardless of how they were
350 ranked by the Task Force. Areas of the highest concentration of multiple resources include the
351 Woodmont Orchard on Pillsbury Road, the Pettengill Road area, spots around the Musquash
352 Conservation Area, the land around map and lots 16-23 and 18-33 in the northeast corner of town and
353 the Town Center. J. Vogl noted that the “hot spots” visible under the excluded areas demonstrates the
354 value of past purchases.

355
356 The second map, a “Co-occurrence of Natural Resource Features by Resource Score,” assigns the Delphi
357 scores generated by the Task Force so wherever features intersect, they receive a ranking based on their
358 weight relative to each other. Areas with multiple features that stand out on the first map may not do
359 so on this map if those features did not score highly with the Task Force. Other areas may only have two
360 features, but if those features scored highly on the Delphi exercise, such as water quality and quantity,
361 their location will be prominent. Stonehenge Road and Beaver Brook area were “hotspots” on this map,
362 in addition to Pettengill Road and the aforementioned northeast corner of town.

363
364 Lastly, the “Co-occurrence of Natural Resource Features, by Standard Deviation of Total Resource
365 Value,” illustrates the high and low values relative to the average. The areas of lowest resource value
366 relative to the average areas are the darkest brown colors, while the darkest blue are the highest
367 relative areas. This helps to better define areas of extremes on both ends of the spectrum.

368
369 J. Vogl then turned the Task Force’s attention to the SWOT (Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/
370 Threats) analysis also initiated at the March 3 meeting. Observations made at that meeting were
371 reorganized (see attached), which the Task Force was asked to review before this meeting. Using insight
372 from the survey results and Delphi process, the following recommendations and comments were made:

- 373
- 374 ○ Develop a list of the current open spaces and their permitted uses in order to educate the public,
375 increase awareness, and possibly increase involvement.
 - 376 ○ Develop a stewardship plan, regardless of where the funding comes from.
 - 377 ○ Build on the opportunity to use community support; develop marketing and education tools.
 - 378 ○ Provide other groups such as Beautify Londonderry with some of those tools since they already
379 have the resources and contacts needed to disseminate the information.
 - 380 ○ There is no sense (from the survey in particular) as to “how much is enough?” The responses
381 have been more about financial concerns, not where the Open Space Plan is on its road to
382 completion.
 - 383 ○ Can those financial concerns translate to not actively pursuing purchases at this point, instead
384 funding stewardship and considering purchases if and when a landowner presents them?
 - 385 ○ Bonds will not be successful in the current economy, but will be supported again in the future.
386 The time in between can be used to develop a plan and provide education to the public in order
387 to be prepared when the interest in purchases rises again.
 - 388 ○ The public needs to be able to see something is happening, e.g. that trash is being cleaned up
389 and properties are being managed, in order to see the value of the purchases and continue to
390 support the Open Space Plan.



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- 391 ○ The same economic forces that make it difficult to spend additional money also drive land prices
- 392 lower. Therefore, it is a relatively better time to purchase land, although the taxpayer's focus
- 393 may not be on open space at this time.
- 394 ○ In light of the above, if an increase in taxes is not favored, would a shift in spending away from
- 395 some part(s) of the budget and toward open space be acceptable to residents?
- 396 ○ If a shift away from one or more other budget items is possible, will people even want to redirect
- 397 it to something else or simply apply it directly a decrease in the budget?
- 398 ○ The Task Force would like to get a history of funding from the Land Use Change Tax and a sense
- 399 of the costs associated with stewardship.
- 400 ○ The Town should secure reliable funding sources so that money is available should a matching
- 401 grant opportunity arise.
- 402 ○ Reserve funds are important in situations where there is a narrow window of opportunity to
- 403 make an offer to a willing seller, especially if a bargain sale is involved. Education, however, is
- 404 the key first in order to develop those reserve funds.
- 405 ○ The Conservation Commission should continue to work with developers to decrease
- 406 fragmentation during the Design Review process.
- 407 ○ The Town should seek to guard those areas that are only partially protected from attempts to
- 408 weaken natural resource provisions in the town's land use regulations.

409
410 D. Coons asked if there were any other comments or questions. **Seeing none, he entertained a motion**
411 **to adjourn. L. Whittemore so moved. J. Locke seconded. The motion was approved, 5-0-0.**

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413 The meeting adjourned at 9:06 PM. The next meeting will take place on May 5, 2011. A special public
414 meeting will be held in Moose Hill Council Chambers on May 25, 2011 at 7PM.

415
416 Respectfully submitted,

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420 Jaye Trottier
421 Secretary