

Town of Groton

173 Main Street
Groton, MA 01450
Tel: 978-732-1893
Fax: 978-448-1115

fstanley@townofgroton.org



Park Commissioners

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

Meeting Minutes

Date: February 2, 2015
Time: 7 p.m.
Location: Legion Hall, 1st Floor Meeting Room, 75 Hollis Street, Groton
Commission attendees: Gineane Haberlin, Matthew Frary, Jonathan Strauss, Kenneth Bushnell
Visitors: Nick Marsh (Eagle Scout candidate), Dean Marsh (Nick's father), T.J. Rivett (youth baseball and representing football & cheer), Brendan Lowney (youth lacrosse), Laurie Smigelski (Hazel Grove Agricultural Association), Jeff Ohringer (youth soccer), Pierre Comtois (Nashoba Publishing), John Smigelski
Handouts: January 5, 2014 draft minutes

Gineane Haberlin opened the meeting at 7 pm.

Hazel Grove Agricultural Association (HGAA)

Laurie Smigelski, a member of the HGAA and a former Park Commissioner, briefed the group on the activities and accomplishments of the HGAA out at Hazel Grove. Sometimes referred to as the Groton Fairgrounds, the Park Commission spent about \$10,000 for capital improvements and repairs at Hazel Grove over the past year. Those improvements ranged from purchasing fencing materials around harness racing track and cutting encroaching trees, to paying for electrical work on the refurbished red barn. Through volunteerism and spending donated funds, the HGA built new paddocks, finished refurbishing the red barn, replaced fencing around the track and took on paying boarders. The HGAA expects that five more gates will be donated by the Riding and Driving Club.

Laurie Smigelski reported that the operations at Hazel Grove are now self-sustaining. The HGAA receives rent from riders boarding their horses on the property. Fundraising such as benefit trail rides produces more funds. Also, the HGAA occasionally leases the infield for events such as last year's Society for Creative Anachronisms.

As for planning an agricultural fair, the members of the public as well as the HGAA leadership are open to that idea. Laurie Smigelski commented that to move in this direction, an agricultural fair needs a proponent who is willing to shepherd the idea through and iron out the details required to produce such an event in Groton.

Jonathan Strauss requested that the HGAA arrange for manure removal from trails after equestrian cross country rides. Laurie Smigelski accepted that request. Continuing that thought, further discussion noted that HGAA's equestrian trail ride was only one of three such events held in the area that week.

Field use permits

Speaking on behalf of youth baseball, T.J. Rivet requested Cow Pond 1 – 4 and both Town Field baseball diamonds. Gineane Haberlin thanked baseball for work they have done, and Park Commission was glad to be able to increase their support of field maintenance for baseball site prep.

Jonathan Strauss moved to approve the baseball field use permits as provided. MF seconded and motion carried 4:0 (Robert Flynn absent).

Jonathan Strauss pointed out that Cow Pond baseball fields 1 and 2 have no irrigation and the fields were dry at certain parts of the summer. T.J. Rivett collected two estimates from Kurt Dawson's business to install irrigation at each of these fields. Kurt Dawson provided a \$4,500 per field price drafted in a not to exceed fashion. The assumption is that the new irrigation would be tied into the well that supplies the nearby football field with water. The Commissioners discussed the idea, noting that there is something less than \$10,000 remaining in the capital funds allocation from the Town Meeting warrant article. Kenneth Bushnell said that the Park Commission may be able to do one field after baseball concludes its spring season. Also, the group discussed the build – up of the infields (purchasing and spreading infield mix and conditioner) as an expense that the Park Commission and youth baseball can look at in the coming months.

Brendan Lowney was present to represent the youth lacrosse use group. Lacrosse has expressed interest in using Cutler, Woitowicz and part of Cow Pond. Gineane Haberlin asked that Cutler Field be used as much as possible since the field is in good shape and the parking area has been expanded. By contrast, Woitowicz is coming off of repairs to the grass and light use may help consolidate improved health of the grass. Also, Cow Pond fields are an area that both lacrosse and soccer want to make use of this summer. Lacrosse would like to have all games scheduled at Cow Pond as was the case last year.

Brendan Lowney observed that it would be good if the use groups could find a way to use the public school fields, but that there is a need to maintain the fields so that they are in useable shape. T.J. Rivett said that the baseball diamond at the high school was in poor shape before youth baseball assumed maintenance responsibilities.

Jonathan Strauss, who serves as the Park Commission's liaison to the Groton Dunstable Regional School District (GDRSD), commented that the Park Commission is starting a conversation about looking at increased use of the fields and increased maintenance of those same fields. He said that we are all parents and we want this to work. Brendan Lowney said that the GDRSD high school field hockey team is practicing at the middle school fields. The comment was made that the middle school fields are only marginally better maintained than the high school fields. Gineane Haberlin said that we all have good intentions and suggested that Jonathan Strauss approach the School Committee and see about a joint meeting of the Park Commission and the School Committee.

The commissioners drew Jeff Ohringer into the conversation as he was presenting the proposals for soccer's use of Cow Pond. Jeff Ohringer asked for March 30 through June 27 twenty four seven use. He presented a map that proposes to move lacrosse use over to the left corner. Jeff Ohringer noted that when lacrosse and soccer fields overlap, the younger children in particular had a hard time distinguishing one sport's set of painted lines from the other sport's painted lines. Brendan Lowney commented that the map appears to move lacrosse use at Cow Pond closer to the locations and diminished space that lacrosse operated in two years ago. In the conversation, it became clear that soccer and lacrosse youth groups had not spoken with one another about 2015 use at Cow Pond. Gineane Haberlin asked for lacrosse to submit its requests on field use permit forms for the Park Commission to review. One request form is needed for each subject field. She also reminded the group that the Commissioners can make the field use decisions at Cow Pond, but that the Commission preferred to endorse a plan that the affected use groups have already vetted as acceptable for their needs. The Commissioners agreed to revisit soccer and lacrosse field use permit requests at their March 2nd meeting.

Gineane Haberlin said that July 1st capital improvement money is expected from the Spring Town Meeting to put into lighting upgrades at Cow Pond for both fields and parking areas. The lights will increase usage of the fields and improve safety. New lights will also be more energy efficient as the temporary lighting installed by soccer use group in the fall helped for that season, but was expensive to operate. Laurie Smigelski asked about mosquitos and evening use of the fields. The first answer offered is that use of the fields is dependent on Board of Health warnings if diseases carried by mosquitos are presenting a risk. The second answer is that the primary use of the lights is to extend the season by three week at the end of fall which is a cooler season when mosquitos are usually not a problem.

Jonathan Strauss suggested that additional fencing in the baseball area at Cow Pond be undertaken in the next fiscal year starting July 1, 2015. If funds are not sufficient, then funding for fencing can be sought at the Fall Town Meeting with a proposed warrant article.

T.J. Rivett presented the Cow Pond football and cheer field use permit request. There was no competing proposed use for the requested field.

Kenneth Bushnell moved to approve the football and cheer proposal for use of Cow Pond football field in the fall as submitted and pending receipt of a certificate of insurance. Gineane Haberlin seconded and motion carried 4:0 (Robert Flynn absent).

The Park Commission is in receipt of a Groton Dunstable Lacrosse Renegades proposed field use application. As there was not a representative in attendance to speak to this application, the Commissioners deferred action on this request to their March 2nd meeting.

Gazebo (Smith Social Pavilion)

The commissioners agreed that the gazebo looks good after the Jimmy Cronin repairs. This contractor replaced four posts and offered to spend a day replacing the broken plastic lattice with vertical 1 x 3 boards. Such boards would be more durable than the existing plastic lattice and some find it more aesthetically pleasing as well. If the Park Commission purchases the materials, then it could pay contractor Jimmy Cronin for a day's labor to do this repair.

Gineane Haberlin moved to authorize expenditure of an amount not to exceed \$1,000 for further repairs of the gazebo by contracting with Jimmy Cronin for labor to finish up the skirt with materials to be purchased separately by the Park Commission with all work to be overseen by Commissioner Kenneth Bushnell. Matthew Frary seconded and motion carried 4:0 (Robert Flynn absent).

Volunteers for Clean Up

Gineane Haberlin reported that the Groton School students have offered to participate in another clean up. The group discussed possibility of tasking the students with spreading mulch to assist the garden club with clean-up of commons. Other groomed areas like a strip at Cow Pond fields were mentioned also.

Sawyer Common: access and flags

Matthew Frary recounted his care and replacement of the service flags at Sawyer Common. Also, the newly installed flags are nylon whereas the retired set appears to have been made out of a heavier polyester material. Heavy snows have made the approach to the memorial and flagpole bases largely inaccessible. Matthew Frary recommended that the Park Commission explore ways to get the snow cleared so that veterans or other interested members of the public can freely access Sawyer Common. Gineane Haberlin will contact DPW and ask for Sawyer Common and Legion Common porta potties to have snow cleared to improve accessibility.

Minutes

Gineane Haberlin moved to approve the January 5, 2015 as written. Jonathan Strauss seconded and motion carried 4:0. (Robert Flynn absent).

Legion Common Ice Rink

Gineane Haberlin met with Fire Chief Steele McCurdy and he agreed to direct the fire department to add water to refresh the ice rink on days that are 25 degrees outside or colder. The water comes out of the fire engine tanks at 68 degrees. If the weather is warmer, then the operation would not have the desired result. This situation reminded Gineane Haberlin that the Park Commission cannot be effective without help from others. The rink needs to have the layers of snow removed.

Jonathan Strauss commented that we need to be able to contract snow-blowing the ice rinks out because DPW cannot do the work when they are flat out busy with other things like snow removal from giant snow storms. He stated that our budgets have matured and our needs have matured. The Park Commissioners will invite Tom Delaney to attend the March 2nd meeting to discuss how some of this post snow storm clean up from five feet of snow in two weeks can be accomplished.

Regarding future use of the Hollingsworth and Vose field for siting a public ice rink, Jonathan Strauss suggested that the GDRSD hold harmless agreement provided to Insko at the Middle School may be helpful to review. Fran Stanley will request a copy of this agreement.

Nick Marsh Gazebo Presentation

Eagle Scout candidate Nick Marsh provided written handouts to the Commissioners and also brought photographs of the gazebo. Nick Marsh described the work that he would like to undertake for his project. Nick Marsh aims to complete his work by July 4, 2015. He will have the oversight of two experienced contractors who are adult volunteers with the Boy Scouts. He will also have the volunteer labor force of his fellow scouts who may assist with items like scraping and painting. Briefly, Nick Marsh proposes to:

- Scrape and paint the gazebo

- Sand and refinish the mahogany deck boards, replacing as needed.

- Replace broken plastic lattice with more durable material such as a composite PVC.

- Add 6 inches of cobblestone around the structure to protect wood from mowing equipment.

- Replace and possibly widen ramp to the full width between columns.

Commissioners thought that a widened ramp would be more useful for anyone who required a ramp to access the gazebo. Commissioners volunteered storage space for materials in the Town Field shed. Matthew Frary will serve as Nick Marsh's point of contact for the Park Commission. Matthew Frary and Nick Marsh will see if they need to appear before the Historic Districts Commission to gain approval for the repairs. Any permitting will also be investigated.

Building materials needed are lumber, paint and deck sealer. Lumber may be the most expensive item. Moore's provides an extra discount to the boy scouts which Nick Marsh may be able to use even if the Park Commissioners cover the material costs.

Commissioners expressed their appreciation to Nick Marsh for the large, but useful project that he has proposed. Gineane Haberlin complimented him on his preparedness and presentation skills, saying that he has done an amazing job. Matthew Frary said that he would like for Nick Marsh to be able to replace the lattice skirt rather than to have the Park Commission contract that work out. Commissioners agreed to amend their prior motion rather than to rescind it.

Jonathan Strauss moved to amend the prior motion that authorized up to \$1,000 to be spent on the repair of the gazebo skirt by making the that motion contingent on the scope of Nick Marsh's final Eagle Scout plan. Matthew Frary seconded and motion carried 4:0 (Robert Flynn absent).

Fran Stanley will notify Bob Wright, organizer of the cosponsored free concert series that the gazebo may not be available for use until after July 4, 2015.

Gineane Haberlin reminded the group that the Finance Committee is meeting this Saturday. Although the Park Commission has discussed the proposed FY16 budget, there has not been a formal vote.

Gineane Haberlin moved to approve the fiscal year 2016 budget as presented and discussed at previous meetings. Matthew Frary seconded and motion carried 4:0 (Robert Flynn absent).

CPC Basketball Project

Matthew Frary reported that youth basketball has committed to contribute \$5,000 toward the basketball court project. Jonathan Strauss is planning to speak with Town Manager Mark Haddad, but Matthew Frary might approach Mark Haddad and the Board of Selectmen for letters of support for the project. DPW Director Tom Delaney can also be asked to write a letter of support, especially since the Town Field project will result in improved drainage in that area.

Gineane Haberlin moved to approve the CPC basketball project letter of support as written, pending Matthew Frary's approval. Jonathan Strauss seconded and motion carried 4:0 (Robert Flynn absent).

Gineane Haberlin proposes having Fran Stanley, the Park Commission assistant, trained at MIIA expense to inspect the Park Commission's playgrounds. The training location, price and frequency of trainings to maintain credentials will be researched. If any of those answers are off putting, then Groton can see if Kate Hodge at the Town of Littleton's recreation department could be contracted to perform this service.

Elections

Jonathan Strauss commented that most boards rotate the chair annually. He asked whether Gineane Haberlin would continue as chair, noting that it is typically a 2 hour to 10 hour per week time commitment. Given the large time commitment, Jonathan Strauss noted that in his view some deference should be shown to the chair. For instance, a close call or tie might go in the direction of the chair's position. Group discussed whether a vice chair might be voted upon so that the next chair could become familiarized with the role.

Gineane Haberlin stated that she has been on the Park Commission for 18 months and in that time the Park Commission has spent \$60,000 and accomplished 15 projects. This is a point that can be shared with the Finance Committee on Saturday, February 7th at their meeting.

Fertilization Contractor

Commissioners discussed renewing the Turf Unlimited contract. The prices quoted are consistent with last year's prices. The Park Commissioners were pleased with the contractor's work in the 2014 season.

Kenneth Bushnell moved to approve Turf Unlimited as the fertilization vendor for the Park Commission's sports turf fields pending approval of the process by the Town Manager, who is also the Town's procurement manager. Gineane Haberlin seconded and motion carried 4:0 (Robert Flynn absent).

Commissioners noted that for public meetings involving important Park Commission projects, it will be desirable to have the use group representatives attend.

Next Meeting: Monday, March 2, 2015 at 7 pm in Legion Hall.

Gineane Haberlin moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:38 pm. Matthew Frary seconded and motion carried 4:0 (Robert Flynn absent).

Notes by Fran Stanley.