

Recreation Commission meeting Tuesday, March 24, 2009

Tana Babbitt not in attendance
Robert Benton in attendance
Len Cidado in attendance
Kathleen DeGrandis in attendance
Charlie Hammond not in attendance
Mike McDonald, Chairman not in attendance
Elizabeth Nikiciuk in attendance

Jennifer Hruniak, Director in attendance

Meeting commenced at 7:06PM

Review and Vote on February Minutes

Kathleen motioned to accept, Elizabeth seconded, all in favor, February minutes accepted.

Patricia Hunt, CPA

Jennifer introduced Pat Hunt to the Commission and said she is here to discuss potential parcels of land being considered by the CPA for recreational purposes. Pat thanked Len for filling Mike's shoes on the CPA Committee and said she appreciates his attendance at their meetings. The CPA Committee follows the Open Space and Recreation Plan. They are still looking at the same parcels of land. Len has been on a tour of these potential parcels. The main parcel that could solve the recreational field needs is the Bertarelli parcel. Located along Purchase and Washington Streets, the parcel is 173 acres. The town has the right to first refusal when the owners are ready to sell.

Interim solutions to solve the immediate need for more fields have been explored. Feasibility studies have been conducted on several properties. The property on Foundry Street was found to be unsuitable and too costly. The Washington Street property was very rocky with changes in elevation and wetlands in the back that would make it difficult to build more than one field. Commercial zoning makes it a costly property as well. The Williams Street property had a drainage ditch and wetlands that made it unsuitable for building fields. Henderson Farm was also deemed unsuitable due to wetlands on the property. The Gill property located along Depot and Foundry Streets is a future possibility, with 150 acres and the town's right to first refusal. Also, Marshall Farm on Elm Street has good soil and enough flat land for several fields.

The CPA has nine million dollars in funds, seven million of which are unreserved. They have limited spending now so that funds will be available when a favorable parcel does come up for sale. An ideal parcel would be easily accessible and able to accommodate several fields and adequate parking.

Kathleen feels a potential site should have much more to offer than just sports fields, such as a skate park, walking track, and concessions. She said we need to be creative about what facilities are offered. Pat said those decisions are left up to the Recreation Commission. The CPA recommends funding to purchase the property. Development can come later, after the parcel is purchased. Bob asked if the CPA recommendation must go before town meeting. Pat answered yes. Kathleen stressed that recreational opportunities are needed for the entire community, including the elderly. We need to keep an open mind about what is offered. Elizabeth agreed and supports waiting for a large parcel to become available. She said we already own a number of small fields that we can use as a temporary solution. Len said the town of Attleboro has a spectacular recreational complex. Pat said once the land is acquired, an engineer can be hired to do schematic plans for the property. She also said there are Self Help funding opportunities available to us. Len asked if CPA funds can be used to improve existing fields. Pat answered no. Bob said that's too bad as many of our small fields could use renovations. Jennifer asked if the committee has discussed funding for renovations at Frothingham Hall. Pat responded that no discussions have taken place. The Commission thanked Pat for taking the time to meet with us.

Len suggested holding a meeting to visit the potential parcels Pat spoke about. Bob said Southeastern Rehab Center may take the land that's now being used as baseball fields and build an assisted living community. That will cause a tremendous shortage of baseball fields in town.

Old Business

Jennifer reported she is meeting with the Finance Committee tomorrow evening to discuss the Recreation Department FY2010 budget request. She will report back to the Commission after the meeting. Jennifer reminded the Commission that the 2nd Annual Holiday Egg Hunt is scheduled for Saturday, April 4th at 11AM. The rain date is Sunday, April 5th. She encouraged everyone to attend.

Five Year Plan

Jennifer said the five year plan agenda item was requested by Mike based on the Open Space and Recreation Plan. He would like the Commission to take note of the plan and commit to working on it. Further discussion was tabled until our next meeting when Mike is in attendance.

New Business

Jennifer reported that she has been asked to sit on the Stadium Field Use Committee to oversee use of the new stadium. The committee will consist of five members including Athletic Director, Jim VonEuw, John Haederle representing the Friends Group, and representatives from Easton Youth Soccer and Pop Warner Football.

Jennifer said she will be drafting a sponsorship request form for the summer concerts. Elizabeth has already secured sponsorship from Maplewood and plans to seek donations from other businesses. Elizabeth will also approach the Easton Moms Club and Women of Today for donations. These groups sometimes bring free food and beverages to events. Jennifer reported that Riverside Theatre will

perform on July 1st, Toe Jam Puppets on July 15th, and Wayne Potash on August 12th. There is still one open time slot on July 29th. Bob suggested booking the Baha Brothers, although he feels it may be difficult to find sponsors this year.

Kathleen suggested that the department survey the town on what type of services they would like to see if we had a large parcel of land to develop. Len said a survey like that will build too much expectation. Elizabeth suggested having program participants fill out a survey asking what they would like to see the Recreation Department do in the next five years. Jennifer said she developed a similar program survey that is available on-line. It could be revised and given out at the end of each program. She will email it to the Commission for feedback and revisions. Kathleen said she wants the department to be versatile in our programming and accommodating to a wide variety of interests.

Meeting adjourned at 8:38PM

Approval of Minutes

Michael McDonald, Chairman

Jennifer Hruniak, Recreation Director