

## **Minutes of the Newburyport Parks Commission**

**July 21, 2022**

*Newburyport Senior Community Center*

Call to order: 6:03 p.m.

A quorum was present

In attendance: Chair Ted Boretti, Charles Griffin, Matt Ellsworth, Paul Swindlehurst, Nicole Whelan

Also in attendance: Parks Manager Mike Hennessey, Special Projects Manager Kim Turner, Andrew Casson, John Pelletier, Karen Clagett, Jean Berger, Lily Cragg, Kelly Majewski, Cheryl Smith, Jason Lacroix, Stewart Lytle, Cris Miller, James Jones, Jane Snow

### **OLD BUSINESS**

#### *Geocache at March's Hill*

Chair Boretti inquired if the applicant was in attendance, with no response. Chair Boretti stated this was the second meeting with no applicant in attendance to present the request. **Motion by Commissioner Swindlehurst to withdraw the item from the agenda, seconded by Commissioner Griffin. So voted on a unanimous voice vote.**

#### *Coast Guard Memorial*

Harbormaster Commissioner Andrew Casson presented an update to the previously discussed memorial project from the June meeting. He reviewed the text of the memorial, its material, and its location. Parks Manager Hennessey will install the memorial. **Motion by Commissioner Ellsworth to accept the memorial as presented, seconded by Commissioner Griffin. So voted on a unanimous voice vote.**

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### *Approval of garden plaque*

Chair Boretti inquired if the applicant was in attendance, with no response. Chair Boretti stated this was the second meeting with no applicant in attendance to present the request. **Motion by Commissioner Swindlehurst to withdraw the item from the agenda, seconded by Commissioner Ellsworth. So voted on a unanimous voice vote.**

#### *COVID Memorial*

Senior Project Manager Geordie Vining presented the project, which was stalled last fall because of concerns about the location, embedded within the rail trail and durability of the artwork. New location was presented along the berm, further down the rail trail, across from the swinging bench, within the lawn area and off the pavement. It was suggested to slightly elevate and angle the stone for visibility and plant around the edges with low plantings. Commissioner Swindlehurst encouraged Vining and the City to consider future public art locations more comprehensively and think about the capacity of certain sites for quantity of installations. **Motion by Commissioner Swindlehurst to approve the new location of the memorial, seconded by Commissioner Ellsworth. So voted on a unanimous voice vote.**

### *Black History Interpretive Signs*

Senior Project Manager Geordie Vining provided an update to the project. \$53K in CPA funding was approved for this project. Intent to start with one sign on the CCRT at the Low St bridge, and then install the remaining 9-11 signs in groups of 2-3 at a time. Locations selected based on pertinence to history described, as well as visibility and access near walkways. Requested locations at Brown Square, Patrick Tracy Square, Inn Street and Market Landing Park. Size will match other interpretive signs along the rail trail. Durability of the materials was discussed and Vining informed the Commission that he intends to use Direct Embed Process, which should hold up better than the previously used High Pressure Laminate. Commission expressed concern about location of sign at Patrick Tracy Square because of recently donated public art and existing plaque. **Motion by Commissioner Ellsworth to approve the installation of interpretive panels as presented, with coordination of locations with Parks Manager Hennessey, seconded by Commissioner Griffin. So voted on a unanimous voice vote.**

### *Lower Atkinson Common Improvement Plan*

Manager of Special Projects Kim Turner presented an informational update on parking design for the park. Parking layout is a refinement by City Engineer of the previously approved master plan which relocates the playground internal to the park, and provides parking entirely off Merrimac St. Jane Snow suggested the narrowing of the street was making travel difficult. Manager Turner responded that drive aisles would not be narrowed, based on standard requirements, but parking would be eliminated from the street, which should improve safety. **No action taken.**

### *Extension of Cashman pickleball program*

James Jones presented an application to extend pickleball play at Cashman Park by two months (September and October) from 8:30-12:00 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Current permit expires August 30. Jones said an organizer would be on-site during these hours to provide equipment and supplies provided by Friends of Newburyport Pickleball, and that the additional months would relieve load of play on other City parks. **Motion by Commissioner Swindlehurst to approve the extension as presented, seconded by Commissioner Ellsworth. So voted on a unanimous voice vote.**

### *Planting/replanting plan for Clipper City Rail Trail 1 near Washington St*

Manager of Special Projects Kim Turner introduced this agenda item as two separate projects. The first project, Friends of Newburyport Trees proposed an extension of their existing gardens on this section of the rail trail. Jean Berger presented that portion of the garden project. Manager Hennessey expressed concerns about some of the tree species selected. Turner presented the second, larger re-vegetation project, which was initiated by the Mayor's office after several trees were removed along this section of the rail trail in December of 2021. The new plantings will be native species that are pollinator and habitat friendly. Turner discussed the process to date of meeting with all of the abutters to receive input on the plan, and informed the Commission that the City has committed \$20K for this project, which should cover the entire replanting. Installation would occur in the fall, when temperatures are lower, and with abutters on-site to provide input on locations of individual plants, understanding that reasonable adjustments might need to be made based on conditions in the field. **Commissioners requested that FONT provide a final plan during the August meeting based on species approved by Parks Manager Hennessey. Motion by Commissioner Ellsworth to approve the larger revegetation plan as presented by Turner with the understanding that reasonable adjustments may need to be made in the field, seconded by Commissioner Griffin. So voted on a unanimous voice vote.**

### *Fundraising walk on Clipper City Rail Trail*

Representatives from the Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center presented their application for a 3.1 mile fundraiser walk on October 2, 2022. This is a repeat event for roughly the past 9 years and draws between 400-500 people. The roadway crossings at two locations on High St have been approved by the City Council. The applicants commit to removing signage and trash after the event is over. **Motion by Commissioner Swindlehurst to approve the application as presented with a 50% non-profit fee discount of \$150, seconded by Commissioner Ellsworth. So voted on a unanimous voice vote.**

#### *Permit application for Newburyport Chamber Music Festival*

Representatives from the Chamber Music Festival presented their application for a free August 9 concert from 6-8pm at Patrick Tracy Square. This is a repeat event and draws fewer than 50 people. **Motion by Commissioner Swindlehurst to approve the application as presented with a 50% non-profit fee discount of \$25, seconded by Commissioner Griffin. So voted on a unanimous voice vote.**

#### *Multiple permit applications for Yankee Homecoming, Inc.*

Representative Jason Lacroix presented his application for various events at several parks during Yankee Homecoming. Events include fireworks and brewfest at Cashman Park, Old Fashioned Sunday and Art show at Bartlet Mall, vendors and a stage at Market Square, and vendors at Inn Street. A permit application was not filled out for the Inn Street event and Lacroix asked for an emergency application to be approved because of the timing of the event being so close to the request. Commissioners discussed their concerns about the new stage location at Market Square, near the entrance to Vera, and facing out toward Water Street. Lacroix said the Chair of the Public Safety Committee did not have concerns about this location and agreed to locate this with Parks Manager Hennessey for his final approval. Commissioners discussed the fact that the Parks Ordinance does not allow commercial activities or horses on Bartlet Mall. Lacroix said there would not be horses this year, but there would be commercial vendors. Commissioners discussed that the combined fee for all these events, with the 50% non-profit fee discount would be approximately \$10K. Lacroix stated that previous administration made a deal with Yankee Homecoming to waive this fee for parks and allow commercial activities that are opposed to the ordinance, and he asked the same of the Commission this year. **Motion by Commissioner Ellsworth to approve the applications for Bartlet Mall, Market Square, Cashman Park, and Inn Street, as presented with no fee, and with the condition that Parks Manager Hennessey approve the stage location on Market Square with the applicant, and with the understanding that this year the Commission will allow commercial use on Bartlet Mall and will waive the overall fees, but next year the Commission expects the applicant to come to the Commission earlier in their process and anticipate that commercial use of Bartlet Mall will need to be approved by the Commission and a fee for each park will be expected, seconded by Commissioner Swindlehurst. So voted on a unanimous voice vote.**

#### *March's Hill update on status*

Chair Boretti provided an update on the status of March's Hill, in which two issues remain: consideration of a new pump track and extent/potential expansion violation of the previously approved bike trails. Chair Boretti asked to walk the trail with the neighbors and feels the first step could be to shrink the extents of the existing trail and provide a vegetated buffer to the abutters. He asked the administration to provide a GPS survey of the area and engage a consultant to provide a review of the trail and offer professional advice to the Commission. He also suggested that the advocacy group be involved in any replanting, as well as provide the Commission with a review of alternative sites for a pump track that might be considered. Commissioner Whelan stated that an alternative site might be at Woodman Park, and having several options might help spread out the activity. Commissioner Whelan also stated that she liked the idea of an annual permit for this activity. Several residents spoke in opposition to the bike trails. Karen Clagett, 3 Coffins Court stated the map that was previously approved by the Commission is inaccurate and has been illegally expanded, and feels the trail needs supervision, and does not want a pump track to be added in this location because of the narrowness of Coffins Court and the inability to support parking. Cheryl Smith, 8 Coffins Court stated her concern about the impact the trails have had on the condition of the park and expressed her desire for revegetation. John Pelletier, 11 Coffins Court said there has been a big change over the past few years since the Commission granted approval for biking. He said the bikers are not abiding by the 'no new alteration' rule and are expanding the trails without permission. Commissioner Griffin asked Pelletier if he had removed three trees on park property and expanded his lawn onto park property. Pelletier stated that the Tree Warden had granted him permission to remove the trees, thinking it was Water Department property and not Park property, but conceded that he had expanded the lawn onto park property without permission. Jane Snow, 9 Coffin Street stated that our police on bikes should periodically visit the site to keep an eye on the situation. Commissioner Swindlehurst stated this is a challenging situation as neither the Parks Commission nor the Parks Department has enforcement rights. He suggested that signage could define hours, but police would still be the only means of enforcement since it is not realistic to have a locked gate and fence around March's Hill. **No action taken.**

*Mayor Gayden W Morrill Charitable Foundation – 2022 recommendations*

Manager of Special Projects Kim Turner stated that it does not appear there are any funding requests from the public this year and that the Parks Commission needs to provide recommendations to the Mayor and the Foundation for their deliberations in September. The amount available this year is \$110,000. **Motion by Commissioner Ellsworth to recommend \$50K for 10 granite blocks with the history of Bartlet Mall at the Bartlet Mall Frog Pond, \$20K for Fuller Field irrigation, and \$40K for resurfacing the tennis courts at Atkinson Common, seconded by Commissioner Griffin. So approved by unanimous voice vote.**

**Motion to adjourn by Commissioner Griffin, seconded by Commissioner Ellsworth. So voted on a unanimous voice vote.**

*Adjourned 8:50 p.m.*