

Town of Groton

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Park Commissioners

Gineane Haberlin, Chair
Kenneth Bushnell
Robert Flynn
Matthew Frary
Jonathan Strauss

Meeting Minutes

Date: August 12 2014
Time: 7 p.m.
Location: Legion Hall, First Floor Meeting Room, 75 Hollis Street, Groton
Commission attendees: Gineane Haberlin, Jonathan Strauss, Matthew Frary, Kenneth Bushnell (arrived later)
Other attendees: Connie Sartini, Jane Bouvier (representing Grotonfest), Chris Davies (representing youth soccer), Kevin Potter (LA Athletic Director)
Handouts: Agenda, July 9, 2014 draft minutes

Gineane Haberlin called meeting to order at 7 pm.

Invoices and funding

Pending invoices were reviewed. Commissioners discussed whether to pay originally invoiced amount for the landscaping work on the mulched bed done by P.C. Myette out at Cow Pond. There was no prior estimate and the work was done. Jonathan Strauss contended that Commission should pay full amount and not try to get the vendor to discount his charges in these circumstances. In the future, the Park Commissioners may want to proceed by obtaining an estimate or decide if they are interested in using the same vendor. The Commissioners in attendance responded to this point of view by approving the originally invoiced (and higher) amount for payment.

P.C. Myette payment will be made out of encumbered FY14 funds. Commissioners asked to review updated FY15 budget and remaining warrant article funds at their September meeting. Hazel Grove electric charges can be transferred to the Hazel Grove Agricultural Association while the HGAA is managing the Groton Fairgrounds.

For the Firemen's Common flagpole, Commissioners agreed to purchase an extra crank handle and that it wants a longer halyard with slack to fly two flags (both the U.S. flag and a POW flag) instead of the single flag.

As previously discussed, Commissioners agreed to purchase one or two replacement flags for each flag that is presently flying.

Gineane Haberlin reported that solenoids and sprinkler heads at the Cow Pond Football field have been breaking. The irrigation contractor has been sent down to this field three times in the past two days. At some point, a large puddle formed on the fields which raises the question of whether someone with access to the irrigation timers is tinkering with the watering schedule.

Minutes

Commissioners reviewed minutes.

Jonathan Strauss moved to approve the July 9, 2014 minutes as drafted. Gineane Haberlin seconded and motion carried 3:0 (Robert Flynn absent and Kenneth Bushnell abstained).

Field Use Permits

The Park Commissioners discussed pending field use permit for soccer at Cow Pond fields with youth soccer representative Chris Davies and approved the same.

The Park Commissioners discussed pending field use permit for soccer at Town Field by 3rd youngest boys with Lawrence Academy Athletic Director Kevin Potter and approved the same. Gineane Haberlin and other commissioners applauded Lawrence Academy on the lacrosse tournament that was held on the LA campus a few weeks ago.

Park Commissioners discussed pending field use permit for Grotonfest with organizer Jane Bouvier and approved the same.

Applicants were reminded that users of Town property need to follow all relevant laws and permit requirements such as Nashoba Associated Board of Health permitting of food vending at the Cow Pond snack shacks.

Lacrosse use group did not have a representative present but their field requests were received in advance of the meeting. Commissioners agreed with lacrosse use group wish to rest Woitowicz Field this fall in order to improve the turf. Commissioners agreed to assign Cutler and Town Field (at non Lawrence Academy reserved times) in order to rest Woitowicz. Nashoba Technical School just opened a new turf field and it will allow area groups to use its field. Lacrosse can be referred to Nashoba Technical School if it requires more space than the Park Commission can provide.

CPC Applications and/or Future Expected Costs

Cow Pond Lights

Chris Davies, representing youth soccer, discussed a planned CPC application for overhead lighting of certain Cow Pond turf fields. There are several considerations including whether to ask for game quality light versus practice quality light, whether to specify lighting that is energy efficient, whether to add lighting to the parking lot for safety reasons (general agreement to do so). Jonathan Strauss recommended that the baseball Field of Dreams CPC application be reviewed to see organization of a successful application as well as to see if the lighting contractor elements will be helpful when designing this project.

The addition of ball field lighting may extend the playing season in time and allow for afternoon practices to last later into the evening. If youth soccer submits an application, then the Park Commission can write a letter of support. A rough estimate of this project's cost is \$100,000.

Using Prescott School Playground Equipment

If the Prescott School sale proceeds, the Park Commission can remove Prescott playground equipment and store it at the DPW garage. Some of the playground equipment could be installed at Cutler and the remainder of the equipment could be installed at Cow Pond. Kenneth Bushnell will measure out the required fall zones that determine what space is needed for equipment installs. Matthew Frary commented that the Cutler Field teeter totter (seesaw) should be removed. The playground installation project may cost \$50,000 plus the cost of the special wood chips that cushion the playground area.

Cow Pond Walking Path

A walking path that is routed around the Cow Pond ball fields would add variety to the Cow Pond offerings and complement the sports uses. The Town of Dunstable has Larter Field, which contains a paved walking path. The Larter Field walking path is enjoyed by many parents who exercise on the walking path while their children playing ball sports. The walking path is also utilized by other residents who value an accessible easy walking path. This project which might cost about \$140,000 due to substantial labor costs meets the Park Commission goal of enhancing its existing facilities. Kenneth Bushnell and Gineane Haberlin will concentrate on the walking path and the Prescott playground. An entrance to the walking path will be needed at either end.

Ice Rink(s)

Kenneth Bushnell pointed out that the Holofcener ice rink needs new boards. The commissioners discussed popularity of the rink and wondered if a second rink could be put up at Cutler Field to benefit West Groton children. Ideally, the rink would have ready access to water as well as neighborhood volunteers who will help keep the ice cleared of snow. Perhaps the Tarbell school grounds could be used.

Cutler Field Basketball Court Maintenance

Large crack in asphalt surface needs to be patched.

Town Field Basketball Court Replacement/Demolition

Matthew Frary investigated the possibility of creating two courts in the area where there is presently one dilapidated court. There is a sewer line running next to the basketball court so there is not enough free land to expand to two courts. Commissioners discussed the options. Perhaps land next to the court could be filled to create extra parking spaces next to the court. A new court could be built for \$30,000 to \$50,000 if built in-house by the Department of Public Works. Fencing around the court would have to be done by an outside contractor.

Perhaps a quote/estimated cost of demolishing the basketball court could be collected.

Splash pad was raised as an idea. Kenneth Bushnell explained that a splash pad has to be tied into sewer in order to treat the contaminated water. What other ideas? The more things you add to a clean project, the less clean it becomes. Commissioners noted that the basketball court project would require Historic Districts Commission approval.

Fall Town Meeting Warrant Article: Might the Park Commission request about \$30,000 to put towards refurbishment of its existing facilities?

Celebrations Committee

The commissioners discussed events that are held on Park Commission land such as fireworks, Grotonfest, and part of the Memorial Day parade celebration. This summer, the Park Commissions were asked questions about the funding, organization, payments, vendors and state licensing that includes CORI checks. Betsey Reeve addressed the Commissioners in July regarding the fireworks event and several other questions were field by the Town Clerk regarding the same event. Jonathan Strauss explained that the perception has been that fireworks is a Park Commission event and yet the Park Commission just allowed use of the space by Don Black's group and paid for portable restrooms. The group wondered how to address the issue so that in the future there will be less questions and more successes.

Gineane Haberlin suggested that formation of a celebrations committee may be a solution because a public committee is transparent and accountability falls to more than one person. A celebrations committee might allow more and varied events to be held on Park Commission property as the interest arises.

Jane Bouvier said that this is the first year that she has heard of problems with fireworks. Jonathan Strauss agreed that overall, the July 4th fireworks celebration has been a great day from his perspective.

If a celebrations committee were formed, then it might require trinket/food vendors to hold state permits to ensure that CORI checks have been made. The group discussed how much money would need to be raised to pay for the event. Fireworks are funded by a Commissioner of Trust Funds grant (\$6,000 in 2014) but the concert band is hired and those funds need to be raised if the event continues with similar offerings. For a public event, who gets the right to sell things and make a profit? If you have an entity whether it is for profit or not for profit making money, should that entity pay for event expenses? For example, under those circumstances why should the Park Commission pay for the portable restrooms? If donations are received, they could be held in a gift account similar to the way the Town's Greenway Committee organizes its annual river festival at Petapawag Place. Jane Bouvier added that all such events should have a rain date scheduled just in case. The 2014 fireworks planning did include a rain date

Connie Sartini confirmed that the fireworks celebration is a municipally sponsored event. Town sponsorship allows the Town's insurance plan to cover the event without the purchase of additional liability insurance. Connie Sartini wondered if people will take their events to private land if the process is too unpalatable or too many constraints are present. Jonathan Strauss commented that the July 4th celebration is the primary issue. The Park Commission sees a need to do things differently next year but is not yet clear on what those changes will be.

There was not support across the commission for a celebrations committee to be formed as a first step. Matthew Fray suggested that if the Park Commission wanted to check in on planned events, then Commissioners can call event organizers in before the event. Connie Sartini suggested that the Commission may be trying to fix things that are not entirely broken. All recalled how Don Black ran the Town's 350th celebration, an effort that was highly appreciated by town residents. Connie Sartini recalled that to organize the 350th celebration, Don Black had to make some decisions on the fly, but observed that his interests were in the Town's interests.

Jonathan Strauss summarized the discussion progress by having the Commission list of what it wants to have (i.e., the elements of a safe, fun and orderly event) and list what it does not want to have. There should be no unresolved questions. If vendors are problematic, then the Commission may think about a celebration that removes the vendor component.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Upcoming Meeting: Park Commission Tuesday, September 16th at 7 pm

Notes by Fran Stanley.