

Town of Groton

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Park Commissioners

Jonathan Strauss, Chair
Laurie Smigelski, Vice-Chair
Kenneth Bushnell
Robert Flynn
Gineane Haberlin

Meeting Minutes

Date: August 14, 2013
Time: 7 p.m.
Location: Legion Hall, 75 Hollis Street, Groton
Commission attendees: Jonathon Strauss, Laurie Smigelski, Robert Flynn, Gineane Haberlin
Guests: Bill Roper, Britta Roper, Karen Tuomi (Director, Peter Twomey Youth Center, Kathy Shelp (Director, Groton Council on Aging), Paul Funch (Chair, Trails Committee)

Jon Strauss opened the meeting at 7 pm.

Field Use Requests

The Commissioners first spoke with Kathy Shelp, the Director for Groton's Council on Aging. Kathy is planning a new event and needs outdoor space to hold a community dog show/event. The event may be called **Groton's Big Bow Wow**. Kathy had identified the Town Field behind the public library. She is in the early planning phases and has a lot of flexibility for how she might shape the event. She is hoping that area groomers and veterinarians will help to sponsor the event. It is possible that the Pepperell Rotary may cosponsor. Groton's seniors will run the event. All dogs will be leashed. Dog waste will be collected after the event.

In the ensuing discussion, the group wondered whether the Hazel Grove facility may be a better site. Hazel Grove is a 28 acre site with 11 acres inside the driving track. Typically, animals are not allowed on Groton's playing fields whereas Hazel Grove's main uses are equestrian and so have allowed use by animals. Gineane Haberlin who serves on the Hazel Grove Agricultural Association observed that volunteers are still working to get the site cleaned up. If the event moves to Hazel Grove, then Kathy Shelp is flexible with scheduling and the event could be held in the spring of 2014. Commissioners decided to hold this application while the applicant explores an alternate site such as Hazel Grove or perhaps even private venues such as the Deluxe lawn on Main Street.

Jonathan Strauss mentioned an intention to create a website that displays all the camps that are being run in Groton.

Next, the Commissioners considered a request for use of the Cow Pond Soccer Fields for a soccer camp serving children aged 5 to 14. Britta Roper was present as the request's contact person to address Commission questions. The **Challenger soccer camp** starts on August 19 and the organizers are still registering. Registration fees pay for liability insurance, travel from England for soccer instructors, a t-shirt and \$10 per child is sent back to the local club (Groton Dunstable Youth Soccer Organization). Britta Roper noted that Chris Martinez speculated that some crossover liability coverage may be present as well. Britta Roper continued, explaining that the camp's use of the fields has not produced any damage to the site over the past 3 years.

Jonathan Strauss moved to approve the field use permit request as described in Britta Roper's application. Robert Flynn seconded and motion carried 4:0 (Kenneth Bushnell absent).

Next, the Commissioners reviewed two requests for fall league usage – **football** and **soccer** -- that did not have applicants present to speak to the particulars of the requested use.

Jonathan Strauss moved to approve the football field use permit request as described in the application with approval conditioned on the submission of a certificate of insurance. Gineane Haberlin seconded and motion carried 4:0 (Kenneth Bushnell absent).

Jonathan Strauss moved to approve the soccer field use permit request for Cow Pond I & II practice area, Stonebridge and Cutler as described in the application with approval conditioned on the submission of a certificate of insurance. Laurie Smigelski seconded and motion carried 4:0 (Kenneth Bushnell absent).

Robert Flynn asked the group to look at the process of approving field use permit requests. Jonathan Strauss said that as chair he would like to move the process to one that involves review by the full commission which allows for questions to be asked of the applicant about the intended use. That process would permit greater transparency for the public. Also, the Park Commission typically meets monthly so this process puts responsibility for a timely application on the applicant.

The group discussed possible changes to the field use permit request. Observing that two requests were granted pending submission of certificates of insurance, the group agreed that it would like clarity from the Town regarding the way the Park Commission should require certificates of insurance (COI). The question is pertinent because the costs of obtaining COIs are not insignificant. For example, a COI such as for the Hazel Grove benefit trail ride in the fall might cost \$500 for a single day event. Does the current COI policy permit ad hoc picnics at the Town Field gazebo; a pick-up game of basketball on a Town owned court; a standing pick-up game of softball; garden club member care of small commons; boy scout projects? The Park Commission will seek clarification from Town Manager Mark Haddad. Robert Flynn noted the importance of directors and officers of organized sports having insurance coverage. He said that it was the responsibility of those people and organizations to obtain such coverage.

Other fields: Groton Dunstable Regional School District

Jonathan Strauss introduced Karen Tuomi, who is a former Park Commission assistant and the current director of the Peter Twomey Youth Center. Jonathan Strauss invited Karen Tuomi in because she is in charge of the scheduled use of Groton Dunstable Regional School District fields. Park Commissioners are often asked whether the Town of Groton might use some of the District fields in order to meet user demand. Commissioners wondered whether U6 and U8 Soccer which has over utilized the Cow Pond fields might want to explore moving to District fields.

The District receives a preference when scheduling use. Varsity sports receive the highest level priority. Requests sometimes do not come in. For non-district use, outdoor fields and indoor gymnasiums are available on a first come, first serve basis. There are charges for for-profit use, but non-profits are not charged. Currently, lacrosse and football use District facilities. Softball, baseball, soccer and even ice hockey (conditioning only) have used District fields. Karen Tuomi will share a copy of the building and field charges sheet with Commissioners.

The fields behind Florence Roche and the middle school have working irrigation systems. The maintenance budget is unknown. District maintenance staff mow the fields, but baseball diamond is historically maintained by volunteers. Group observed that lacrosse and football are sports that are typically hard on the fields. Right now, league lacrosse is sited at Lawrence Academy, the Groton School as well as paying to use Larter field in Dunstable. Karen Tuomi does not yet know what the availability of fields will be this spring (2014).

Groton Trails Vision

Paul Funch, who serves as chair of the Trails Committee and is a long time organizer of the Squannacook River Runners Association, addressed the Commissioners. Paul Funch provided a handout titled Context for Developing Groton's Trail Vision. The Montachusett Regional Trails Coalition has asked its 14 member towns to develop Trails Visions. Paul Funch is putting together a Trails Vision Committee to be appointed by the Town Manager and he is

interested in Park Commission member involvement. It will probably be a three month commitment. Gineane Haberlin volunteered to serve on the committee as the committee aims are very much in her areas of interest.

The Trails Vision will seek to improve connectivity, greenways, business development. Signage, maps, easier access to local businesses may increase tourism and general sustainability for the Town. The Committee may make a list of priorities ranging from land purchase, coordination with Mass Highway, signage, etc. The Committee will seek to identify what the Town wants to have and then build the public will to accomplish that end. Jonathan Strauss approved of the concept noting that the Park Commission should be about recreating not just fields and fertilizer. Paul Funch stated that it is healthy for children to promote free range kids as well as a connection to and use of nature. The use of CPC grants for signage was suggested by the Commissioners to Paul Funch.

Minutes

Jonathan Strauss moved to accept April 17, 2013 minutes as drafted. Laurie Smigelski seconded and motion carried 2:0 (Kenneth Bushnell absent; Robert Flynn and Gineane Haberlin abstained).

Jonathan Strauss moved to accept May 8, 2013 minutes as drafted. Laurie Smigelski seconded and motion carried 3:0 (Kenneth Bushnell absent; Gineane Haberlin abstained).

There was no meeting held on May 29, 2013.

Jonathan Strauss moved to accept the June 12, 2013 minutes as amended. Laurie Smigelski seconded and motion carried 3:0 (Kenneth Bushnell absent; Gineane Haberlin abstained).

Jonathan Strauss moved to accept the June 26, 2013 minutes as amended. Robert Flynn seconded and motion carried 3:0 (Kenneth Bushnell absent; Gineane Haberlin abstained).

July 11, 2013 draft minutes will be reviewed at a future meeting.

Cutler Field

Jonathan Strauss said that lacrosse has discussed spending up to \$10,000 on improvements to Cutler Field. If trees are taken down around the field and parking area, flag poles and rocks are moved, and field prep of slice/seed/over-seed, then there may be two lacrosse sized fields ready to be played on by spring. The field work would be done this fall with the tree work to follow afterwards. One total bid for the work came in at \$28,000 with Keith doing the field work and hiring out the tree work (Roy Turelli?). Keith has done work at competitive prices in the past. The group discussed building out the specifications (already have irrigation and fertilizer) in order to help shape more definitive plans. The plan would be to bid everything out.

The Park Commissioners will meet again soon to look at immediate projects at Cutler Field and Hazel Grove. One or more warrant articles can be composed for Fall Town Meeting to help pay for improvement to Park sites. Fran Stanley will confirm warrant place holder with Town Manager.

Park Budget

Commissioners discussed difficulty in stretching Town budget to address needed expenditures. Jonathan Strauss noted that the Commission paid for rails and green paint to replace rotten wood rails on Minuteman Common. However, there is no ready mechanism for getting these rails painted before a volunteer installs them. There is a limit to the type and number of work tasks that can be performed by boy scouts. Jonathan Strauss advocates steps to help move the Town from its historic model of relying on volunteer labor over to a paid model. He hypothesized that the budget for a Park Commission (\$46,000) is quite different from what a Park Department might command to accomplish Park aims (circa \$160,000). The Park Commission may explore a capital improvement list to see what projects Townspeople would care to fund. Outlay sizes range from \$4,000 for a new flagpole on the Common versus a much larger amount for repairing the basketball court behind the public library.

Invoices

Waste Management (July service)	\$49
Waste Management (August service)	\$49
Groton Electric Light Department (July service)	\$650.85 [total]
United Site Services (July 24, 2013 invoice)	\$544 [8 portable toilets]
United Site Services (July 10, 2013 invoice)	\$272 [July 4 th fireworks celebration event]
Aslan Enterprises MA (August 12, 2013 invoice)	\$3,995 [fertilizing 5 locations]
Earl Carter (July 2013 invoice)	\$449.70 [repair of Cutler field storage building]
Montachusett Lawn Sprinkler Co. Pond field irrigation system]	\$123.00 (July 25, 2013 invoice) [repair of sprinkler head for Cow

Commissioners reviewed invoices for fiscal year 2014 work and individually signed approval of all presented invoices but for the Carrot Top flag invoice. Don Black is arranging payment for this invoice out of donated boy scout project funds. Fran Stanley will forward invoice and note place where charges can be lowered.

Gineane Haberlin left the meeting.

The next meeting will be held on August 28 at 7 pm at Legion Hall. The focus of the meeting will be plans for Cutler Field and Hazel Grove.

Laurie Smigelski moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:39 pm. Robert Flynn seconded and motion carried 3:0 (Gineane Haberlin and Kenneth Bushnell absent).

Notes by Fran Stanley.