



TOWN OF GROTON
Park Commission
Town Hall
1st Floor Meeting Room

PARK COMMISSION
Brian Edmonds, Chair
Anna Eliot, CPC Representative
Mary Jennings, Member
Jeffrey Ohringer, Member
Rob Foley, Member

Date: Monday February 3, 2025
Time: 5:00 PM
Location: 1st Floor Meeting Room
Members Present: Brian Edmonds, Rob Foley, Anna Eliot, Mary Jennings, Jeffrey Ohringer (via phone)
Members Not Present:
Others Present: Laura Fisher, Mark Haddad, Tom Delaney, Brian Callahan, Charlotte Steeves, Joshua Pollock, Judy Anderson, Carl & Carol Cohner

Call to Order: 5:05 p.m.

Chair Brian Edmonds called the meeting. Because Jeff Ohringer is participating via phone, all votes in this meeting will be taken as roll call votes.

Community Preservation Committee Representative Report- Charlotte Steeves, the Conservation Administrator presented a grant opportunity through the Stewardship Council to restore Carol Wheeler Park along the Squannacook River. Working collaboratively with municipalities and local organizations, the grant would be applied to helping plant native plant species to attract pollinators and enhance the native biodiversity. The grant application deadline is March 3rd. **Upon motion by Chairman Edmonds, the park commission supports a joint application for this plan and authorizes Anna Eliot to work on the application with the other committees through the stewardship committee. Seconded by Jennings, the motion was unanimously passed in a 5:0 roll call:**

Edmonds	Aye
Foley	Aye
Eliot	Aye
Jennings	Aye
Ohringer	Aye

Resident Carl Cohner spoke of how he has made an effort to get Carol Wheeler Park extended through writing a letter. He has stated that he has worked to help clear invasives and open the land to create a beautiful view of the pond. Carl proposed making it a town park as it adds to the value of West Groton. Commissioner Jennings mentioned a possibility of working with the MBTA to beautify the property.

Commissioner Eliot and Commissioner Jennings expressed the need for a more detailed construction design and receive more public input on the upcoming large Cow Pond Project. The baseball and soccer leagues have submitted a joint letter opposing the project as written. The letter is attached to these minutes as Exhibit A. In the following CPC meeting, they will be requesting for all public group applicants to reduce their costs for applications concerning this project.

Prioritize CPC Projects for Park Commission Properties- The commissioners each gave their opinions for priority for the three upcoming projects which include 1) Town Field Project 2) Cow Pond Design Project 3) Baseball Project.

Commissioner Ohringer and Eliot believe #1 Town Field, #2 Cow Pond #3 Baseball.

Commissioner Jennings #1 Town Field, #2 Baseball, #3 Cow Pond.

Commissioner Foley #1 Town Field, #2 Baseball, #3 Cow Pond.

Chairman Edmons #1 Cow Pond, #2 Town Field, #3 Baseball.

Discussion was had on whether the Cow Pond project should be delayed a year due to conflicts of interest between the needs of user groups and designs. Commissioner Ohringer suggested a need for a clear breakdown of costs for this project.

Upon motion by Chairman Edmons, seconded by Commissioner Jennings, to submit a letter to CPC of Parks prioritized projects in the following order: Number one would be Town Field Project, number two is to support Mark's CPC application for Cow Pond and bringing in further work with Activitas and design, three would be the baseball project for Cow Pond. The motion was unanimously passed in a 5:0 roll call:

Ohringer	Aye
Eliot	Aye
Jennings	Aye
Foley	Aye
Edmonds	Aye

Town Manager Mark Haddad suggested at the previous CPC meeting that the committee hold off on the Cow Pond project till at least the fall, in order to understand their finances to date. CPC rep Anna Eliot explained that they are still paying off the Middle school track and will not consider going into debt for another project till that has been paid.

Charter Review Committee- Town Manager Mark Haddad stated he has withdrawn his proposal to the Charter Review Committee in relation to Parks Commissioners being elected or appointed. The Charter Committee, meeting on February 13th has decided to move forward with the discussion anyways and divided the topic into two separate issues. First, whether or not Parks should be under Department of Public Works and second, whether Parks commissioners should be elected or appointed. The commissioners discussed if a letter should be written to the Charter Committee in regards to them stating their opinion on being elected or appointed.

Commissioner Jennings suggested the committee remain elected until a separate Parks Department can be established for the town. DPW Director Tom Delaney commented that the DPW are the leg work of the Parks Department. Whether they are elected or appointed the board should be focused on setting policy and direction. If there was more money going to DPW more could get done, such as hiring someone to do extra maintenance on fields. A discussion was had about how other towns maintain their Parks Department along with funding. **Upon motion by Commissioner Jennings, seconded by Commissioner Eliot, that the Parks commission to recommend to the Charter Review Committee and the Board of Selectman that the Parks positions remain elected.**

The motion was unanimously passed in a 4:1 roll call:

Ohringer	Aye
Eliot	Aye
Jennings	Aye
Foley	Aye
Edmonds	No

Old/New Business:

Sign permits/ invoices- Upon motion by Chair Edmons, seconded by Commissioner Foley, to sign permits as long as there is room on the schedule was unanimously approved in a 5:0 roll call:

Ohringer	Aye
Eliot	Aye
Jennings	Aye
Foley	Aye
Edmonds	Aye

Schedule Next Meeting and Adjourn- Monday, February 24th 2025 5:30pm

Mary Jennings moved to adjourn at 6:24pm, Rob Foley seconded, and the motion carried unanimously

Minutes by Laura Fisher, Administrative Assistant.

APPROVED: As Amended 3/10/2025

February 3, 2024

Town Manager & Park Commission
173 Main Street
Groton, MA 01455

Dear Mr. Mark Haddad and Groton Park Commission,

After careful review of the Cow Pond Brook Fields Conceptual Master Plan shared at the December 10th Park Commission meeting by Activitas, we are writing on behalf of the Groton-Dunstable Youth Soccer League and Groton-Dunstable Youth Baseball League to express our mutual user group feedback with the proposed improvement plan.

While we greatly appreciate the effort to enhance the park's facilities, we believe that the proposed changes will negatively impact the usability and accessibility of the fields for our youth sports programs, and overall do not meet the needs of either organization, which make up the majority of use at this facility. The current plan overlooks key aspects that are crucial to maintaining the quality and functionality of the Cow Pond Fields. Specifics are noted below.

Parking and Access Concerns: The proposed plan leaves several unaddressed issues regarding parking and access. The pathway from the main parking lot to the fields is unclear, raising concerns about its ability to accommodate current traffic volumes. The parking capacity appears insufficient compared to the existing space, and we strongly suggest exploring the option for additional parking across the street. While we appreciate the new parking layout near the fields, it appears as not enough to meet the community's needs. In addition, the proposed improvement plan does not appear to provide adequate handicapped-accessible viewing areas and pathways for all fields from parking areas.

Field Usage and Layout Issues: The new field layout seems less functional than the current arrangement for all leagues using Cow Pond. We don't support keeping a dedicated football field, which we believe is unnecessary and reduces space for other sports. Additionally, placing high usage fields closest to the transfer station raises concerns about odor and overall playability. We recommend relocating the 11v11 soccer field away from this area and including backstop nets for safety and efficiency. Also, given available space, it is unlikely that the right side of Cow Pond could support two full-sized 11v11 fields along with a walking path. The proposed design already shows a reduced size 11v11 field, which would limit the usability of that field.

Amenities and Features Recommendations: While we support certain amenities, such as the walking path and including seating for the lit 11v11 field, other aspects require reconsideration. Concessions should be centrally located to serve all fields effectively and conveniently.

Basketball Court Enhancement Suggestions: Instead of focusing solely on basketball, we recommend making the courts multi-use to better serve community interests. Adding facilities for futsal and dek hockey would be a valuable addition. The US Soccer Foundation's mini-pitch program offers a helpful reference for this approach, especially considering that the town already has numerous basketball courts.

Lighting for Baseball: Early spring and late fall season baseball practices and games commonly end early or are frequently not held due to lack of sunlight and corresponding player safety considerations. There is only one baseball field in town with lights, and the demand for the time exceeds the capacity available, leaving teams without fields to practice or play on. Any large-scale initiative at Cow Pond must include a second baseball field with lights that must be designed with consideration of our neighbors at the MIT Haystack Observatory.

Safety Nets for Baseball: Foul balls commonly leave Cow Pond Fields 1-4, creating a dangerous environment for visitors - especially those with young children. Posts and nets should be considered as a part of the effort to prevent injury to spectators, and also limit the loss of baseballs in surrounding wooded areas.

In conclusion, while we appreciate the intent behind the Cow Pond Improvement Plan, we believe it requires significant adjustments to better meet the needs of our youth sports leagues and the broader community. We urge the committee to reconsider these aspects and engage more closely with all local sports organizations to develop a solution that genuinely enhances Cow Pond without compromising its current value and use.

Sincerely,

Groton-Dunstable Youth Soccer League

Groton-Dunstable Youth Baseball League