



TOWN OF WATERTOWN
Conservation Commission
Administration Building
149 Main Street
WATERTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS 02472

Leo Martin, Chairperson
Marylouise Pallotta McDermott, Member
Charles C. Bering, Member
Patrick W. Fairbairn, Member
Maria P. Rose Member
Jamie O'Connell, Member

Telephone (617) 972-6426
Facsimile (617) 926-7778
www.watertown-ma.gov
Susan C. Jenness, Assistant

MINUTES

Meeting Date: Wednesday, March 6, 2019, 7:00 PM in the Philip Pane Lower Hearing Room

Conservation Commission Members Present: Leo Martin, Patrick Fairbairn, Maria P. Rose, Jamie O'Connell, Charles Bering

Absent: Marylouise Pallotta McDermott

Also Present: *Peter Centola, Elodia Thomas, Gideon Schreiber, Thomas J. Sullivan, Chris Hayward, Carolyn Bays, Town Council, Christen McDonough, Matt Kelly*

Staff Present: Steve Magoon, *Acting Agent*, Susan C. Jenness

Martin Chaired.

- 1. Public Hearing Continued – Parcel 1236-2-0 and 1510-1-0** for an Abbreviated Notice of Resource Area Delineation (ANRAD) request submitted for the approval of resource area boundary delineation associated with the resource areas located at Parcel 1236-2-0 and 1510-1-0 at 71 Arlington Street. Owner applicant: Maximos Hatziliades. Representative: Michael (Mickey) Marcus, Joseph Rogers, SWCA Environmental, LLC

Christen McDonough appeared on behalf of the applicant/owner.

McDonough explained that back in 2015, the wetlands were delineated and at that time the Conservation Commission (CC) had asked that the applicant to take a look at the stream area that is about ½ mile long.

McDonough said that on February 11, 2019 a field review was conducted with the applicant's delineation. At that time she reported that 3 additional wetland flags were added.

McDonough explained that she had just been given the report that was written by Matt Kelly, the Senior Scientist from Epsilon Associates, who was hired to represent the Town in this process.

She said she had not been able to get a full understanding on Kelly's report as she was just receiving it now.

Martin asked McDonough to thoroughly review the report, and also confer with Kelly about the issues and prepare to come back to the Conservation Commission meeting in April.

Rose suggested that applicant get survey flagged.

Martin asked McDonough if Hatziliades had any plans for the future of the site, and McDonough said there was none.

Martin asked McDonough to resubmit her report with the flags as agreed upon with Kelly.

Motion: Rose made a motion for McDonough to review the comments from the report by Epsilon Associates and to confer over any questions to revise the plan for ANRAD. O'Connell seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached for Mc Donough to review the comments from the report by Epsilon Associates and to confer over any questions to revise the plan for ANRAD.

2. Arsenal Park- Continued Discussion on hard court areas

Martin called the meeting to order to discuss the items that would go into the box in Option 3

Thomas J. Sullivan of Upland Rd. appeared. He said he felt this park was not the best place to house Community Gardens, and that he knew this park was not the only alternative the town had. He reminded the Commission that the Town was below the national standards for recreational facilities and that now they are decreasing even more because of Community Gardens taking over their space that was allocated for hockey. He urged the Commission to find alternative locations for Community Gardens and suggested spaces such as Gore Estates, Ridgelawn Cemetery or the GSA Property. He closed by saying he did not feel this matter had been looked at hard enough.

Commission Comments

Fairbairn said that he felt it was important to build as much flexibility into the plans as possible and that Concept 1 with the conditions of a modified skate park, or Concept 2 would allow for that flexibility to occur.

Rose said that considering the comments made by Community Gardens former Director Therese Hammersle, Concept 3 would allow Community Gardens plenty of space, and also provide more opportunity for disabled gardeners. Rose said she thought that in the future the Town could contribute to their plots. Rose was happy with the nearly full size skate park and tennis courts that had potential to be modified.

O'Connell said she liked Concept 3 which was aligned with the Town's Open Space Plan calling for more open space. She said Concept 3 struck the best balance for the town, and thought it was great that the seniors will have space for Pickle Ball, and Recreation has diverse ways of offering exercise.

Bering said Concept 3 was the best plan in his opinion. He said he was on ski patrol at one time and cautioned the town that skate parks pose a risk. He urged members of Town Council to carefully review skate park risks. Centola responded to Bering's concern about skate parks and said that all equipment will be state of the art with training offered by professionals. He said that helmets and padding will be mandatory. Schreiber responded that all sports are risky and of course if anyone ever gets hurts doing anything someone should call 911 right away.

Centola said he will look into getting sports companies to donate helmets and protective gear.

Martin said he liked Concept 3 and that removing the boards gave up the room to add other things.

Centola spoke about the fact that Mr. Sullivan had done so much for the Town as a leader for the Recreation Department. Centola handed out documentation to town staff and the board depicting a Basketball Courts Plan from the late 1970's, and the plan approved just last year by the Town, and also the Arsenal Park Plan from the very beginning of this process. Centola said he was disappointed by Community Gardens who had accepted this space on a temporary basis to use the hockey rink until the renovations, and that the Town was reneging by not putting hockey back into the plans. He said if he had to make a choice that the multicourt would have been his.

Joan Oustifine from Lovell Rd. gave a talk about how Pickle Ball has become a favored past time and how neighboring towns are devoting more space to it, over tennis courts. She said that Debbie Chen is the Local Ambassador for Pickle Ball and she would be able to coordinate with her to integrate Pickle Ball into its potential in Arsenal Park.

Barbara Ruskin said that she liked Concept 3 and pointed out the garden spaces seemed smaller. She urged the town to look for other spaces for Community Gardens aside from just in this location.

Elodia Thomas spoke about Lincoln Park where there are "*USE AT YOUR OWN RISK*" signs. She said she liked Concept 2 and urged the town to look into using big belly trash receptacles in the park.

Michelle Cokonougher of 37 Paul St. said that she was not in favor of any one design over another but agreed that diversity of activities was very good. She thought that Option 3 would allow for more flexibility in the future.

Public Comments were closed.

Magoon spoke and said he liked Concept 3. He said that the town had given serious consideration to the Recreation Department and what they felt they required. He said that the plan did not just give green space to accommodate Arsenal Development. He said he thought this space will be a pretty special place for people to just congregate. He said the question for the Commission to answer at this time is whether or not green space takes precedence over court space.

Centola responded to Magoon's comments and said his issue for recreation is about being able to offer opportunities that are diverse.

Martin responded that multi-use courts take up too much space.

Motion: Rose made a motion to the Conservation Commission that they adopt Option 3 as presented. Bering seconded the motion.

Vote: A four to one vote was reached adopting Option 3 as presented.

3. Informational Meeting - Presentation and discussion of Whitney Hill Park Annual Report 2018 per the Town Council's 2013 Resolution Preserving Whitney Hill Park.

Fairbairn was introduced by Martin to make his annual presentation on Whitney Hill which is a 5 minute walk from the High School. Fairbairn explained that he had been doing work at Whitney Hill with students who have been led by him in conducting research in this field laboratory that was purchased by the town in 1895.

Fairbairn introduced Lynsey Kraemer, the Coordinator of the Science Department grades 6-12, and Jennifer McDonald the Biology Teacher. MacDonald took the place of Erik Hiltunen, who had coordinated the program for the students together with Fairbairn in previous years.

Kraemer took to the podium and explained that in the first year of Jennifer's position, they had not had the time to focus on the field work with Fairbairn. She said in the future she hoped to get the students involved in the program with Fairbairn, and that they will have more time in the future, as they progress through the curriculum as the first priority. She said she looked forward to following up with him in the near future as spring approaches.

Public Comments

Libby Shaw from Templeton Parkway who is the President for Trees for Watertown told Fairbairn she truly appreciated the work he does. Shaw said it is vital that people acknowledge that the world of biology in the Park is part of the community, including the underground as well. She spoke about a poetry competition that is being planned to bring

awareness of how the local birds and insects, part of the Whitney Hill Community are supported by the health of the tree population.

Jacob Mirsky of Bradford St. spoke about how much he appreciated the prior work that has been done to care for Whitney Hill. Mirsky who lives two blocks away from Whitney Hill said that he would love to volunteer for trail maintenance or some other practical aspect of stewardship. Fairbairn said he is looking for people who would be interested in photographing some of the species who are part of the park habitat. Mirsky said trail maintenance and stewardship was his preferred way of serving.

Elodia Thomas suggested posting on "Watertown Next-door" would help doing community outreach for how the public could volunteer. Rose reminded the public and the board that there were plans for a kiosk, and some concrete pillars that would mark the entrance of the park. She said that posting information about events in the future will become easier when those items are added to the park.

Barbara Ruskin pointed out that Whitney Hill has been forever wild and felt it was important to remember it should remain natural. She warned that putting up kiosks and signs might take away from the natural aspects of the park. She also requested that the town consider an additional trail be added for walking on.

Chris Hayward, the Town's Tree Warden and Supervisor of the Forestry Crew spoke as the liaison between the Conservation Commission (CC) and the Department of Public Works, (DPW). Hayward explained that requests should come from the CC or the public about town trees, or CC issues related to DPW directly to him. He said that the forestry crew has been trained to prune branches for public safety first. He said that the plan for pruning at Whitney Hill is for the space to remain as natural as possible.

Fairbairn said that the CC is interested in providing a habitat for larger predators to curb nuisance of rabbits, mice and rats. Fairbairn asked Hayward to save tree limbs for use in creating a desirable denning habitat for larger species and that old logs would help to accomplish that.

Magoon explained to Fairbairn that Watertown is concerned with the well-being and public safety of everyone. He said he felt that in creating opportunities for larger species to den at Whitney Hill, it could lead to potential safety concerns for local residents, children, cats and smaller dogs that are all members of the community of Whitney Hill.

Fairbairn said he said he met with Karen O'Reilly, the Animal Control Officer for Watertown and John Maguranis the soon to be retiring Animal Control Officer in the

Town of Belmont. He said that they were supportive of his ideas, and that both were very sympathetic to public concerns about coyotes and foxes.

Martin suggested that O'Reilly and Maguranis come and speak to the CC about habitat management at another meeting.

Hayward reported that he is working with local arborists who expressed some interest in volunteering to do some pruning for the Town over Arbor Day. He said he hopes they can do some pruning at Whitney Hill at that time. Libby Shaw, President for Trees for Watertown made the suggestion that Hayward could ask the arborists doing the work to look into preserving some of the branches with holes in them that are still considered safe for the public, so that local owls can perch in them.

Martin thanked everyone who came to participate in the Annual Whitney Hill Meeting.

4. Minutes Continuation -December 5, 2018 Meeting

Motion: Rose made a motion to adopt the minutes of the December 5, 2018 meeting as modified. O'Connell seconded the motion.

Vote: There was a unanimous vote to adopt the minutes of the December 5, 2018 meeting.

5. Minutes Continuation- January 9, 2019 Meeting

Motion: Rose made a motion to adopt the minutes of the January 9, 2019 meeting as modified. O'Connell seconded the motion.

Vote: There was a unanimous vote to adopt the minutes of the January 9, 2019 meeting as modified.

6. Minutes- February 6, 2019

Motion: Fairbairn made a motion to adopt the minutes of the February 6, 2019 meeting as modified. Rose seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached to adopt the minutes of the February 6, 2019 meeting as modified.

7. Agent report

- a. Commission Member Application Update- Magoon reported that there was at least one candidate who was planning on filing an application letter to the Office of the Town Manager later on this week.
- b. Agent Application Update- Magoon reported that there was a candidate who the Town was planning to make an offer to in the upcoming days.
- c. Magoon announced that Matt Shuman will receive the Rita Barron Public Official Award by the Charles River Watershed Association on March 28, 2019 at the CRWA Annual Meeting.

Motion: A motion to adjourn was made by Rose at 9:40 PM. The motion was seconded by O'Connell.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached to adjourn the meeting at 9:40 PM.