

Park Commission Meeting

July 27, 2026

Commissioners present: Mark Presti, Anna Eliot, Jeff Ohringer, Jack Petropoulos

Also present: Brian Callahan (DPW), Judy Anderson

Commissioner Presti called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM.

Eliot moved and Petropoulos seconded a motion to approve the minutes from July 20 as amended. The vote was unanimous to approve the minutes.

Commissioner Ohringer joined the meeting at 5:10 PM

The commission discussed a written report submitted for consideration by Chairperson Jennings and read by Presti.

- Jennings reported on a conversation with Trails representative Paul Funch in which Funch reported that the Accessible trail at the Nashua River using stone dust had held up well with no signs of encroachment by grass.
- Jennings reported working with user groups to schedule games in the fall to not conflict with each other in order to lessen stress on the limited parking available in front of the soccer fields.
- Jennings reported having sent a story to the Herald describing the restriction of use of the Access Rd and reported having posted an ad in social media for recruiting Turtle Monitors.
 - Jennings reported having posted a call for turtle monitoring. Petropoulos reported 4 respondents and reaching out to all 4 but only one had returned the call and was monitoring tonight.
- Jennings reported considering using social media to promote public information and engagement regarding the Cow Pond project prior to Town Meeting.
- Petropoulos described similar initiatives during the approval of the new Fire Station
 - Eliot suggested Petropoulos and Presti come up with a plan for use of social media to promote engagement
- Ohringer Suggested withdrawing permits for baseball and soccer for the day of Town Meeting in order to encourage parents to participate at Town Meeting in support of the Cow Pond proposal. Discussion also included asking User Groups to avoid scheduling games for Town Meeting (Saturday October 3)

Video was interrupted at approximately 5:18 PM after 0:17:30 of the meeting. The following content was discussed after the interruption, but before the outage was noticed.

Eliot reported on the activity of the Working Group on the revised Cow Pond project.

- Lighting will be included in the project, justified by an increase in capacity. Stone dust will be used on the walking track and can be paved over in the future. Means for generating public awareness were discussed.
- Presti supplemented the report on the Working Group, saying that he thought that today's Working Group meeting was a good one. He reported that the walking trail would return to its original size rather than the scaled down version reported previously as a way to save on cost. He confirmed that the baseball parking lot will remain as gravel. He reported that the CPA will be considering the out of cycle application this evening and the Town Manager will be posting an RFP for the project on August 17 with bids due by September 15. He also reported that there was no support within the Working Group for the temporary connecting road, based largely on the cost and public safety considerations.

Petropoulos reported that Turtle Monitoring was continuing but that it was becoming very stressful to continually ask people to do the work and he worried about the sustainability of the initiative. He reported that 4 individuals had inquired about volunteering but that of the 4 that he replied to, only one had followed through and that she was out tonight monitoring.

Commissioner Ohringer stressed that he felt that the Commission needed to be unanimous in its support for the Cow Pond project if it was to pass at Town Meeting, and asked Petropoulos to explain his having abstained from the vote to advance the proposal to the CPC.

Video was restarted at approximately 5:57:00 PM approximately 30 minutes later.

Petropoulos explained that he was uncomfortable with the level of information that he had about the evolution of the project and that the more he learned, the more questions came up. He explained that this was not a reflection on the project. Rather it was a reflection on the methodology chosen to scope out the project, specifically through representative members of the Parks Commission participating on a Working Group and reporting back end results to the Parks Commission. Petropoulos explained that this process left him feeling less informed than he would like to be for a project of this size and that he was uncomfortable voting to support the project as a result. He went on to offer as examples, questions that today's report from the Working Group left him with, including questions about quantifying the increased capacity that lighting would enable, questions about the cost of wheel stops and the varying explanations on the consequence of plowing that had been offered over time, options for planning in case of a failed vote, and the increased cost of items that were recently added back into the plan.

Ohringer discussed his concern for managing access and the volume of traffic in the Fall when both soccer and baseball are playing at the same time

Petropoulos raised the question asking what the plan was if the proposed work does not pass. Eliot cautioned that, if we offered an alternative plan, Town Meeting may like the alternative plan better.

Presti read into the record a letter from a resident asking the Commission to fund Port-a-potties at the Lost Lake pickle ball courts. There did not seem to be support for covering the cost. Eliot suggested that pickle ball users go to the Council on Aging to see if they would cover the cost. Eliot also recounted that the court was originally installed for Lost Lake residents and was never intended to have bathrooms. Eliot volunteered to contact the resident with feedback from the discussion.

The Commission considered a number of permit applications. The Council on Aging permit for September 1 through November 19 was deferred.

Invoices were discussed

- Playground equipment repair (\$821) Approved
- Throne Depot (\$290, \$100, \$100, \$100) Approved
- Sprinkler Repair Encumbrment (\$4,290) Approved

Missing meeting minutes were discussed, including implications for public opinion as we go to Town Meeting with a request for Cow Pond improvements. Presti volunteered to work with Laura to inventory missing minutes and develop a strategy for coming up to date.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:45PM

Approved 8/10/2026