



TOWN OF GROTON

Park Commission
Town Hall
1st Floor Meeting Room

PARK COMMISSION

Mary Jennings, Chair
Anna Eliot, Vice-Chair; CPC
Representative
Mark Presti, Clerk
Jack Petropoulos, Member
Jeffrey Ohringer, Member

Date: Monday May 18, 2026
Time: 5:00 PM
Location: 1st Floor Meeting Room
Members Present: Anna Eliot, Mary Jennings, Mark Presti, Jeffrey Ohringer, Jack Petropoulos
Members Not Present:
Others Present: Laura Fisher, Brian Callahan, Megan Buczynski, Mike Johnson, David Pitkin, Judy Anderson

Call to Order: 5:02 p.m.

Mary Jennings, Chair, called the meeting.

Public Comments –

None.

Reports –

Chair Report

Mary Jennings updated the commissioners that they were getting some of the work done from the budget of jobs that might need to be encumbered. DPW director Brian Callahan confirmed the repairs to the seahorse at Christine Hanson playground and the maintenance needed to correct the sinkhole at Woitowics Field. Callahan also notified the Commissioners about some projects Youth Softball is working on stating Don Berry is working with the Chief Procurement Officer and Town Manager to purchase equipment for the project, including potentially converting Connex boxes into dugouts, which would be installed at Cutler Field.

CPC Rep

Commissioner Eliot reported that the CPC reviewed the decisions made at the spring town meeting.

Financials –

Administrative Assistant Fisher notified the commissioners of invoices for Throne Depot, Gatsby Grounds and Groton Electric needing approval.

Permits –

Upon motion by Commissioner Presti, seconded by Commissioner Petropoulos, to approve the request for GD Youth Lacrosse to use Woitowicz Field from June 15 through August 31, Monday-Friday, was unanimously approved 4:0.

Old/New Business

Town Meeting Discussion

A discussion regarding the results of the spring town meeting failed \$4.8 million CPA proposal, attributing its defeat to current economic concerns, last-minute changes, and unclear understanding of CPA funding guidelines. Three options were presented for moving forward: doing nothing, resubmitting the proposal at fall town meeting, or scaling back the project while maintaining the \$3.2 million threshold to qualify for a \$1 million federal grant available until December 2027. The Commissioners questioned whether more engagement would have made a difference in the project's approval and expressed concerns about the limited time allocated for presentations and the challenge of addressing pre-existing public resistance to the project. The Commissioners identified the need to better engage and educate potential supporters, particularly by making meetings more accessible and considering placing the proposal first on the ballot. The decision was made to postpone making a final decision whether to move forward with the project and planned to reassess their plans after they reorganize at their June meeting.

GD Baseball – Current Expenses

Mike Johnson presented the maintenance expense summary showing a significant budget increase from \$19,623 in 2025 to \$38,700 in 2026, primarily due to hiring a third-party company to maintain the infields at Cow Pond instead of relying on volunteers. The budget includes a \$12,400 annual contract for professional field maintenance and \$20,000 for capital expenses to repair field surfaces and address safety issues.

Director Callahan and Mr. Johnson discussed equipment ownership and maintenance for baseball fields. Director Callahan clarified that the town owns the Superstar, and Zero-turn mower, while GD Baseball owns the Gator. The Commissioners addressed capital expenses for equipment, estimated annual costs for ownership and maintenance, with the Gator and zero-turn mower costing around \$1,000 per year, the infield groomer estimated at \$2,000 per year, and the estate mower potentially costing \$3,000-4,000 annually. The discussion concluded with an agreement to collaborate on creating a detailed spreadsheet to track these equipment costs and maintenance requirements.

DPW and Parks discussed the allocation of costs for maintaining the multi-purpose Cow Pond facility, which includes baseball and soccer fields. They agreed on a rough one-third to two-thirds split between baseball and the other fields for cost allocation, with a specific focus on determining the actual expenses for running the facility, including labor, equipment depreciation, and utilities. The discussion highlighted the need to be more granular in cost breakdowns, particularly regarding electricity usage and maintenance requirements, while acknowledging that overall maintenance responsibilities would remain similar regardless of the specific sport being played.

The Commissioners discussed establishing a fee structure to cover the costs of maintaining recreational facilities, with a focus on transitioning maintenance responsibilities from user groups to the town. They explored the challenges of determining exact costs, including equipment and personnel expenses, with estimates ranging from \$200,000 to \$250,000 annually for a dedicated recreation department. The discussion highlighted the need to balance user fees with the goal of reducing burdens on volunteer organizations, while also addressing capital expenses for facility improvements and player safety concerns. Director Callahan, Mr. Johnson and Commissioner Petropoulos agreed to meet to review and restructure the current budget breakdown, identifying which maintenance tasks should be handled by field users versus the town.

Schedule Next Meeting and Adjourn- Monday, June 8, 2026 5:00pm

Mark Presti moved to adjourn at 7:03 pm, Jeff Ohringer seconded, and the motion carried unanimously

Minutes by Laura Fisher, Administrative Assistant.

APPROVED: July 13, 2026
