



**TOWN OF GROTON**  
Park Commission  
Town Hall  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor Meeting Room

**PARK COMMISSION**  
Mary Jennings, Chair  
Anna Eliot, Vice-Chair  
Mark Presti, Clerk  
Jeffrey Ohringer, Member  
Jack Petropoulos, Member

Date: Monday April 13, 2026

Time: 5:00 PM

Location: 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Meeting Room

Members Present: Mary Jennings, Anna Eliot, Mark Presti, Jeff Ohringer & Jack Petropoulos

Others Present: Laura Fisher, Judy Anderson, Peter Cunningham

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**Call to Order: 5:02 p.m.**

Mary Jennings, Chair, called the meeting.

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**Public Comments – None**

**Approval of Minutes –**

**Upon motion by Vice-Chair Eliot, seconded by Commissioner Presti, to approve minutes of March 9, 2026 was unanimously approved 5:0**

**Upon motion by Vice-Chair Eliot, seconded by Commissioner Ohringer, to approve minutes of March 23, 2026 was unanimously approved 5:0**

**Chair Report –**

Chair Jennings reported on assistance for Lost Lake Courts, noting that the Groton Center cannot provide financial help for a porta-potty or painting lines. The Parks will discuss if they have enough to cover the costs later in the discussion.

**CPC Rep –**

Commissioner Eliot reported that the CPC is getting ready for town meeting and that the dam article will be discussed and voted on at town meeting.

**Budget –**

**Upon motion by Commissioner Ohringer, seconded by Commissioner Petropoulos, to approve Spring permit requests for Soccer shots use of Cutler Field at 9:45-11:15, Council of Aging Spring permit Tuesday & Thursday mornings use of Lost Lake Courts, Beverly Smith Spring permit for Monday, Wednesday, Friday 9:00am-12:00pm use of Lost Lake Courts was unanimously approved 5:0.**

Invoices were signed for Throne Depot, GELD and G.W. Shaw.

### **Sub-Committee –**

The Commissioners discussed their communications strategy regarding the Cow Pond project, including a feature article published in the Groton Herald emphasizing that there would be no tax increase. The article highlighted three main components: improved field access, enhanced programming, and better environmental health, including a 20+ acre turtle nesting area that will be permanently protected as open space.

The Commissioners reviewed lawn care service bids, comparing Gatsby's (\$38,819 total) with DB Lawn Solutions (\$47,670 total), noting that both companies declined to include irrigation services in their proposals. The commissioners decided to only do one application of fertilization to common areas to save on costs.

**Upon motion by Commissioner Ohringer, seconded by Commissioner Presti, to accept the Fertilization bid by Gatsby Grounds in the amount of \$36,545 for five applications to main fields and one application to the common fields, was unanimously approved 5:0.**

### **Planning of April 15 Public Forum –**

The discussion focused on planning for an upcoming public forum about a park project. The Commissioners discussed how to present the project's benefits and costs, with Jack offering to create a slide detailing that the project won't increase taxes and will provide various benefits like enhanced field use for lacrosse and baseball. They agreed that Megan would lead the presentation while other members would be ready to address specific questions about CPC funding and project details. The Commissioners all agreed to emphasize the importance of clearly explaining that the project addresses access and environmental issues, and that it won't require tax increases due to existing assessments and expected federal grant funding.

### **Alvin Sawyer Field Update –**

The town manager was able to restore the little league field, which was completed by a contractor at no cost to the town. The field will not be playable till next spring. The Commissioners considered potential future relocation of the field away from wetlands, possibly using a CPC grant, and discussed the need for a permit system to control access to the property. They also noted that Town field would also remain closed and emphasized the importance of maintaining the remediated field to prevent it from reverting to its previous condition.

### **Goal #2 Permitting Process –**

Chair Jennings discussed implementing a permitting process and public use fees for park facilities, building on research conducted by herself and Jeff Ohringer about nearby communities' fee structures. They determined that while software is not strictly necessary but would significantly reduce administrative burden and improve scheduling transparency for both public and user groups. The Commissioners agreed to explore software costs and assess the administrative assistant's time requirements before making a decision, while continuing with the current permit process in the short term. A key concern was raised about potentially double-charging user groups who already spend significant amounts of their own money on facility maintenance and improvements.

The Commissioners focused on the transition of field maintenance responsibilities from user groups to the organization, they expressed concerns about asking user groups to track their spending while the organization invests significant public dollars in field maintenance, citing Cow Pond Field as an example where \$67,656 was spent on eight fields. Discussion about a plan for the town to eventually take full responsibility for field upkeep, equipment, and maintenance, relieving user groups of these duties as they struggle with volunteer hour shortages in modern society. The conversation highlighted the current hybrid approach where some towns have recreation departments handling maintenance while others rely on volunteer hours.

The Commissioners discussed transitioning to a unified approach for maintaining sports fields, with a focus on establishing clear maintenance responsibilities and user fees. They agreed to develop a policy where the town maintains the basic field infrastructure while user groups cover additional costs specific to their sports.

The next steps include focusing on developing a comprehensive budget for the Parks Department and gathering cost data from user groups and other towns. The group decided to meet with individual user groups, including baseball, to gather cost information and timelines, and agreed to create a standardized questionnaire for calling other towns to understand their personnel budgets.

Administrative Assistant Fisher will be constructing an up-to-date fiscal year field cost broken down by field that shows the costs contributions for DPW & Parks.

**Key upcoming meetings** including a forum on April 15th, regular parks meeting on April 27th, and a Park meeting on May 11th which will include baseball representatives. The Commissioners also noted the need to address playground maintenance in their budget discussions and planned to review the Carol Wheeler Park grant after their upcoming meeting on Wednesday.

Schedule Next Meeting and Adjourn- Monday, April 15, 2026 Public Forum & April 27, 2026.

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**Commissioner Petropoulos moved to adjourn at 6:50 pm, Commissioner Ohringer seconded. The motion carried unanimously in a 5:0 roll call vote:**

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Minutes by Laura Fisher, Administrative Assistant.

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**APPROVED: 6/8/26**

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