

Minutes
Watertown Conservation Commission
Town Council Chambers
Wednesday, September 6, 2017

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

Commission Members Absent: Louis Taverna

Staff Present: Christopher J. Hayward, Susan C. Jenness (adopted 10.4.17)

Martin Chaired.

1. Discussion - Arsenal Yards Relocated Access Easement to Arsenal Park

Marylouise Pallotta McDermott, the previous chair of the Conservation Commission requested the floor to explain the historical background of the care and custody of Arsenal Park.

Pallotta McDermott explained that Arsenal Park was designed by John Wacker, Landscape Architect, for Thomas McDermott, Watertown Selectman, and Diana Proctor, Conservation Commission Administrator, who were both highly involved with the Conservation Commission during the 1970's. McDermott at that time was also associated with Thomas P. O'Neil, the former Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Pallotta McDermott explained that both she and her husband, Thomas McDermott travelled back and forth to Washington to meet with former Speaker of the House, a total of three times to broker a permanent arrangement between the CC, the town and the Federal Government. As a result of that arrangement, the CC would be given permanent custody of Arsenal Park, a green space in Watertown which is accessible to residents, but also open for non-resident use as well.

Pallotta McDermott clarified that the other remaining parks in the town are currently under the care and custody of Peter Centola, the Director of the Recreation Department for Watertown.

Martin thanked Pallotta McDermott and said that it was thanks to what she just explained that the park will remain in the care and custody of the CC as a permanent agreement.

Martin explained that the discussion about the easement regarding the access road to Arsenal Park would be about how access both in and out of the park would be achieved given the new building which is proposed for the site.

The original access road will remain the same, while the exit road will be relocated up closer to the stores in order to add a building to the site.

After a brief discussion Martin requested the CC make a motion.

Motion: Pallotta McDermott made a motion to approve revisions made to the easement that were approved by the town, under the new entrance to the park. Rose seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached while Bering abstained as he arrived late to the discussion.

1. Informational follow up – August 15, 2017 Arsenal Park planning meeting.

Bering, Rose and O'Connell attended the August 15th Arsenal Park planning meeting.

O'Connell described the meeting as a well facilitated process, using aerial photographs of the park that were utilized in breakout sessions taking place in individual groups. Participants were asked to discuss questions that were based on their opinion about the space. Some examples of questions that were asked were the following; What would you find enjoyable in this setting? What is special or unique about this park? How would you suggest we make improvements in the space?

O'Connell explained that sticky notes were provided for participants to record their comments on, and then placed on the aerial maps. The comments were collected in order to be synthesized and quantified by the facilitation team, and then entered into a record that will be used for planning the future of the park.

Rose commented that the meeting was well organized and benefitted from having a professional facilitator.

Rose, O'Connell and Bering reported some of the comments that were made during the meeting back to the group and some comments made during the process were discussed among the CC.

Hayward passed out lists of the comments that were captured by the facilitation team that night so the members of the CC could read them. Hayward urged members of the CC to look at the lists of comments as a way of keeping up with what is being discussed inside the process. He explained that eventually all of the information gathered in this process will come together and be presented to the Conservation Commission so that the Conservation Commission can comment and make recommendations about best uses for the space at the appropriate time.

Rose suggested that there might be ideas that are being developed which are not good ideas in the space. The group agreed that they could keep an eye on the process and write letters from the group making comments as the process unfolded when necessary.

Fairbairn warned members of the CC to be particularly prepared for the park to eventually be used for an over flow of activities coming from the recreation department.

Hayward urged all members of the commission to attend the next meeting scheduled for the public participation now scheduled in October. CC members were urged to sign up for “notify me” in order to keep inside the loop of scheduling at all times.

2. Minutes from April 5, 2017

O’Connell said that she had commented to Chris Jones the landscape architect during the April 5th meeting. She narrated her comments which were not entered into the minutes, to be recorded in the modified minutes.

Motion: Rose made a motion to approve the April 5, 2017 minutes as modified. Fairbairn seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached approving the minutes of the April 5th, 2017 minutes as modified.

3. Minutes from June 7, 2017

Fairbairn provided comment to the Conservation Office seeking to strike two paragraphs of his dialogue from the June meeting. He had also submitted one substitute paragraph of revisions regarding his discussion with the CC members on the conditional acceptance of the Order of Conditions in accordance with the citation of Massachusetts Wetland Protection Act from the June minutes.

After several additional small modifications a motion was made to accept the minutes from the June 7, 2017 Minutes.

Motion: Pallotta McDermott made a motion to approve the minutes as modified. O’Connell seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached approving the minutes as modified.

4. Agent report

- a. DCR projects- Hayward updated the CC that the Pedestrian Bridge Replacement would begin in November. He said an additional tree will need to be removed in order to swing the crane in to the site as needed. Hayward said he directed the DCR to plant a new tree to replace the one being removed.
- b. Sasaki has submitted a new work plan as scaffolding will no longer be used in the project to repair and update the façade of the building.
- c. Mt. Auburn Cemetery Auburn and Halcyon Lakes project-Hayward reported that he would be meeting with Jennifer Letourneau, the Conservation Agent from Cambridge, and

Naomi Valentine, Assistant Project Manager from Sound Science Creative Solutions, SWCA Environmental, at Mt. Auburn Cemetery. They plan to discuss proposed work to repair damage done during the drought last summer, and to discuss some enhancements to the space as well. Hayward said he would update the CC of any new developments.

- d. Hayward reminded the CC of the Department of Public Works (DPW) public meeting on Green Infrastructure taking place at 6 PM in the Town Council Chambers on September 14, 2017.
- e. Hayward informed the CC that he would be present at the Faire on the Square on September 23, 2017 at a table with the Storm water Advisory Committee.
- f. Martin informed the CC that the proper communication channel for CC members to reach out to transmit CC business to the DPW is to inform Hayward of their messages, who will then contact the DPW on the CC's behalf. Fairbairn indicated that he believed that the DPW needs to know what the CC is doing at Whitney Hill, and that he feels strongly that exchanging information with the DPW about their thoughts on issues like maintenance would be positive. Martin said that a lot of information has been given to the DPW through the Annual Whitney Hill Report and asked Fairbairn to bring his messages to be conveyed to the DPW to Hayward who will communicate his messages to the proper individual at the DPW.
- g. Town Councilor Palomba asked the CC if they would consider holding an Executive Session at their October meeting, between the CC and the town council. He explained that this would allow everyone involved in the discussion on potential parcels of land in Watertown to increase Green Space, to meet in executive session without having to schedule a separate meeting. They were open to the idea. Hayward told Palomba he would have until the week before the October meeting to contact the Conservation Office to set up the meeting in accordance with Open Meeting Laws.

Meeting adjourned.