

Town of Groton

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Park Commissioners

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

Meeting Minutes

Date: September 29, 2014
Time: 7 p.m.
Location: Legion Hall, First Floor Meeting Room, Hollis Street, Groton
Commission attendees: Gineane Haberlin, Jonathan Strauss, Matthew Frary, Robert Flynn, Kenneth Bushnell
Other attendees: Donald Black
Handouts: Agenda
September 16, 2014 draft minutes

Gineane Haberlin called meeting to order at 7:04 pm.

Celebrations: July 4th, Veterans Day, Memorial Day Parade

Park Commission invited Donald Black to attend this Park Commission meeting so that Commissioners can learn more about the organization of the July 4th celebration. Gineane Haberlin introduced the topic stating that there is a need for a more transparent event as it is held on Town Land and paid for with Town funds (through the Commissioner of Trust Funds grants). This summer, questions were raised about CORI checks for vendors, and there were complaints from one vendor (the Firefighters Association) about finances and the Commissioners did not have the answers. Robert Flynn asked who organized the event and who paid for it. The Commissioners pay for event portable restrooms and approve the field use permit for use of Town Field. All Commissioners commenting noted that they were positive about the event and thought that the Town benefited from having this collective celebration.

Donald Black addressed the group and stated that he has always run the event as a Park Commission event and has been doing so since he served as chair of Groton's 350th celebration. Donald Black commented that he may have put the Park Commission in a difficult position by being the outgoing chair and still running the event. The event with rain date is often scheduled for the Monday after the 4th because the nearby public library is closed that day. The initial organizers started as a group of three (Police Chief Palma, Fire Chief Bosselait and himself). For public safety questions such as does weather permit fireworks launch, the decision is shared between himself, the Fire Chief, Police Chief and DPW Director. Both the Fire Chief and DPW director have access to good weather forecasting data to help can track local weather patterns.

Financing of the event came from several sources over the years. Initially, bottles and cans from the recycling services at DPW raised \$60,000. This year the Trust Funds provided \$6,000 to pay for the fireworks. The charges for fireworks grow incrementally each year. The Park Commission directly pays for portable restrooms. Insurance, crowd control and emergency services are provided free of charge by the Town of Groton since it is a Town sponsored event. As for the sale of food, the Firefighters Association ran it and brought in other food vendors. Donald Black recalled that there is a trinkets vendor who has come to the event since its inception. The trinkets vendor and perhaps other food vendors may make out a check for about \$150. Donald Black collects those checks and hands the checks directly over to the hired band (Nashoba Valley Band) to pay for their performance. The group agreed that there is not a mechanism for the Park Commission to charge fees and collect money. Donald Black explained that he raises the needed funds but does not carry over funds year over year.

The question was asked if there were no food present, would it affect attendance. In Donald Black's opinion, the food is a secondary consideration and he does not think that the absence of food would diminish attendance. Donald Black offered to turn over the running of the event to the Park Commission but was willing to consider

running the event in the future as an agent of the Park Commission. The Park Commission could appoint a Park Commission liaison to Donald Black to support increased communication with the Park Commission regarding this event.

The group discussed various options for the 2015 July 4th event. Gineane Haberlin stated that she likes the idea of a celebrations committee in order to do more events around Town besides the fireworks and the Memorial Day parade. Having a Park Commission liaison to the July 4th event will also help the Park Commission to transition the event to other organizers should Donald Black decide to put his energies elsewhere. Kenny Bushnell volunteered to be the liaison.

GH moved to endorse Donald Black as the July 4th agent for the fireworks celebration with Kenneth Bushnell to serve as Park Commission liaison. Jonathan Strauss seconded and motion carried 5:0.

Donald Black asked the Park Commissioners to focus on the Veterans Day event that is commonly held on Sawyer Common. Donald Black thinks that it is appropriate for this event to have Park Commission sponsorship. This is an event that Donald Black also organizes. This year, the holiday falls on a Tuesday.

Gineane Haberlin asked for a description of the event. Donald Black organizes a musical group, revolutionary war minutemen re-enactors fire their muskets, and a bell referred to as the bell of freedom is often rung too. Usually, there is a veterans speaker. Set up involves putting up twenty-five chairs [folding chairs borrowed from Swallow Union] in a circle within the monument semi-circle. Veterans are invited to sit in these chairs in part so they are distinguished from the rest of the crowd. As a part of the ceremony, the US flag that is flying is retired and a new US flag is raised. The retired US flag is disassembled over the year. Stars are cut from the retired flag and given to Groton veterans and their families. If a tent is used, then the boy scouts are asked to put it up.

Kenneth Bushnell moved to amend Donald Black's agent position to also include Veterans Day. Jonathan Strauss seconded and motion carried 5:0.

Donald Black was asked to send in emails to Kenneth Bushnell and Fran Stanley about planning elements for these two events. Commissioners briefly discussed the Memorial Day parade that is organized by Veterans Agent Bob Johnson. This event is funded through a \$500 budget line item that filed under Park Commission's other accounts (operating budget, warrant article funds, gift accounts). Gineane Haberlin asked whether the Trustee's Funds could be used as a mechanism to fund additional Park Commission events. The Park Commission could expand their activities if they had sufficient funding to proceed.

Smith Social Pavilion

Donald Black explained the background on the gazebo. Donald Smith is the benefactor for the Smith Social Pavilion. Originally planned for Legion Common, the neighboring abutters at that time did not support that location. Donald Smith was amenable to the second choice of the Town Field area as he recalled playing baseball there as a child. The Board of Selectmen asked the Park Commission to attend a Selectmen's meeting and discuss the Park Commission's proposal to move the gazebo to the Groton Fairgrounds. The Park Commission wants to eliminate the vandalism that has afflicted the gazebo at the current site.

The gazebo needs to be partially disassembled to be repaired anyway. It is thought that all the vertical elements need to be replaced. Matthew Frary wondered if the structure would be cheaper to replace than to repair. All agree to maintain the name as the Smith Social Pavilion regardless of gazebo's location or possible replacement. Donald Black is still in contact with the Smith Family. He will ask the family for their approval/acceptance of a new Groton Fairgrounds location on behalf of the Park Commission. Presently, Ralph Smith on Common Street is the only Smith still living in Groton. Gineane Haberlin shared her sense of obligation to make a plan for the repair of this structure even if the plan is not implemented until next year. As Robert Flynn proposed, Building Commissioner Ed Cataldo will be asked to perform a safety inspection of the gazebo.

Invoices

Pending invoices were reviewed and Commissioners approved payment for various invoices. Review of Triangle portable restroom invoices prompted discussion of need for one more portable restroom to be placed near the baseball side of Cow Pond in order to serve crowds at football games this fall. Fran Stanley instructed to order this extra service from the Park Commission's vendor.

Community Service Efforts by Groton School

Gineane Haberlin informed the Commissioners that volunteers will be raking playground mulch and adding sand to the sand box. Kenneth Bushnell will repair the one bouncy horse that has a loose fitting. Weeding of the small Carol Wheeler garden will also be done by Groton School volunteers.

The Groton Garden Club just worked on the commons and put in fall plantings. Jonathan Strauss reported that the Cow Pond ball fields look good. The group agreed that the grass looks great and Cutler field looks amazing. Woitowicz field is also coming along as the grass seed takes hold. Kenneth Bushnell reported that there is a foul pole that needs to be cut down. The Commissioners reiterated that they do not want to encourage people to bring dogs to Town fields. Even leashed dogs can become unruly in crowds and when meeting up with other dogs.

Lighting at Cow Pond Ball Fields

Gineane Haberlin updated the group on Cow Pond lighting. This fall, there will be new temporary lights for Cow Pond 3 courtesy of the soccer use group. Temporary lighting on the left hand side of the parking lot will be achieved through a portable light tower borrowed from the Police Department. Soccer use group asked the Park Commission to install nets along the woods to keep the soccer balls on the field. Kenneth Bushnell says that Cow Pond 4 also needs netting for foul balls because there are woods behind one side of the field.

The Park Commission agreed with Gineane Haberlin's idea to move temporary Cow Pond 3 lights to Cutler after Cow Pond's entire multi use fields' lighting are developed and/or improved. Cutler Field is already set up for electric.

Gineane Haberlin announced the Town's approval of a capital improvement line item to light all of Cow Pond appropriately via a \$90,000 grant. This will be a line item transfer that does not need Town Meeting approval. For \$90,000 one can purchase lighting for two fields. The lighting is not a new request as it has been in the budget for two years.

Commissioners agreed that there is widespread interest in building a walking track around Cow Pond (would cost \$140,000). Jonathan Strauss reminded the group that executing capital improvements in a competent fashion is important in order to keep residents engaged and involved in continued investment. Skills, man power all in house and DPW can manage it. For the project, DPW would purchase a piece of machinery that costs \$50,000. Whether to go out to bid is the Town Manager's call as chief procurement officer. Gineane Haberlin commented that our own labor and our own management is always going to better despite some cost differences. Kenneth Bushnell leaves the meeting.

The work needs to be done to install lock to Cow Pond irrigation as agreed at the mid-September meeting. Kenneth Bushnell will be asked to do that task.

Minutes

Commissioners reviewed the most recent set of draft minutes.

Gineane Haberlin moved to approve the September 16, 2014 minutes as drafted. Robert Flynn seconded and motion carried 4:0 (Kenneth Bushnell absent).

Field Use Permits

Commissioners approved cub scouts' permit request for use of Cow Pond parking lot for a cookout/bon fire. Certificate of insurance received for the event. The Commissioners were not comfortable with having a fire in that location even though the Groton Fire Department did not oppose the plan. Commissioners recommend that the applicant use Surrenden Farm and the portion of those fields set aside for scouting use.

School Liaison Report

Jonathan Strauss provided a school liaison update. He met with High School Principal Mastrullo and Facilities Director McCaffrey. Together, they walked the high school fields and saw how rough the soccer and football fields are. The grass is sparse. There is lots of crabgrass and there is uneven ground. Should fields be turned over to the Town? Would it make sense to make one field turf and repave the middle school track? CPC funds cannot buy turf. Town does not need to own the land in order to spend CPC dollars. Field prep, site work and track can be paid for by CPC money. The school wants to work with the Park Commission. Jonathan Strauss also spoke with David Manugian whose children play soccer.

The group agreed that the next question is to explore the school committee's thinking about present field maintenance and possible improvements. The school district spends about for 35 million and has a school system that is nationally ranked for academics. Perhaps a CPC application could encumber the unallocated reserve for the next ten years and find \$500,000 in private donations

The Commissioners will ask the school committee for their input, update the Town Manager and update use groups. Of concern is the fact that the CPC match will be very low this year, perhaps 22% from state funds. The volume of transactions at the Registry of Deeds has been quite low recently.

Mosquito Control Request

Barry Pease asked Gineane Haberlin if the Park Commission would support the purchase of mosquito control by the Town. There is a difference of opinion on the Park Commission by the Commissioners who expressed their opinions. Some believe that this is an important safety measure. Others are dubious that reducing the mosquito population will adequately protect the population. It is unclear how the Park Commission would register its opinion on the subject (write to the Board of Health or perhaps write to the Selectmen). Also, in a ranking of harms that might be protected against, mosquito control may protect two percent of the population whereas Lyme Disease and other related tick borne illnesses affect eighty percent of the population. The Park Commission did not take a formal position as a whole on this issue.

Ice Rinks

Gineane Haberlin asked for estimated costs for purchase of plywood boards, L bracket supports and liners for two rinks. Robert Flynn will calculate the material costs, but the plastic liners will cost about \$200 each.

Gineane Haberlin moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:04 pm. Matthew Frary seconded and motion carried 4:0 (Kenneth Bushnell absent).

Upcoming Meetings: Monday, November 10th at 7 pm in Legion Hall.

Notes by Fran Stanley.