

Town of Groton

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Park Commissioners

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

Meeting Minutes

Date: September 25, 2013
Time: 7 p.m.
Location: Legion Hall, First Floor Meeting Room, 75 Hollis Street, Groton
Commission attendees: Kenneth Bushnell, Jonathan Strauss, Robert Flynn, Gineane Haberlin, Laurie Smigelski
Guests: John Smigelski, John Petropoulos, Anna Eliot, Meredith Scarlett

Jonathan Strauss called the meeting to order at 7 pm. Before moving the Commissioners to the agenda items, Jonathan Strauss announced his resignation from the position of Chair effective immediately. Jonathan Strauss described some of his activities as a Chair and Commission member over the past two weeks. He averaged at least two hours per day on Park Commission business. The pace of work need to support Park Commission objectives has been very demanding of his time while at the same time he has been concerned about criticisms of his actions from within his own board. Jonathan Strauss has served on the Park Commission for five years and intends to remain a commission member through the end of his elected term of office.

Jonathan Strauss turned the running of the meeting over to Laurie Smigelski as she serves as Vice Chair. As Vice Chair, Laurie Smigelski is not automatically elevated to Chair. The chair is determined by a vote of the Commissioners. Laurie Smigelski stated that she is not interested in serving as Chair. The Chair would be expected to organize meetings, advocate for Commission budgets, serve as a point person for Commission priorities and respond to time sensitive request such as emergency requests to fix irrigation at Cow Pond Brook Field. Laurie Smigelski opened the floor to nominations for Chair, but none were forthcoming.

Gineane Haberlin moved to postpone the vote for electing a Chair until the next meeting. Robert Flynn seconded. Motion carried 3:0 (Jonathan Strauss and Laurie Smigelski abstaining).

Commission members discussed what level of cost specification was needed in order to speak outside the Park Commission regarding budget requests and approximate dollar values for desired projects. On the matter of time sensitive questions as well as requests for Park Commission action that occur outside of regular monthly meetings, Gineane Haberlin suggested that the Park Commission address these questions with a more frequent meeting schedule.

The group shared cost estimates gathered since the last meeting. Robert Flynn has gathered two quotes for carpentry repair of the gazebo. One repair estimate is \$6,000. Form of repair may need to take into account materials that are vandal resistant for areas like under pavilion lattice work or ramp and handrails up to the gazebo deck. A wood substitute such as PVC (brand name Azek) was quoted for replacement decking. The group discussed whether greater support be needed under the decking if the repair is not made with regular pressure treated wood. A good close up photograph showing the rot present in a main support post was positioned in the PowerPoint presentation to highlight needed repairs for this structure.

Robert Flynn contacted Tom Delaney (Department of Public Works Director) regarding the repair of the garage roof on the Town Field behind the library. Tom Delaney committed to supplying the labor to repair the roof if the Park Commission can purchase materials needed for the repair.

Robert Flynn called Commissioners' attention to the broad powers of Park Commissions granted by M.G.L. Chapter 45, Section 5.

The group next looked at the basketball courts and attempted to estimate repair costs. Major work is needed for the Town Field court and some effort would be required to rehabilitate the Cutler Field court. Cutler's court might cost \$7,500. Town Field court cost estimate should include cost to complete the water runoff diversion efforts begun by Tom Delaney this summer. New backboards and nets may be needed. There is a chance that adult users of the basketball courts will donate backboards and nets.

Gineane Haberlin commented that the basketball courts are apt to be larger cost items that should not be budgeted for this year or this warrant article. The Finance Committee has expressed interest in learning what the Park Commission wants to spend money on this year as well as future years. A list of future capital improvement projects would be good to give to the Finance Committee.

The flagpole on Firemen's Common is rusty and Laurie Smigelski's application of an over-the-counter test kit showed the presence of lead. Given the cost of lead remediation, Commissioners decided that that repainting the flagpole would not prove cost effective. Instead, Commissioners will recommend replacement of the current 55 foot pole with a new 40 foot pole. The pole itself is priced at \$2,500. This price does not include removal of the old pole, installation of the new pole or cost of recommended hardware.

The next topic was the tree work envisioned for Cutler Field. Jonathan Strauss can find more quotes and Kenneth Bushnell knows a local resident who has a tree service business. Kenneth Bushnell observed that the prevailing wage scales vary a lot. The hourly rate of a laborer who might be hand shoveling for the day runs about \$48 per hour or at least twice the rate of a non-prevailing wage employee. However, the prevailing wage rate for some jobs like snow shoveling and tree service work may be above the non-prevailing wage rate, but are set at a much lower relative rate. Therefore, converting a non-prevailing wage quote into an estimate of what a prevailing wage quote might be cannot be calculated by a uniform labor multiplier.

After some discussion, the group agreed that combining tree service work across Park properties would not achieve a cost savings for the Town.

Jonathan Strauss asked the Park Commission whether it could offer its support of previously described Cutler Field improvements. Jonathan Strauss explained that he would not need to work the level one site plan review through the Planning Board's review process if the Park Commission is not intending to do the proposed work. Some Commission members asked why this Cutler Field work and why now.

Jonathan Strauss explained that the proposed Cutler Field project represents approximately \$30,000 worth of work and a local use group is willing to pay one third of that cost. The youth lacrosse league in Town currently has restricted its registration due to limited field availability. The entire girls' component of lacrosse is off Town fields and instead either leases or borrows field space from private schools and Dunstable's public Larter Field. One half of the boys' lacrosse league is off Town fields and pushed to similar private school and adjoining town alternatives. Lacrosse is currently paying for its non-Parks playing fields and to help address its need for field shortages, the Lacrosse use group is willing to spend money fixing up Cutler Field. The youth soccer league in Town wants increased field space to afford it the opportunity to lay up field to preserve them. Here, the youth baseball league decided to pull out of Cutler Field and no longer make use of these facilities. With certain remedial field work and an expansion of the parking lot, the recreational league representing the Town's youth league sports noted that two multi use fields could be created. These multi use fields would be suitable for use by soccer or lacrosse.

Jonathan Strauss then moved to a description of specific planning steps. He has been in touch with the Groton Fire Chief regarding how to handle access to Cutler Field for an emergency response. He noted that some of the tree work can be staged but the tree work needed to expand the parking lot must be done first. If there is not sufficient parking to serve the multi-use fields, then the sports' leagues will not be able to practice and play games there. He asked the other Commissioners whether they consider this Cutler Field project enough of a priority to proceed.

Gineane Haberlin moved that the following projects are priorities to be discussed at the Finance Committee for a warrant article for the Fall Town Meeting: Cutler Field, Town Field/gazebo, Firemen's Common flagpole, general signage, Hazel Grove site work and Minutemen Common rails. Robert Flynn seconded and motion carried 5:0.

Jonathan Strauss moved to accept the September 11, 2013 minutes as drafted with one correction. Gineane Haberlin seconded and motion carried 4:0 (Kenneth Bushnell abstained).

Jonathan Strauss explained the background on the J.B. Turf invoice for grub treatment of Cutler Field. The actual cost was within \$800 to \$1,000 estimate provided by the landscaper who uncovered the grubs during his slicing and seeding work. Park Commissioners approved the payment of this invoice.

Next, Commissioners looked over a couple of estimates received for winterizing the Cow Pond Brook soccer fields. The soccer field and Field of Dreams have irrigation systems that are tied together so it makes sense to assign those two fields to a single contractor. Montachusett is highly familiar with the irrigation system at Cow Pond Brook field. Kurt's business might be assigned to winterize Stone Bridge and Cutler. Kenneth Bushnell commented that the contractor Turf Unlimited has been tending the football field. Either Kenneth Bushnell or Jonathan Strauss can e-mail Turf Unlimited to ask for a quote.

CPC two page summaries are due October 28, 2013. Jonathan Strauss expressed interest in applying for the remaining \$41,000 for the benefit of Ledge Rock project. This is money that the CPC was willing to commit, but a shortfall left the grant amount short by \$41,000. The effort needed to apply for this money is minimal since the original CPC application for Ledge Rock with a changed dollar amount asked would constitute an adequate submission. Group discussed making a joint application to CPC for all the fields. Applications can be made for future projects that are as far as 5 years forward in time. For example, an application may be put in for a future playground to be built at Ledge Rock field.

Robert Flynn noted that a walking path made of stone dust around Park fields (Cow Pond or Ledge Rock) would be well utilized.

Kenneth Bushnell suggested poured in place rubber coating for the Christine Hanson Playground to replace the wood chips that are used there presently. Also, could the unused Prescott School playground equipment be moved to a location that would be used by young Groton families?

For the next meeting, Commissioners are asked to bring in a list of projects that might be included in a CPC application.

The Park Commissioners began consideration of the Hazel Grove Agricultural Association RFP submission. Jonathan Strauss reviewed the two to three year history of Hazel Grove and the emergence of the Hazel Grove Agricultural Association. Meredith Scarlett described the group's aims as wanting to make a 1, 3 and 5 year plan to address the park and move it to a self-sustaining site. The year one goal is to have the site clean and safe. HGAA has increased signage and communications with the public and the Town of Groton. The year three goals involve improving the infrastructure of Hazel Grove. By year five, the goal is good infrastructure, an agricultural fair, lots of use and a self-sustaining model. The group looked to the Town of Spencer Fairgrounds which also has a municipally owned standard bred harness racing track. Spencer manages its track through an RFP process. It was always a plan of the HGAA to become a private group for management and to enable fundraising on behalf of the site.

Jonathan Strauss asked what the HGAA wants in terms of being under the Park Commission which has jurisdiction of the Hazel Grove site or apart from the Park Commission. The 28 acre park with an 11 acre infield is under the jurisdiction and custodial responsibility of the Park Commission. The HGAA understands that if it is selected to manage the Hazel Grove site, then Hazel Grove will still remain a jurisdictional responsibility of the Park Commission. There was more discussion regarding how the RFP was initiated. Gineane Haberlin commented that this question was sticking on a process question. From a practical standpoint, she added, it would have been good for the HGAA to have consulted with the Park Commission to make sure that the RFP works from the Park's perspective as well as the HGAA perspective.

Jonathan Strauss asked if from the HGAA point of view, is the Park Commission's recommendation to the Town Manager on the RFP submission time sensitive? Meredith Scarlett answered yes because the HGAA needs the

authority of the Town to help with securing insurance, allowing individual lease ups of the stalls, etc. The HGAA might be able to receive up to \$3,400 per month in rental income from renting dry stalls. There are some good prospective tenants who will move their animals to other establishments if the HGAA cannot act in the near future. Meredith Scarlett stated that her group was not looking to circumvent Parks. Anna Eliot, an advisor to HGAA, said that the universe of use groups is not set. HGAA is open to 4H, the Grange, the Trails Committee, etc. Use of the harness track will be limited to members of the Riding and Driving Club. Other informal pick up use of Hazel Grove is there for riding in the infield or the nearby trails network.

The Park Commissioners then spent some time editing the PowerPoint presentation to be shown to the Finance Committee. Commissioners agreed to submit costs in terms of expected ranges.

The next meetings will be held on October 2nd and October 16th. Both meetings will be scheduled for 7 pm at the usual Legion Hall location. There will be no meeting held on October 9th.

Laurie Smigelski and Robert Flynn will present Gineane Haberlin's PowerPoint presentation to the Finance Committee on September 26th.

Gineane Haberlin moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:30 pm. Jonathan Strauss seconded and motion carried 5:0.

Notes by Fran Stanley.