



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

PARK COMMISSION
Mary Jennings, Chair
Anna Eliot, Vice-Chair
Mark Presti, Clerk
Rob Foley, CPC Representative
Jeffrey Ohringer, Member

Date: Monday January 12, 2026
Time: 4:15 PM
Location: 1st Floor Meeting Room

Members Present: Rob Foley, Anna Eliot, Mary Jennings, Mark Presti, Jeffrey Ohringer
Others Present: Laura Fisher, Brian Callahan, Mark Haddad, Kara Cruikshank, Megan Buczynski, Peter Cunningham, Judy Anderson, Mike Johnson, Don Barry, Pat McAdams, David Pitkin, Bob Pine, Richard Hewitt, Mary Winkus, Jim Simkd, Michael Castorano, Matthew Waterman, Phil Francisco.

Call to Order: 4:20 p.m.

Mary Jennings chair, called the meeting.

Public Comments – None

Chair Report –

The Parks Commission discussed implementing a permitting process for park properties, with a subcommittee led by members Jeff Ohringer and Mary Jennings presenting research on fees charged by nearby communities. The subcommittee found that all surveyed towns except Groton charge fees for park use, with funds going to revolving funds exclusively for parks. The commission considered how to set fair rates, with a suggestion to blend per-person and flat rates for different user groups. They also discussed the need to evaluate maintenance schedules and costs, noting that user groups have already invested significantly in park maintenance and improvements. Member Ohringer motioned to pursue a permitting process including user fees, seconded by Member Foley

The commission discussed implementing a permitting process and user fees for park properties, with the goal of establishing a revolving fund. They agreed to pursue this process while seeking public input and negotiating with user groups. The commission also acknowledged the need to define what services would be covered by fees and to provide adequate notice to user groups and the public. They decided to withdraw a previous motion and instead vote on a new motion to create a permitting process that would include fees for park properties, with proceeds going to a revolving fund.

Upon motion by Chair Jennings, seconded by Vice-Chair Eliot, to create a permitting process that will be placed in a revolving fund and include public input, was unanimously approved 5:0.

Mary Jennings moved to close the Parks meeting and open the Parks Public Hearing at 5:00 pm, Jeff Ohringer seconded. The motion carried unanimously

Activitas Engineer, Megan Buczynski gave a detailed presentation on the proposed improvements for the Cow Pond Project, presenting the project timeline and details. The project is expected to go to town meeting in May with hard bid numbers and construction is planned to begin in July, pending approval. The meeting focused on a proposed project which includes new parking areas, sidewalks, entrance points, a playground, park amenities, renovations to Cow Pond Field 3, adding lighting to Field 2 and rehabilitating the youth baseball access road to comply with 2009-2010 permit restrictions. The discussion highlighted the complexity of the site, including resource areas, critical environmental concerns, and Article 97 restrictions on parcels 40 and 57 for open space use.

The presentation also focused on the natural heritage aspects of a project, particularly concerning endangered species and their habitats. Ms. Buczynski discussed the presence of endangered species, including box turtles, and the need to address their migration patterns and nesting areas. The project includes several "must-dos," such as finding an alternative route for youth baseball access to stop using a specific road, addressing parking issues, and improving accessibility within the site. Additionally, the discussion covered the need to shift the location of a baseball field to accommodate a full-size rectangular field for lacrosse, while ensuring no loss of program space. Compliance with natural heritage regulations and the associated permitting process were also highlighted as critical components of the project.

Project costs for a park improvement project, with the current total estimated at 4.28 million, slightly above the target of 4.1 million. The discussion covered various project components and the possibility of funding options with Megan explaining that the Community Preservation Committee could explore strategies to control costs. Mary Winkus and Phil Francisco, both residents near Cow Pond, expressed concerns about the proposed development of recreational facilities. They emphasized the importance of preserving the town's rural character and suggested that the project should be modest in scale, given the declining youth population and limited usage of the current facilities. They questioned the need for a playground and raised concerns about traffic and environmental impacts.

The Commissioners agreed to continue discussion on the renovations with the Cow Pond Project in the next upcoming meetings.

Schedule Next Meeting and Adjourn- Monday, January 26, 2026 5:00pm

Rob Foley moved to adjourn at 6:30 pm, Mark Presti seconded. The motion carried unanimously

Minutes by Laura Fisher, Administrative Assistant.

APPROVED: 3/23/26
