

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: March 2, 2015
Time: 7 p.m.
Location: Legion Hall, 1st Floor Meeting Room, 75 Hollis Street, Groton
Commission attendees: Gineane Haberlin, Robert Flynn, Matthew Frary, Jonathan Strauss, Kenneth Bushnell
Visitors: John Smigelski (Chair of Conservation Commission)
Handouts: Agenda, February 3, 2015 draft minutes

Gineane Haberlin opened the meeting at 7:07 pm.

Minutes

Jonathan Strauss moved to approve the February 2, 2015 draft minutes as written. Gineane Haberlin seconded and motion carried 4:0 (Robert Flynn abstained).

Gazebo – Smith Social Pavilion

Matthew Frary reported on his attendance at the Historic Districts Commission meeting regarding the Eagle Scout repair of the gazebo. Matthew Frary updated the HDC on the improved state of the gazebo due to recent investment in structural repairs. Eagle Scout candidate Nick Marsh will take sample photographs of replacement slats in situ and share with the HDC. Building permits need to be pulled by licensed professional contractor. Handrails were asked about on the ramp. Matthew Frary explained that an accessible survey is planned to get the gazebo up to accessibility standards.

Legion Common Ice Rink

Robert Flynn reported on the ice rink. It is still snowed in. Robert Flynn has the snow thrower to plow it out but only if he can get his machine trailered to Legion Common. After some discussion, Commissioners agreed to stop work on the rink as it is now March and it is getting warmer. Fran Stanley will request removal of Legion Common porta pottie.

Flag Ordering and Flag Refreshes

April 1 and November 1 flag changes agreed upon by the group. Matthew Frary noted the differences between nylon and polyester flags. The nylon U.S. flags seem relatively durable. The set of retired service branch flags were polyester and were starting to deteriorate. The new service branch flags are nylon. Commissioners will see how the nylon flags hold up over time.

Commissioners had brief discussion of how U.S. flag protocol requires that such flags not be flown at night unless lit. Future improvements to expand number of lighted flagpoles mentioned.

Fertilization Contractor

Commissioners discussed the two estimates that were received -- one from TruGreen and one from Turf Unlimited. A third vendor was asked to submit an estimate, but did not follow through and submit an estimate. After some discussion the Commission acted as follows:

Gineane Haberlin moved to select Turf Unlimited based on quotes in hand, competing vendor's specifics and exemplary service provided by Turf Unlimited last year. Robert Flynn seconded and motion carried 5:0.

Field Opening

Commissioners discussed the expected field opening date. Time must be given for the large snow load to melt, for runoff to be absorbed and for the grass to green up. Gineane Haberlin will send an email to sports teams about opening the field circa mid-April. She will include a reminder for use groups to submit field use permit if they do not yet have approved uses in place.

Kenneth Bushnell reminded the group that it is unclear whether Woitowicz will be ready to be put back in use at the same time that the other fields appear ready.

Field use permits

No new field use permit requests received. The Groton Dunstable Lacrosse Renegades permit request is pending, but will be reviewed alongside the other youth lacrosse permits.

Organizational Chart Issue

Gineane Haberlin introduced the email exchange that Robert Flynn had with Board of Selectman Chair Joshua Degen. The Park Commission is an elected board and does not directly report to the Town Manager. Gineane Haberlin first noted that the dotted line does not denote answering to and can mean a working relationship not direct authority. Also, it is problematic that the email was speaking on behalf of the Park Commission, but the Park Commission had not discussed the matter. Gineane Haberlin commented that at a prior meeting Robert Flynn brought up that the Park Commission should speak with one voice through the chair.

Robert Flynn acknowledged that but said that if there is something wrong it should be corrected. In his experience, the organizational chart's dotted line logically indicated an authority that the Town Manager did not have over the Park Commission and he thought his request was a simple correction that did not warrant deliberation by the Commission.

The group discussed whether a letter should be sent to the Board of Selectmen. After more discussion, the group agreed that the entire issue could be resolved if a key or index defining indicated relationships is added to the bottom of the chart.

CPC finances and pending basketball application

The Park Commission discussed the present bind that the continuing Surrenden Farm commitment (\$450,000 per year) has put on the CPC finances. There is a rationale for arguing that the Conservation Commission should step back when there are infrastructure projects. If the Conservation Commission continues make annual transfer requests of about \$200,000 to their land purchase fund, then this practice restricts what funds remain available for non open space projects including active recreation and other large projects (Prescott School renovation).

The other issue noted is that the CPC as designed is unable to vet the Conservation Commission project beyond the scope of the subject application. With 41% of Groton's land restricted for conservation, how much is enough? Jonathan Strauss asked how much more land needs to be set aside to preserve the rural character of the Town. With Prescott School repurposing, the middle school track and other projects that require significant amount of funds, there is no ability to prioritize and save for important Town projects.

The history of Conservation Commission funding was discussed. The Board of Selectmen voted to make CPC the primary funding source for the Conservation Commission's land purchase fund. Fund was to total \$750,000 to \$900,000 several years back. Now, the Conservation Commission purchase fund averages \$450,000 to \$500,000.

John Smigelski is the chair of the Conservation Commission and he approached Gineane Haberlin about the Park Commission's repeated point of how CPC funding has skewed toward open space to the detriment of active

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recreation projects. John Smigelski will be stopping by the meeting later to discuss areas of cooperation between boards.

Matthew Frary reported that the CPC basketball application was reviewed by the CPC. One comment made by a committee member was that it was the best application presented this round.

Jonathan Strauss pulled papers and his interest is to interface with the schools to improve the underused asset of the public school fields. He would like Gineane to stay on as chair for another year. He is not interested in serving on CPC again. He is busy at work and will not be able to commit as fully as he has in years past.

Next meeting: Monday, April 6th at 7 pm.

Requested agenda item for the next meeting: Groton School volunteers and Garden Club planning to spruce up the commons.

[Kenneth Bushnell leaves the meeting.]

John Smigelski arrives and spoke with Park Commissioners about having ready money in Conservation Commission's fund in order to be able to respond to a priority parcel that comes up at auction. For auctions, the timeline is too brief to allow for calling a Special Town Meeting to approve funding. Jonathan Strauss noted that once money is transferred from CPC to the Conservation Commission fund, the funds move from being unrestricted to completely restricted to a land purchase purpose. John Smigelski contends that the better way of looking at it is how many projects can we be piggy backing off with one another? Gineane Haberlin mentioned the walking trail as a project that could be collaborated on between Park Commission, Conservation Commission and Trails Committee. The group discussed the fact that CPC does not have a way to prioritize projects.

Jonathan Strauss moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:15 pm. Robert Flynn seconded and the motion carried 4:0 (Kenneth Bushnell absent).

Notes by Fran Stanley.