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

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

Date:	Monday September 28, 2026
Time:	5:00 PM
Location:	1st Floor Meeting Room
Members Present:	Mary Jennings, Mark Presti, Jeffrey Ohringer, Jack Petropoulos (via Zoom) Anna Eliot left at 6:33pm
Members Not Present:	
Others Present:	Laura Fisher, Judy Anderson, Peter Cunningham, Mike Johnson, Megan Buczynski, Mark Haddad, Kara Cruikshank

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Call to Order: 5:01 PM

Mary Jennings, Chair, called the meeting. Anna Eliot was not present till 5:05 PM

Public Comments –
None.

Reports –

The commission approved minutes from the September 14th meeting and discussed three announcements: Groton School's volunteer day on October 13th (though no specific parks projects were available), recognition of turtle monitors who helped enable baseball field access including a special thanks to park members Presti, Jennings & Husband Jim, Ohringer Petropoulos, Conservation Commissioners, Bruce Easom & Ben Wolfe and volunteers Susan Gilbert, Laura Cummings and her daughter. Town Manager, Mark Haddad made an announcement that town website had a new interactive town meeting dashboard featuring warrant articles and supporting documentation for the Cow Pond along with other helpful information.

Upon motion by Commissioner Presti, seconded by Commissioner Ohringer, to approve minutes from September 14, 2026 was unanimously approved via 4:0 roll call vote:

Jennings	**Aye**
Ohringer	**Aye**
Presti	**Aye**
Petropoulos	**Aye**

CPA Update
Commissioner Petropoulos reported that the CPC expressed concerns about construction timeline certainty and public information dissemination for the CPA proposal for Cow Pond that would be voted on at Town Meeting. Jack and Bruce were tasked with creating a presentation about the CPA process for town meeting, which will be presented as a neutral report rather than

promotional content. The committee also recommended breaking the proposal into three separate proposals, and there are approximately $1.6 million in CPA funds available for the upcoming town meeting.

Upon motion by Commissioner Presti, seconded by Commissioner Eliot, for the approval of a permit for a Women's Fitness Bootcamp to be held at the pavilion at Town Field 8:00AM - 9:00AM Fridays in October was approved via 4:0 roll call vote:

Jennings	**Aye**
Ohringer	**Aye**
Presti	**Aye**
Petropoulos	**Abstain**
Eliot	**Aye**

Parking Lot Project Requirements

The group discussed the minimum requirements for a parking lot project, with consensus that a connector road between the front and back lots would be the bare minimum, though this would require removing Field 3. The estimated cost for the connector road alone was $100,000, with an additional $400,000 needed to replace Field 3, making the total project approximately $500,000. The discussion also covered alternative field locations and logistics, with Mike Johnson, GD Baseball rep explaining that while Alvin Sawyer could potentially accommodate some younger players, there would still be challenges with field size and player logistics.

Baseball Parking Lot Alternatives Discussion

The discussion focused on parking lot alternatives for baseball fields, with the commissioners proposing to convert CP3 into a parking lot rather than creating a road to another parking lot. Jack raised concerns about increased walking distances to multiple fields if parking was concentrated at CP3. The group discussed cost considerations, with some suggesting a gravel parking lot option in the $70,000-$100,000 range versus a $500,000 road project, though questions remained about CPA funding eligibility for parking lots. The conversation ended with uncertainty about whether CPA applications would be considered for parking lot improvements and a need to address this deadline immediately.

CPA Applications Planning Discussion

The group discussed four CPA applications, with Jack suggesting they focus on broad preliminary applications for connector road access and soccer parking improvements while awaiting CPC guidance on CPA funding for parking projects. The commissioners expressed a preference to submit all applications as options, noting that Field 3 would need to be removed regardless of which project is implemented. The members discussed three separate CPA proposals submitted by Jack Petropoulos totaling approximately $3.2 million for various sports facility improvements including connector roads, parking lots, and field replacements. After some confusion about specific costs and details, the commission voted to move forward with submitting all three proposals as separate CPA applications to serve as placeholders for future town meeting consideration. Jack requested permission to refine the cost estimates after consulting with Mark Haddad and Megan, but this amendment was withdrawn before the vote. They established a backup plan to create a gravel road between parking lots for next spring if the CPC proposals are not accepted. Activitas Engineer Megan Buczynski clarified that while the gravel road would not require a town meeting vote, any funding would need to wait until July 1st of the new fiscal year.

Upon motion by Commissioner Ohringer, seconded by Commissioner Petropoulos, to submit three separate CPA proposal as presented by Jack Petropoulos to the CPC, as a placeholder for the future was approved via 4:0 roll call vote:

Jennings	**Aye**
Ohringer	**Aye**
Presti	**Aye**
Petropoulos	**Aye**
Eliot	**Abstain**

Upon motion by Commissioner Eliot, seconded by Commissioner Petropoulos, to approve Mark Haddad's CPA proposal to install dugouts at Town Field was unanimously approved via 5:0 roll call vote:

Jennings	**Aye**
Ohringer	**Aye**
Presti	**Aye**
Petropoulos	**Aye**
Eliot	**Aye**

The Commissioners discussed concerns about removing a baseball field to create an access road, with Commissioner Presti expressing strong frustration about the project becoming "a complete debacle" due to misinformed opposition. Presti suggested reappropriating the back parking lot for a new field, though he emphasized any solution would need careful planning rather than simply removing the baseball field. The discussion highlighted ongoing parking issues at the site, but the commission agreed they should maintain their position on the larger project rather than implementing a minimal solution that wouldn't address conservation or road issues.

Town Meeting Project Preparation
The group discussed preparations for an upcoming town meeting regarding a $3.9 million project proposal. They reviewed presentation materials focusing on safety, accessibility, and recreational components, with plans to emphasize that the actual cost after grants and contributions would be $2.9 million, similar to a previously approved middle school track project. The commissioners identified the need to make the presentation more readable from the back of the room and to better highlight the reduced cost compared to other projects, with plans to revise the materials before the meeting.

Project Presentation Strategy Discussion
The group discussed concerns about a presentation on a $3.9 million project, with Commissioner Petropoulos suggesting they condense the 15 slides into a simpler format focusing on the problem, solution, and cost, particularly highlighting that 45% of the project is funded by non-Groton dollars. The conversation ended with a decision to reschedule their next meeting from October 12th to October 5th, and they noted upcoming agenda items including a proposal from Shepley Hill regarding conservation land management.

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

Meeting Adjourned 6:45 PM

Minutes by Laura Fisher, Administrative Assistant.
APPROVED: 9/22/26