

## Town of Groton

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## Park Commissioners

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

### Meeting Minutes

Date: September 16, 2014  
Time: 7 p.m.  
Location: Town Hall, First Floor Meeting Room, 173 Main Street, Groton  
Commission attendees: Gineane Haberlin, Jonathan Strauss, Matthew Frary, Robert Flynn  
Other attendees: Chris Davies (representing youth soccer) (via speaker phone)  
Handouts: Agenda  
Temporary lighting proposal for Cow Pond  
August 12, 2014 draft minutes

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Gineane Haberlin called meeting to order at 7 pm.

### Invoices

Pending invoices were reviewed. As explained to the group, the Commissioners may decide to shift responsibility for payment of the Hazel Grove electric usage to the Hazel Grove Agricultural Association (HGAA). There is one account in the Park Commission's name currently and there are thought to be five or six other metered accounts on that site. If the HGAA assumed this responsibility, then Groton Electric Light Department (GELD) might require them to place a \$150 deposit on each account. There is a possibility that the Park Commission might put a letter on file with GELD that assures them that the Park Commission will guarantee payment of the accounts. Such a letter may be sufficient for GELD to open up HGAA accounts without taking a deposit. The average cost of total Hazel Grove electric is about \$100 per month.

Commissioners discussed the matter. Robert Flynn commented that the Hazel Grove park has not had much ongoing financial support from the Park Commission whereas the Commissioners routinely pay electric bills for ball fields in Town. Robert Flynn recommended that the Park Commission assume direct responsibility for all of the electric accounts at Hazel Grove. Other commissioners agreed with this plan and directed Fran Stanley to request the billing change.

### Minutes

Commissioners reviewed minutes.

*Gineane Haberlin moved to approve the August 12, 2014 minutes as drafted. Jonathan Strauss seconded and motion carried 3:0 (Robert Flynn abstained and Kenneth Bushnell absent).*

### Field Use Permits

Commissioners approved PTA's permit request for use of Town Field for a Halloween parade, pending submission of a certificate of insurance.

Fran Stanley reported that the Park Commission has received a Grotonfest certificate of insurance, but the insurance document lacks provision naming the Town of Groton as additional insured. Event organizer has been asked to provide a certificate that includes the additional insured provision. Fran Stanley instructed to keep the Town Manager informed on status.

Commissioners plan to discuss July 4<sup>th</sup> fireworks event at their next meeting. Fran Stanley instructed to invite July 4<sup>th</sup> celebration organizer Donald Black to the next meeting so that he might participate in the discussion.

### **Lighting at Cow Pond Ball Fields**

Gineane Haberlin introduced the topic. She explained that there are demands on the fields (i.e., more playing time per day) and for the safety of the players, the Park Commission is installing additional lighting at Cow Pond ball fields. Commissioners reviewed the proposal for installing temporary lighting on one or two practice fields. What had initially been envisioned as a three field lighting project costing close to \$100,000 was reduced to a \$15,000 (approximate cost) project when youth soccer looked at what they could pay for and install for use on the current fall soccer season. One field is the focus because the selected field already has some poles and some lighting.

Commissioners shared initial thoughts. Robert Flynn expressed concern that payment for the lights by a use group would be seen as giving that use group priority or exclusive use of that Park Commission property. Jonathan Strauss commented that he does not think that this is a concern based on explicit communications that the use groups do not gain special access. Jonathan Strauss stated a larger concern that active recreation should be paid for out of the regular town budget and not have so much of Park Commission funding dependent on Community Preservation Committee (CPC) grants.

Chris Davies may join the meeting later or participate remotely by speakerphone. So, Commissioners deferred further discussion of lighting project until later in the meeting.

### **Community Service Efforts by Groton School**

Gineane Haberlin reported that David Black from the Groton School contacted the Park Commission regarding how Groton School could help on a Park Commission property for its community service day. Middle school students are scheduled to work on sprucing up the Christine Hanson Memorial Playground on September 30.

Volunteers will spread certified playground chips, rake current playground chips, weed out broken sandbox toys and add sand to the sandbox. Approximately four cubic yards of certified playground chips will be delivered by a landscaping supply vendor (Dirt Doctors in Southern New Hampshire) on September 29. The Town's Department of Public Works will supply a load of free sand. The school will provide rakes, shovels and wheelbarrows to move the material.

On the same day, a smaller group of school volunteers will weed and clean up the Carol Wheeler park in West Groton. The school will bring any needed gardening tools to that site as well.

### **Smith Pavilion**

The Smith Pavilion or gazebo needs repair of rotted wood, broken railings, broken lattice work. The structure was not built with pressure treated wood so the exposed wood below winter snow levels was susceptible to rot. Jonathan Strauss commented on the frequent repairs needed to railings and lattice work due to vandalism. He said that the gazebo has been the most repaired item that we own.

Jonathan Strauss suggested that the gazebo be moved to the Groton Fairgrounds. The structure would still be repaired by the Park Commission but the structure may stay in good repair and free from vandalism if it is relocated away from the Town Field area. Commissioners discussed this idea and the idea was favorably received. The HGAA group could make use of the gazebo and also use the gazebo as a draw for attracting additional use of the Hazel Grove site. Matthew Frary noted that the Town Field could use temporary staging – perhaps stored in the newly repaired storage shed – when events require a stage.

### **Funding & Planning for Future Projects**

Gineane Haberlin suggested that the group prepare one, three and five year plans for capital improvements and infrastructure repair. That level of planning would help to focus the biggest use groups who have means to address capital improvements. And, this planning is also useful for coordinating CPC grants and organizing direct Town

funding through annual budgets or dedicated warrant articles. Park Commission may ask for time at Fall Town Meeting to provide project report on previously authorized \$50,000.

Jonathan Strauss expressed interest in having the Park Commission assign a liaison to the Groton Dunstable Regional School District (GDRSD). Active recreation for Town residents may be expanded or improved if GDRSD gets its middle school track repaired or the school district gets a turf field. A number of the school fields are in poor condition and some attention and help from the Town of Groton may help to address that problem too. These sorts of projects are a form of infrastructure and are things that the Town of Groton needs to do. Presently, there is no communication avenue for the schools. Commissioners discussed this idea and were amenable to a liaison position.

*Gineane Haberlin nominated Jonathan Strauss to serve as Park Commission liaison to the Groton Dunstable Regional School District. Matthew Frary seconded and motion carried 3:0 (Jonathan Strauss abstained, Kenneth Bushnell absent.)*

Matthew Frary reported on the CPC ratings scale of proposed projects. The Master Plan and Open Space & Recreation Plans both seem geared toward conservation land acquisition over active recreation. Matthew Frary excused himself from the Park Commission meeting in order to appear before the Historic Districts Commission on the matter of HDC oversight of the Town Field basketball court project. Notably, all of the present basketball courts are either smaller than regulation size or the court dimensions are painted incorrectly. On one court, the player is out of bounds when standing directly under the hoop.

Hanson Playground project. In the spring, Robert Flynn offered to work with Gineane Haberlin on improved ADA compliance and surfacing.

Park Commission liaisons need to get in touch with use groups. Gineane Haberlin observed that Kenneth Bushnell and the Lacrosse use group are doing a good job on field refurbishment at Woitowicz with the slice/seeding effort.

Department of Public Works employees fixed the ramp that led up and into the soccer shed at Cow Pond.

Cutler Field. Robert Flynn said that Cutler could accommodate an ice rink since the Groton Fire Department will probably be willing to use their water tanks to fill up the rink. Lighting Cutler would help with the hockey rink use. Park Commissioners agreed to purchase two liners and sufficient boards to form two ice rinks

Another possible project mentioned was the reconfiguring/improvement of the Cow Pond parking lot.

Signs. Park Commissioners agreed that all of the signs that it intends to put up will be directional.

#### Cow Pond Irrigation

Gineane Haberlin explained that several reports of re-set irrigation timers and irrigation timer mistakes -- too much water, not enough water -- have filtered in this spring, summer and fall. Park Commissioners agree that irrigation schedules should not be changed without the approval of the Park Commission field liaison. Also, it is important for the Park Commission's irrigation contractor to always be aware of the approved watering schedule. Despite these issues, the sports turf at Cow Pond fields is reported to be in good shape right now.

Commissioners decided to install a lock box on the irrigation timer equipment and to allow just the DPW, irrigation vendor and of course the Park Commission to have access. Such control was deemed necessary in order to enforce the Commission's irrigation policy.

#### **Cow Pond Lighting**

Chris Davies participated in the discussion via speaker phone. Park Commissioners asked Chris Davies for project details. Discussion centered on whether effort and expense to put up temporary, metal halide lighting on Cow Pond 3 was the right project to do at this point. About 75% of the cost is for electrical service upgrades and increased transformer size for delivery of needed power. It is hoped that those investments will be useful to the future larger project. The Park Commissioners agreed that a comprehensive lighting for Cow Pond would make a good CPC

application for the spring. Specifying durable, low wattage fixtures for the comprehensive lighting project will help the Park Commission with its ongoing operating costs.

Jonathan Strauss cautioned that youth soccer may not recoup its investment. Chris Davies replied that this is a risk that he understands his organization is taking. Chris Davies also stated that there is a possibility that new lighting will not go up next summer, due to funding constraints, in which case the Cow Pond 3 lighting would be relied upon as is for another year.

Park Commissioners and Chris Davies agreed that if the field is lit, then the parking lot needs to be lighted too for safety. One light pole can have fixtures installed to light half of the parking lot. Commissioners agreed to supply temporary lighting to the other side of the parking lot if the plan goes forward. Temporary light towers can be rented for the remainder of the season.

*Jonathan Strauss moved to approve youth soccer's proposal to light Cow Pond 3 and one half of the Cow Pond parking lot with the Park Commission arranging to provide temporary lighting to the other side of the parking lot. Gineane Haberlin seconded and motion carried 3:0 (Kenneth Bushnell absent and Matthew Fray absent).*

Park Commissioners then discussed extent of notice to MIT Haystack and the Wallace Observatory. Chris Davies has already had an initial email exchange regarding youth soccer's plans to install lighting over a field used for soccer practices. Commissioners decided that the Haystack communications are intended as a courtesy notice and not intended to be a request for permission. Commissioners acknowledged that Town committees have often extended such notice to its near neighbor regarding past Town of Groton projects.

#### **Town Field Basketball Court**

Matthew Fray rejoined the meeting and said that the HDC was helpful on the preview of the basketball court project. Matthew Fray explained what the Park Commission was planning to improve or even re-make the basketball court. The HDC reflected back its wishes for lighting that is in keeping with the historic district look which may be a higher price point than Park Commission's usual preference for cost efficient lighting that stresses function over form. In lieu of reproduction black metal light poles, might the Park Commission respond to HDC aims by painting wood poles black? Other topics like fencing and accessible access to the court were covered in the HDC discussion too.

*Gineane Haberlin moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:11 pm. Jonathan Strauss seconded and motion carried 4:0 (Kenneth Bushnell absent).*

Upcoming Meetings: Monday, September 29<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm in Legion Hall.

Notes by Fran Stanley.