



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

Date: Monday June 8, 2026
Time: 5:00 PM
Location: 1st Floor Meeting Room
Members Present: Anna Eliot, Mary Jennings, Mark Presti, Jack Petropoulos
Members Not Present:
Others Present: Laura Fisher, Mark Haddad, Kara Kruikshank, Judy Anderson, Priscilla Williams, David Pitkin, Jeff Ohringer

Call to Order: 5:01 p.m.
Mary Jennings, Chair, called the meeting.

Public Comments –
None.

Reports –

Chair Report

The Commissioners welcomed write in candidate Jack Petropoulos for a two-year term and mentioned applicant Jeff Ohringer for the vacant Park Commissioner position to be interviewed by the Select Board on Monday, June 15, 2026. The Vacant position is only for a one-year term. The Commissioners agreed to postpone the reorganization of officers till the next meeting when they possibly have a full five-member board.

The Commission considered a request from Priscilla Williams, President of the Garden Club, to install a memorial for late member, Susan C. Kinniburgh, located on Fireman's Common. The memorial will feature a shrub with a metal plaque. The commission approved the memorial concept pending DPW's approval for placement within a mulch footprint, with the Garden Club responsible for funding the memorial.

Upon motion by Commissioner Eliot, seconded by Commissioner Petropoulos, to approve the Garden Club, featuring a memorial at Fireman's Common in memory of Susan C. Kinniburgh with a plaque within a footprint, surrounding a shrub pending approval with permission from DPW was unanimously approved 4:0.

Upon motion by Commissioner Eliot, seconded by Commissioner Petropoulos, to approve the minutes of April 13, 2026 was unanimously approved 4:0.

Financials –

The Commissioners signed invoices for Groton Herald GELD and Throne Depot.

Permits –

Upon motion by Commissioner Eliot, seconded by Commissioner Petropoulos, to approve Pick Up Softball at Cow Pond usage from June 15 - August 31, Sundays, 9am-11am was unanimously approved 4:0.

Upon motion by Commissioner Eliot, seconded by Commissioner Petropoulos, to approve GD Youth Basketball League at Cutler Field and Town Field on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 6pm – 8pm was unanimously approved 4:0.

Old Business – Recap of GDYBB Field Expenses

Commissioner Petropoulos reported on a meeting with Mike Johnson to analyze youth baseball field expenses, where they examined the budget and applied costs to individual fields while accounting for depreciation of long-lasting equipment. The team discussed how to categorize costs between general town expenses versus youth sports-specific expenses, with examples like uniforms being potentially youth sports only while pitcher's mounds might benefit other users. The next steps include contacting soccer and lacrosse to conduct similar cost analyses, with the goal of determining which costs should be considered for future discussions about funding or responsibility.

Fee structures and payment responsibilities between the town and user groups for maintaining sports facilities was reviewed. They agreed to follow Jack's recommendation of conducting offline meetings with soccer and lacrosse groups before bringing information to public meetings, and decided to proceed with gathering comprehensive budgets from user groups including capital items and building maintenance costs.

Future Cow Pond CPA Field Plans – Baseball Access Road

There was no significant progress to report since the last Cow Pond working group meeting that met three weeks prior, though there was general agreement to move forward with the initiative.

A discussion was had in regards to the Parks Commission's compliance issues with a 2009 conservation determination of applicability for an access road to the baseball field. Chair Jennings attended a Conservation meeting two weeks prior to ask advice on ways to comply with the applicability. The Conservation Commission had records going back to 2014 saying they would approve the access road to Cow Pond as long as the gates were locked at the top and the bottom, keys shall be made available to only emergency personnel. As a result, the Conservation Commission issued an enforcement order, requiring the gates to be locked, with only emergency personnel having access.

While the Conservation Commission cannot officially support the current proposal for Cow Pond as a group until they receive documentation from the consultant that was sent to the Natural Heritage Foundation, they expressed general support for moving forward with the plan.

The Commissioners went over a potential enforcement action regarding road access to the baseball fields, with concerns raised about the negative optics and impact on baseball operations. The Commissioners decided to invite baseball representatives to their next meeting and consult with Town Council about the enforcement timeline and potential appeals of the enforcement order.

Town Manager, Mark Haddad, explained certain aspects of scaling down the Cow Pond Project, stating that the project will still need to be a minimum of \$3.42 million in order to qualify for the million-dollar grant. Haddad asked the Commissioners for direction on what they would like to

keep or scale down moving forward with the project, keeping in mind the playground and walking trail would be necessary to include in order to qualify for the \$1 million grant.

After brainstorming several projects options the Commissioners came up with the following: Chair Jennings suggested pursuing an expanded parking area on a reduced scale and emphasized that ADA accessibility should remain a key component of the project. Commissioner Presti advocated for presenting the full combined project rather than a scaled-down parking lot proposal. Commissioner Petropoulos emphasized the importance of prioritizing the project's most critical elements, while Commissioner Eliot supported finding a middle-ground approach.

Town Manager Haddad noted that the estimated cost of the parking lot improvements and relocation of Field 3 would be approximately \$1.5 million. Jeff Ohringer asked whether the Town could move forward with a parking lot-only project rather than a larger-scale proposal, given the lack of support for the previous project at Town Meeting. The Commissioners expressed concerns about pursuing a parking lot-only project, citing potential ineligibility for Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding and previous community resistance.

The Commissioners explored breaking the approximately \$4 million project into smaller, more manageable components to better prioritize improvements and potentially increase the likelihood of approval at Fall Town Meeting. The project could be organized into three primary categories: parking, accessibility, and capacity/features, with sustainability and conservation incorporated as additional considerations. The Commissioners agreed that the working group, which includes representatives from local sports leagues and committee members, should lead the prioritization effort. Megan from Activitas may assist by developing cost estimates for various options based on the working group's recommendations.

The Commissioners shared their perspectives on a scaled-down grant proposal for the parking lot and sports facility improvements. It was noted that current financial constraints and economic conditions have prompted efforts to reduce the overall project cost. Four potential paths forward were identified: taking no action, pursuing the original proposal, submitting a scaled-down version, or completing only the parking lot improvements without grant funding. Commissioners Presti and Petropoulos stated that the project's most significant improvement should be the parking lot as the top priority, while Chair Jennings identified parking and safety as the primary concerns. Vice-Chair Eliot agreed that safety should be the project's highest priority.

Further discussion was scheduled for the next meeting to make a decision regarding the project based on the working group's recommendations. Additional discussion regarding the baseball access gate will also take place at the next meeting.

Budget/New Business –

Chair Jennings expressed budget expenditure concerns for FY2026, potentially leaving money unspent despite having only spent about half of the \$25,000 budget.

Administrative Assistant Fisher gave a recap of previous expenses and what to expect. Fisher reported delays in receiving invoices for approved work including sprinkler repairs and irrigation turn-on, though clarified that as long as the work was completed in June, it can be paid from this year's budget even if bills arrive later. Admin Fisher explained playground maintenance costs, with estimates coming in around \$5000 including weeding and mulching, which exceeds their initial \$2,500 budget allocation.

Since there was more discussion needed on what was to be encumbered for remaining projects by the end of June, the Commissioners authorized Chair Jennings to work with the Admin Fisher to expend the available \$11,912 in funds according to established priorities, including potential work on benches at Town Field and brush clearing around the baseball/softball field at Cutler Field.

Upon motion by Commissioner Presti, seconded by Commissioner Petropoulos, to approve Chair Jennings to work with Admin Fisher to expend the funds according to the priorities that were set at the beginning of the year was unanimously agreed 4:0.

The Parks Department has received concerns from the Town Manager regarding the Smith Social Pavilion at Town Field. Members of the public have been using the gazebo and then accessing areas of Town Field that are currently closed and roped off due to recent renovations.

To help prevent future incidents involving damaged fencing, removed rope barriers, and unauthorized access to the renovated fields, the Commissioners have agreed not to approve any new permit requests for the Smith Social Pavilion. However, all permits that have already been approved will be honored.

Upon motion by Commissioner Petropoulos, seconded by Commissioner Presti, to approve the Town Managers request not accept any more permits for the Smith Social Pavilion were unanimously approved in a 4:0 vote.

Schedule Next Meeting and Adjourn- Monday, June 15, 2026 5:00pm, Monday, June 22, 2026 5:00pm

Mark Presti moved to adjourn at 6:57 pm, Jack Petropoulos seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Minutes by Laura Fisher, Administrative Assistant.

APPROVED: 7/20/26
