



TOWN OF WATERTOWN
Conservation Commission
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MINUTES

Meeting Date: Wednesday, February 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

Absent: Charles Bering, Marylouise Pallotta McDermott

Also Present: *Lisa Feltner, Town Council, Elodia Thomas, Genie Johnston, Thomas J. Sullivan, Anthony Donato, Andy Compagna, Susan Falkoff. Town Council*

Staff Present: Steve Magoon, *Acting Agent*, Susan C. Jenness (2.27.19 rev)

Martin Chaired.

- 1. Public Hearing Continued- Will not be heard at this meeting – Parcel 1236-2-0** – 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 at 71 Arlington Street. Owner applicant: Maximos Hatziliades. Representative: Michael (Mickey) Marcus, Joseph Rogers, SWCA Environmental, LLC.

Martin called the public hearing to order. He explained that the applicant wished to modify the original ANRAD that was filed in December 2019 and that a new ANRAD was filed at the beginning of 2019.

Martin will take a site visit with Magoon, Fairbairn with Matt Kelly who is a wetland scientist at Epsilon, and was hired as an expert by the Town.

The public meeting on the modified ANRAD will take place at the March 6, 2019 Conservation Commission meeting.

2. Conservation Commission Discussion Continuation- Arsenal Park- Discussion on the 25% concept draft plan based on the recommendations made by the Conservation Commission at the last meeting.

Schreiber gave the history of the ongoing process of the Arsenal Park renovation which began three years ago when Chris Hayward was the Agent for the Conservation Commission.

Schreiber gave highlights of the process which included 3 public meeting that gave members of the public and the Conservation Commission equal access to the public process and multiple opportunities to suggest various scenarios for potential use at the park during the process of updating and improving the space within the original footprint. Over these last several meetings, the Planning Staff and CDM Smith have been reviewing updates to the 25% design before the Conservation Commission.

Schreiber said that the 3 concerns taken from the meeting last month were the following items.

- Hard surfaces
- Playground
- Confirmation with Community Gardens that they were receiving what they needed in the space.

Schreiber said that he had attended a Community Gardens event over the last month, and that both he and Magoon met with the former and current Chair of Community Gardens to discuss the park scenarios in depth and received positive feedback at the meeting.

Magoon said as far as the park goes, this plan is at 25% and the specifics of the playground and hardcourt can be planned definitively later. He said that CDM Smith has been well suited to handle all aspects of this plan, including whatever comes next.

Magoon said that so far, they are striking a balance between natural, passive, large green area and play areas, and that there is room for the Commission to explore. He said he was happy with the original plan with a smaller skate park and Community Gardens.

Martin said that at 25% the plan can go to Town Council and that there will be time to flip configurations in the park around. He told the Commission that they were now looking for what direction they wanted to go in.

Rose asked Martin and Magoon why Plan 1 seemed to be favored. O'Connell said she saw a lot of empty space in scenario 1 and 2.

Rose suggested going with Scenario 1 minus 1 tennis court. Fairbairn agreed.

Mellet explained that all concepts by CDM Smith have additional green space and that there is shade shelter in the Eastern section of the park to address the request for additional shade by the Commission. The skate park and Community Gardens has been expanded in all versions.

Martin read statistical data about tennis and basketball courts and summarized Watertown has enough for the population. He said that more green space is needed at the East end of the park and suggested going with Scenario 2.

Fairbairn said he was concerned with new trends that could take place over the coming years, and asked if the Town could get a second opinion.

Magoon said this is a 40-year plan, and we do not need to worry about transitions that might take place that may or may not happen. He reminded the Commission there was a public process and everyone was offered a blank slate. Magoon said the desire was to save what was in there and make it a better space with upgrades and that is what we have been doing. There were funding issues occurring at the time we started that would benefit us in moving forward with this process which is why we moved forward when we did.

Public Comments

Peter Centola, Director of Recreation spoke first and gave his credentials to the public so they were more fully aware of his extensive academic and work background. He said he was firmly supportive of Magoon and his statement that Plan 1 is well balanced. He added that the ball courts around Town, even the ones in disarray are very heavily used. Centola said the DPW maintains all parks and that he is extremely supportive of Community Gardens and always has been in this process.

Tom Sullivan a resident of Upland Rd. for over 60 years said that Arsenal Park was a space for active recreation dating all the way back to 1975. He said Watertown is below the National Standard for Open Space and that Waltham just next door has a lot more than us. He suggested perhaps the Community Garden Space should be spread out around Town. He also suggested opening up Little Greenough Boulevard leading up to Arsenal Park as open space.

Anthony Donato Town Council said he liked flat green space and said he thought the knoll would be really popular. Reducing tennis courts by 1 was good idea but to leaving the basketball courts was good.

Elodia Thomas quantified statistics about the available basketball and tennis courts in Watertown. She pointed out all the space that has been devoted to the children growing up in the Town and that Community Gardens seems to have a lack of space in comparison. She mentioned Living Well and Eating and Living Healthy programs that are promoted in the Town and how many families are attempting the feed their families and acclimate their lives to spending time gardening. She favored Concept 2 and said that the park is a place of tranquility and the youth have so much invested in them. She asked that the Town make more beds for Community Gardens and that there is space created for wheelchair bound people to participate in gardening too.

Jen Johnston from Green Street and Trees for Watertown said that Grove St. is closing down Community Garden beds and she wanted to echo Thomas's thoughts by pointing out that there is so much going on for children in the Town.

In a letter from Libby Shaw, the President of Trees for Watertown read by Ms. Johnston, Ms. Shaw asked that a plan be adopted that will upgrade and maximize green space and gardens. She said that green space is a place for rest, relaxation and spiritual renewal. She pointed out that more people who will be moving in around the park and public health should be a consideration in choosing how to use this space for renewal and relaxation.

Susan Falkoff, Town Council member said she likes the parks in Europe and that bouncing balls is not serene. She said we have the opportunity to make this a beautiful space. She said she thought the knowledge base was missing in the process and suggested a site visit.

Lisa Feltner, Town Councilor said this was a demonstration of the Town Staff working diligently with the feedback from last month's meeting to make the updates that were brought up during the public conversation last month. She said that Arsenal Street is changing, and more is on the way. She urged the Town to expand the conversation and that they find ways to build upon all the work that has been done so far. Feltner said we need more expertise and that we could move this along faster if the right expertise was brought in.

After Feltner spoke, a new resident who identified himself as a primary care physician, but did not sign in to the meeting that night spoke about the common issue of tension and a lack of balance in life these days. He said it is essential for the Town to have recreational spaces. He said he was in favor of Community Gardens and green that was spacious enough to hold Tai Chai and Yoga classes for the public.

Glenn Howard from CDM Smith rose to speak on the status of the discussion. He reviewed the process of how the plans had been developed over time. He said that he felt strongly what there seemed to be a lot of agreement about the overall park plans. He further indicated that there was not an agreement on what would go inside box that included the basketball courts, tennis courts, multi-purpose court, the skate park and the community gardens. He was hopeful the Commission could come to an agreement on the facilities inside the box at a later date.

After a very lengthy discussion by the Commission, public comments were made

The Conservation Commission concluded that they could agree that both ends of the park were acceptable in the plans. What they could not come to terms with were what would go in the center of the park, and so they left options in the box to be decided upon potentially with assistance through a peer review.

Motion: Rose made a motion to approve the second plan minus 1 tennis court and adding green space by the knoll with all options in the box opened for further discussion. O'Connell seconded the motion.

Vote: The members of the Commission Unanimously adopted the motion made by Rose.

3. Commission Discussion and Review- Preparation for Whitney Hill Annual Meeting.

Martin turned the floor over to Fairbairn who informed Jenness he has an interest in focusing on predators of the habitat at Whitney Hill as a featured topic. He reported that he would likely introduce a speaker at the Whitney Hill public meeting on predatory species on March 6, 2019.

Jenness outlined the following steps for Fairbairn and his colleagues.

- Invitation to meeting for Abutters
Jenness will send out abutter's notices over the next week.
- Notice of the Annual Meeting Process
Jenness will post a notice on the Town's Calendar, the Conservation Commission web site and send out a notify me about the Annual Whitney Hill meeting taking place at the March Conservation Commission meeting.
- Annual Whitney Hill Report Process
Jenness will assemble the Whitney Hill Annual Report as written by Fairbairn and forward it to Magoon for his review, signature, and deliver it to the Town Manager, Town Council.
- Annual Whitney Hill Meeting Preparation
Jenness will work with Fairbairn to get information from him about any expert speakers he will line up to speak at the public meeting in March.

4. Conservation Commission Discussion- Potential participation in the 20th Annual Earth Day Charles River Clean Up-Charles River Watershed Association- The Commission will be on the look-out for public announcements about the CRWA Annual Earth Day for cleanup opportunities.

5. Minutes-December 5, 2018 Meeting- Continued to the March meeting to make time for Agent Reports and Updates.

6. Minutes- January 9, 2019 Meeting- Continued to the March meeting to make time for Agent Reports and Updates.

7. Agent report

- a. Commission Member Application Update- Magoon reported that Mr. Driscoll has received a couple of applications for potential new members of their board. One is thought to live outside the Town so they may not be eligible.
- b. Agent Application Update- Magoon explained that he has a number of second interviews coming up in the next few days and hopes an offer can be made to a new candidate very soon.
- c. Tree graffiti update at Whitney Hill- Magoon reported that Hayward has followed up on the tree graffiti that was reported at a previous meeting.
- d. Army Corp of Engineers Report on GSA Site- Magoon said he received a copy of the Army Corp Engineers Report on the GSA site and will distribute it by email to the members of the board.