

Town of Groton

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Park Commissioners

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

Meeting Minutes

Date: April 6, 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: T.J. Rivet (Youth Baseball), Jeff Schwefler (Pack 28, Cub Scouts), Jonathan Freeman-Coppadge (Groton School), Penny Hommeyer (Groton Garden Club), Celia Silinonte (Groton Garden Club), Alberta Erickson (Friends of Prescott School), Kevin Potter (Lawrence Academy Athletic Director), Jim Cantrill (Lacrosse Renegades), Chris Davey (Youth Soccer), Lisa Murray (Groton Garden Club), Bob Mullins (Groton Dunstable Youth Lacrosse), David Gilmour (Zoo New England fundraiser), John Llodra (Youth Lacrosse), Jeff Ohringer (Youth Soccer), Christine Habermann (Groton Wellness)
Handouts: Agenda, March 2, 2015 draft minutes, pending field use permit requests

Gineane Haberlin opened the meeting at 7:02 pm. Field use permits requests will be addressed first, starting with baseball and baseball impacting requests:

- there are two requests for Groton Dunstable high school team use of Town Fields (4/6 – 6/12 from 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm (practice) and 3 pm to 6 pm (games));
- there is the usual Lawrence Academy request for Town Field for JV baseball practices (4/13 – 5/20 from 3:30 pm to 5 pm);
- the Groton Community School has requested use of gazebo and lawn in front of gazebo for its annual school picnic (5/29 5 pm to 7:30 pm and rain date of 6/5 5 pm to 7:30 pm); and
- the Pack 28 Cub Scouts have requested use of Cow Pond baseball field to have a rocket launch (6/7 from 9 am to 11 am); and
- the expected fireworks display (7/6 with a rain date of 7/7).

The Park Commission has already granted Youth Baseball use of its baseball diamonds at Town Field and Cow Pond field. The Commissioners' approach is to allow such uses as T.J. Rivet as head of Youth Baseball can accommodate. T.J. Rivet stated that he has reviewed the requests and believes that the requested uses can be accommodated.

Kenneth Bushnell noted that the short stop area of infield at the large baseball diamond at Town Field has a burn spot left over from the firefighters' association bonfire in January. Snow prevented earlier inspection and repair. The Commissioners agreed that they did not want future bonfires sited at Town Field. The Park Commission will coordinate repairs with the Fire Department.

Kenneth Bushnell moved to approve all of the above-referenced field use permits as submitted provided a final coordinated schedule acceptable to youth baseball is developed and pending submission of the certificates of insurance by the respective applicants. Robert Flynn seconded and motion carried 3:0 (Robert Flynn abstained and Jonathan Strauss absent).

Youth soccer and youth lacrosse have agreed upon an acceptable schedule for their planned use of the Cow Pond ball fields.

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Gineane Haberlin moved to approve the Cow Pond field use permits as submitted by youth lacrosse and youth soccer. Robert Flynn seconded and motion carried 4:0 (Jonathan Strauss absent).

Jonathan Strauss arrived to the meeting.

Woitowicz when walked after the snow melts can be fully assessed. Kenneth Bushnell recommends speaking with Turf Unlimited to collect this contractor's advice on intensity of use.

Youth Lacrosse reported a large hole at the end of the field at Cutler that needs to be filled. The hole may have been created by a dog digging in that area. Woitowicz field is the youth lacrosse preference. The Groton Dunstable Educational request for Woitowicz field space to play Ultimate Frisbee can be accommodated because its time of use is earlier than youth lacrosse's time of use. Jim Cantrill with Lacrosse Renegades clarified that his request for field space (Woitowicz preferred or Cutler or Cow Pond) does not conflict with youth lacrosse since Lacrosse Renegades by design is an extension of the regular youth lacrosse season.

Gineane Haberlin moved to approve these three Woitowicz uses – youth lacrosse, lacrosse renegades, ultimate frisbee --- pending submission of a certificate of insurance by each respective applicant. Robert Flynn seconded and motion carried 5:0.

The Groton Wellness bike ride field use permit request for Legion Hall was introduced. The group would rather not get a porta pottie. After some discussion of whether the Park Commission would pay for a porta pottie for the season at Legion Common (to be sited on the cemetery side of Legion Hall), the Commissioners agreed that they would not require the applicant to rent a porta pottie but neither would the Park Commission provide one at this time.

Gineane Haberlin moved to approve the Groton Wellness bike ride use of Legion Hall yard as written pending submission of a certificate of insurance. Matthew Frary seconded and the motion carried 5:0.

Zoo New England request spoken to by organizer David Gilmour. The charity ride starts in Hollis, NH and has passed through Groton for the past six years. His group always arranges for a porta pottie. Park Commissioners and other attendees were interested to learn more about the event which is held in honor of David Gilmour's son.

Kenneth Bushnell moves to approve the Zoo New England use of Legion Hall yard pending submission of a certificate of insurance. Gineane Haberlin seconded and motion carried 5:0.

The Grotonfest field use permit request for use of Legion Common and the yard in front of Legion Hall was reviewed. There were no questions.

Matthew Frary moved to approve the Grotonfest permit as written pending submission of a certificate of insurance. Robert Flynn seconded and motion carried 5:0.

Parking lots at Cow Pond and Cutler both look like they are in poor shape due to erosion. Field walk planned for Sunday, April 12th at 9 am before the tentative field opening on Saturday, April 18.

Chris Davey asked on behalf of youth soccer about timing for asking their contractor to paint the lines on the fields. Painting in advance of the practice and the games is preferable (several days in advance). The league will check on whether their Board of Health permit for food sales is current.

Commissioners noted that porta potties need to be placed at the ball fields. Woitowicz and Cutler fields can get porta potties delivered. Presently, Cow Pond is inaccessible. The boulders are still in place blocking the driveway to the rear of the fields due to the significant erosion and frost heaves affecting the gravel areas.

Commissioners will remove both ice rinks (Cutler and Legion Common). Kenneth Bushnell and Robert Flynn will do the Legion Common rink and Gineane Haberlin and Matthew Frary will work on the Cutler field rink pick up.

TJ Rivet stated that for youth baseball, minimal work is planned for the infields early in the season because the surfaces will be too wet to bring in heavy machinery. Infield mix materials will be invoiced to the Town of Groton which the Park Commission has budgeted for. Typically, youth baseball either supplies volunteer labor to spread the

materials or contracts for this work to be done. TJ Rivet anticipates more infield mix this year and less conditioner. Last year was heavy on conditioner with less topsoil.

At minimum, Baseball will use closet for storing the infield mix bags at the Shed at Town Field. This shed now has more storage room available since the tractor it housed has been moved to the Groton Fairgrounds.

Dugouts with protective covers were discussed by Matthew Frary at the Historic Districts Commission (HDC). The dugout covers at Cow Pond would be replicated at Town Field, perhaps painted. There is a safety issue that needs to be addressed. Does the baseball field fall within the HDC purview? HDC is mulling that question. It is unclear whether the answer to jurisdiction issue really changes anything for the Park Commission's purposes. Through Matthew Frary, the HDC will be kept apprised of planned work on the field either way. The HDC may support the Park Commission's application either way.

Renovated basketball courts at Town Field and Cutler Field will be on the warrant for Spring Town Meeting. Notice will be sent to use groups about warrant article information for the Spring Town Meeting.

Alberta Erickson introduced the idea of the Park Commission filling out and submitting a property space requirements questionnaire for the re-use of the Prescott School. This is the online Google form that the Municipal Building Committee for Prescott School is advertising in order to collect specific information about how area groups may want to use the Prescott School. Alberta Erickson is a member of the Friend of Prescott School group and is helping to promote the activities of the Town appointed committee. She would like the Park Commission to fill out the form and note the indoor basketball courts and outdoor basketball courts. Fran Stanley will distribute the Google Form link to use groups in case they want to answer the Committee's space requirements questionnaire.

Garden Club and Groton School

On Sunday, May 17th Park Commission may have many students from the Groton School available to do commons clean up. The Groton Garden Club, per Penny Hommeyer who attended with the Garden Club's development committee, commented on the projects. Penny Hommeyer says that the Groton Garden Club is in good shape with their planned commons work. They would like to have mulch provided in the same amount and of the same quality as last year. Other than that, the Garden Club expects to be self-sufficient for their gardening activities. They explained that their work is very specific.

Mention was made of the April 25th rail trail clean up and Town clean-up is May 2nd and 3rd. Gineane Haberlin thanked Jonathan Freeman-Coppadge for the useful work that his students performed in the fall. At that time, several gardens were spruced up and the Christine Hanson Memorial Playground received needed attention.

Commissioners mentioned several projects that the potentially 80 strong group of students could work on for its all school service day. Projects mentioned included: painting Cow Pond sheds, painting Minuteman Common fence rails, and spreading mulch at Cow Pond. Robert Flynn has knowledge of these specific projects and volunteered to coordinate with the Groton School.

The Park Commissioners expressed their willingness to supply mulch in the same amount and quality as last year (Mad Mic's ordered from Dr. Mulch in Westford.) The mulch will be delivered to Prescott Common when it dries out enough to receive the product.

The Groton Garden Club would like to garden across larger portion of the Firemen's Common. They will look at the benches. The Garden Club may add plantings, hardscaping, and pruning. Is the bench significant? It may be listing to one side such that it requires repair or replacement. Does DPW have any extra benches? The Garden Club members reconsidered an earlier idea to add a trash receptacle to Firemen's Common. Adding the receptacle is no guarantee that the litter issue there will be solved and a new can may encourage dumping.

The Garden Club representatives stated that the Carol Wheeler Park is in good shape if pruned and a little attention given. Also, the Woitowicz memorial area looks tended to the Garden Club's eyes. Perhaps the plantings are cared for by the near neighbors.

Jeff Ohringer suggested that a small memorial garden be planted or expanded at Cow Pond where a flag pole was planted in memory of Pat Taylor and another fellow who was good friends with youth soccer organizers. The Garden Club will advise the eagle scout on plantings around the gazebo. The Garden Club's Boutwell School Plantings won a state award for beautification from the state Garden Club association.

The Park Commission will receive \$45,000 on July 1st for their capital improvements projects. The first project will be the replacement of Cow Pond lighting fixtures with LED fixtures. There may be money left over since youth soccer invested in some field lighting infrastructure. The other projects lined up are the irrigation of the baseball outfields at Cow Pond. Are there any other projects? Jeff Ohringer asked for the contractor Montachusett Lawn Sprinkler out of Lunenburg to be allowed to quote for any new irrigation installation.

One idea suggested was to extend fencing on the far side of the soccer fields perpendicular to the Cow Pond parking lot. Soccer balls get lost in the woods. There are ticks and poison ivy there. Perhaps there could be estimates for extending the fencing. The height would need to go up beyond 4 feet for over shots on the soccer goal.

Any fencing plan would need to take into account the planned walking path around Cow Pond fields that is a longer range plan of the Park Commission. With paving in the front and crushed concrete toward the wetlands rear, this project may cost about \$130,000.

The Cow Pond parking lot near the Transfer station needs work. The rear access to the baseball fields and the lower field gravel parking lot needs attention. The Park Commissioners agreed to invite DPW Director Tom Delaney to the next meeting to discuss.

Jonathan Strauss reported and recapped for the use group audience the status of the Park Commission/School Committee discussion. He explained that the Middle School fields have irrigation although they may not have been turned on in years. Jonathan Strauss and the Park Commission initiated conversation with the GDRSD School Committee to see about having the Town of Groton lease fields for a dollar for 99 years. This would allow the Park Commission and/or the TOG to maintain the fields. This possible plan is not for the high school fields. The GDRSD School Committee may meet again with the Park Commission after the Town elections. Presently, the Park Commission does not have jurisdiction. Can the Park Commission get funded for field maintenance through the GDRSD budget. The thought is that whatever is presently being budgeted for middle school field maintenance could be sent to the Town of Groton and this would be the funding used for mowing and field maintenance. Gineane Haberlin reiterated that having sufficient budget to care for the fields will be a key item to be addressed. John Llodra from Youth Lacrosse spoke on behalf of a number of use group representatives when he commented that use groups would rather spend league money within town to improve the Town's public properties rather than pay user fees to use the facilities of private and non Groton entities.

Kenneth Bushnell will talk to Premier fence contractor to see about doing small repairs to the Town Field baseball fence.

Fireworks

There has not been information regarding budget or planned activities sent to Kenneth Bushnell who was the designated liaison between the Park Commission and Don Black. Fran Stanley has received some information to pass along to the Park Commission from Don Black. The Commissioners are aware that Don Black has experienced a death in the family recently (Groton's principal flag, the Firemen's Common U.S. flag, was set at half-staff in memory of Bennett Black). Gineane Haberlin asked Don Black to attend the Park Commission meeting and this evening did not fit his schedule.

The question going forward is 'what does the Park Commission want for a fireworks celebration this July'. The Commissioners discussed various options while describing the elements of the event that have traditionally been in place.

1. The fact that there is no good mechanism for the Park Commission to collect fees or money to fund the event was stated and repeated.
2. There are the volunteer components such as the Boy Scout Troop clean-up of the grounds.

3. The Public Safety presence of police, fire and ambulance support is well organized and substantial but the Town is not invoiced for those services.
4. There seem to be a number of businesses that make money selling trinkets or food.
5. There are nonprofit organizations like the firefighters association that use the event sales as both a goodwill opportunity but also as a fundraiser for their organization.
6. The Nashoba Valley Concert Band out of Pepperell makes about \$400 for its job playing patriotic music. The Park Commission has paid for that \$400 charge for the Nashoba Valley Concert Band in the past, but the band has also been traditionally paid by food vendors who write a check to the band in lieu of paying a booth fee.
7. The cost of the fireworks display itself is paid for each year by a grant from the Commissioners of Trust Funds. A placeholder grant application was submitted to the Commissioners of Trust Funds requesting payment for the 2015 fireworks display. Without the support of the Commissioners of Trust Funds, the Park Commission would not have the budgeted funds available to pay for the fireworks display. In many years, supplying porta potties for the event has been the extent of the Park Commission's financial contribution.

Since the event is held on Park Commission property and the Park Commission sponsors the event in order to ensure that the event carries the necessary liability insurance coverage, the Park Commissioners agreed that their commission has some responsibility for the event.

In the conversation, the Park Commissioners wondered whether a simpler celebration of 'fireworks and field' (with the field being for children to play on and adults to gather and chat) would be sufficient and avoid some of the features that prompted last year's complaints.

Commissioners noted that after this year, there will not be any parking or use of the basketball court for fireworks celebrations as that would damage the Town Field court. Also, going forward, the Park Commission agreed that it made sense to have at least one commissioner involved in the conversation about whether to hold the event in the event of inclement weather. The 2014 fireworks display was held just before a rainstorm with lightning swept across the area.

The Commission spent about \$2,200 for P.C. Myette to do the spring clean ups. Robert Flynn will ask this vendor to requote but the Commissioners agreed that they would be satisfied to have P.C. Myette take on this clean up task again this spring.

Matthew Frary moved to approve the draft meeting minutes from March 2, 2015. Gineane Haberlin seconded and motion carried 5:0.

Jonathan Strauss announced his decision not to serve an additional term on Park Commission. Seven years has been enough for him.

The contract for Turf Unlimited for fertilization will be a one year contract. The Commission did not collect enough specific three year estimates to allow a vendor to be selected for more than one year.

Gineane Haberlin moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:21 pm. Jonathan Strauss seconded and motion carried 5:0.

Next meeting: Monday, May 4th at 7 pm

Notes by Fran Stanley.