

Harrington Park Recreation Commission

Minutes of Meeting

September 18, 2013

Commission

Siobhan Bailey	Present
Jennifer Brackenbury	Absent/Resigning from Commission
Paul Baly	Absent
Jerry Esposito	Present
Tom Gleason	Present
Steve Marotta	Absent
Steve Pacicco	Present

Town Council Liaison: Michelle Ryan – Present

Secretary: Michael Amdur

Meeting called to order at 8:20 PM

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Call to order. In compliance with the Sunshine Act of 1975, adequate notice of this meeting was made.

ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC

Joseph Niece provided a follow-up to his May appearance before the Commission as per his project -- consisting of building wooden informational signs around local town parks that would educate the community about the local flora and fauna.

He passed around to members of the Commission a (very small) sign that would be one of a number of signs for the parks in town.

Joseph said that the information on the signs will be valid and checked by an expert, which he is still working on. Joseph said that he will start making up the information for the signs once he gets approved by the Boy Scouts Council. The information will eventually be under plexiglass to protect each sign from the elements. Cement will probably have to be used to

keep the signs stationary. The signs will cost \$30 each and he would like to produce 10 signs.

Joseph pointed out two things, in particular. First, he would have signs close to trails that point out poison ivy plants in the area (at Pondsides and/or Highland), so that people walking (along a trail) could read the respective sign and be warned. In addition, he would identify fish because a number of people have requested to know what type of fish are in the water(s). Thus, people would become educated about what they may wish to fish for.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS – UPCOMING MEETING

Michelle mentioned that there is an administrative meeting on the 16th, so the October date scheduled for the Recreation Commission would need to be changed.

NET RESULT: Upon further discussion, members decided to CANCEL the October meeting and plan for a meeting on November 20.

Jen Brackenbury will be resigning from the Commission, just after the upcoming Town Day.

Michelle reiterated (from a couple of months ago) that she felt it was important to have alternates who come to the meetings and who can step in when needed so that there is no learning curve.

WAYFINDER EXPERIENCE

Michelle said that the Wayfinder Experience group - brought up at the August meeting) - is a for-profit group that is going to be using the fields ("fields" not specifically identified in discussion). The Commission approved it in August, subject to Paul Baly's conversation with them. Mayor and Council – based on legal opinion from the Borough attorney – said that Rec couldn't waive the fee for for-profit groups. Thus, the group was charged \$50. Michelle believed that earlier in the day, the group supplied a certificate for insurance and paid a one-time \$50 fee.

WALKING PATH LIGHTING

Michelle had forwarded all members an email from the head of Open Space for the County, Robert Abotomarco. He wrote that there were \$295,000 in requests. They have \$225,000 committed to projects this year. There is approximately \$75,000 left over from last year, thus, it is anticipated that all of the submitted projects should be fully funded.

Tom asked Michelle if that development meant that it was pretty much a "go" for the lighting path. Michelle responded with - both - a "yes" and "no". Michelle explained that there is definitely money in Open Space funding, however, there was concern expressed by some council members as well as the Mayor. Siobhan added that there was a unanimous vote (by the Mayor and Council) to proceed with the project.

Michelle said that the freeholders have yet to vote on the project - usually they determine how much money is awarded in the Winter and then go on to approve projects in the Spring. Once awarded, 18 months are allowed to complete the respective project. Six additional months are granted as an extension, if needed.

Michelle mentioned that the next Mayor and Council meeting is October 21.

PONDSIDE PARK ISSUE

Siobhan would like to get the Pondsides issue on track for the long-term. She would like to have the Commission produce a written proposal for M&C that lays out the issue, what's going on, the current engineering reports that exist, the estimates that exist...with an eye toward requesting a resolution by M&C to earmark a certain amount of Open Space funds per year. This way, in 5-7 yrs, the Commission would be in a better position.

Although Siobhan acknowledged that the Commission can't/shouldn't bind the hand of future Councils, she felt that – as long as there is an existing resolution supported by a written proposal/presentation – it would be hard for a future council to go back and undo the progress that was made. Siobhan felt it would be necessary to have good planning over several years with a definite amount of money earmarked for this purpose, otherwise she could not ever see it being properly planned for.

Steve P. felt that - in order to follow-through with Siobhan's plan - a ballpark figure must be determined ahead of time. Otherwise, if the project will be projected to cost more than \$1 million (\$1.9 million – see below), funding it through Open Space would probably not be the right mechanism. Despite Siobhan's hope that the project would be eligible for matching funds, Steve expressed concern about the individual costs per year (possibly \$100,000 per year, depending on the final cost).

Debate ensued on what the final cost would be, given all the unknowns (DEP permit and updated/unanticipated costs, among other things). Despite being unsure about spending that type of money, Tom mentioned that he liked Siobhan's idea of tackling the Pondsides issue head-on. He would like to see the Commission come up with a rational plan, agree definitively on respective plan, then go to M&C and explain what the Pondsides plan would be.

Steve P. said that \$1.9 million was the estimate from Neglia to take care of Pondsides - assuming that dredge excavation and disposal is **NOT CONSIDERED** in that estimate. Debate ensued as to how much could be done/covered by the Mosquito Commission and/or DPW.

Jerry mentioned that the ambition that underlines this project originally stemmed from Closter successfully undertaking and redoing their Nature Center pond. Tom mentioned that Demarest had done their duck pond a few years ago.

Siobhan and Steve P. agreed that a resolution should be formed for M&C concerning the project.

Michelle mentioned that John Dunlea was outspoken in support of this project being planned for (in the long-term).

Tom mentioned that the eventual deterioration of Pondsides would lead to it becoming filled in and turning into a meadow. Jerry responded that it would reflect "town fitness" if the current generation neglects it completely; it "would reflect on all of our efforts." If it is planned for and maintained as a healthy park, however, it would reflect on the people who are concerned about the town and trying to do the right thing.

Siobhan - directly referencing Jerry's comment - asked members if it is a worthwhile project.

Michelle observed that it would be a good idea to have a talk with the Mayor as well as John Dunlea at the same meeting. Steve P. and Tom seconded this idea.

Jerry mentioned that whatever money Rec puts away should not be such a high percentage that it is a detriment to what the Commission does today.

TO-DO: Michelle responded to Jerry's comment saying that she does not know how she can change that, thus, she is committed to finding that out. She believes that it was originally voted on by referendum (to establish the Borough's Open Space/ Penny Tax). She does not know if it would be needed to have a referendum again in order to have permission to alter. Michelle will seek legal counsel on this issue.

Tom and Siobhan jointly suggested specific wording to be communicated to the Mayor:

Tom: "I think we can go to the Mayor and say 'here is what we want to do, are you on-board with this?'"

Siobhan: "Just in general terms."

Tom: "Right. We want to talk to Greg to get this information. We want to do this so we can give you better information and we want to present this complete thing for you all to consider..."

Siobhan: "...an alternate resolution to set aside some Open Space money on a yearly basis earmarked specifically toward this in the future. We haven't determined what percentage that is, but is that in an approach that you would be open to?"

Jerry: "Right! And it would involve us seeking counsel from Neglia, possibly from the DPW, possibly from...anyone who could give us insight into what we are really looking at here."

TO-DO: An informal conversation with Steve P., the Mayor and John Dunlea, as per Pondsides issue.

FIRST FRIENDS GROUP

Michelle explained that First Friends was a weekly playgroup that used to meet at St. Andrews and was organized by Diane McTigue. It was for preschool children to have playdates. Diane had asked Juniors if they could take over First Friends. It ceases to exist and she wants it to continue. They are not able to use St. Andrews anymore because they are renting out their space. There is an issue of insurance and liability. First Friends doesn't have the money and they don't collect money to pay for the insurance – which is \$125. The request has been made to add First Friends as an ad-hoc group of Recreation. The group is asking Rec to pay for their \$125 insurance cost every year. Rec would need to approve the group, in addition to M&C.

Michelle pointed out (from an email message) that the group is not set up as a partnership or corporation and that any funds that have been collected cover the purchase of toys and snacks. Ninety-five percent of the participants are from H.P.

Michelle believes that the group would like use of the parks during the day.

FOLLOW-UP: Michelle will find out more information about any insurance risk(s) to the Commission and use of the parks.

Tom proposed a motion to support First Friends as a group. Motion passed unanimously.

RAGAMUFFIN PARADE

Michelle volunteered to run the Ragamuffin Parade (Oct. 26 @ 10 AM).

Last year, because of Hurricane Sandy, there was a “Trunk or Treat” event that was organized at the last moment.

Michelle said that the question at hand - in bringing up “Trunk or Treat” – was whether to combine it with the Ragamuffin Parade? The Mayor had asked if the events could be separate.

DECISION: Trunk or Treat was (informally) decided for Halloween, Oct. 31 in the municipal building/library parking lot area.

TOWN DAY

Tom mentioned that Paul B. will be getting beer for the event!

Michelle mentioned that there was a need to man two bouncers (12-4 PM). Jen B. had suggested boy/girl scouts be contacted via email to help man the stations. Siobhan volunteered.

There is no Friday night table run necessary (as in previous year) because they are being delivered automatically. Michelle said that she would be there between 8-9 AM on Sat.

TO-DO: Michelle will send an email to boy/girl scout members – as per Jen B. – in order to find some recruits to assist.

Since donations are very much off from last year, \$5 will have to be charged for the wristbands. Also, there are no deals to be made with Juniors, Lions, Girl Scouts, etc.

MISCELLANEOUS

Michelle mentioned that Neglia Engineering provided M&C at the previous meeting with estimates for the retaining wall at the burial ground. It was \$150,000 and up. M&C asked for Neglia to provide sketches (railroad ties versus stone, etc.).