

Minutes of the Newburyport Parks Commission 20 November 2014

Call to order at 7:04 p.m.

A quorum was present.

In attendance: Steve Sawyer, Kim Turner, Karen Popken, Ann Lagasse

Also in attendance: Lisë Reid, members of the public (see attached list)

Review of meeting minutes

Commissioners reviewed June, August, September, October 2014 minutes. **Motion to approve with corrections, by Commissioner Lagasse, seconded by Commissioner Popken. So voted on a unanimous voice vote.**

NEW BUSINESS

Issues

Cashman Off Leash

Commissioner Popken said she believes many people use the off leash area in summer months and there are no benches. Need for more benches for people who have dogs. She asked if there could be some facing the park for supervision of dogs. Referencing the barrier she added we need to be mindful of not obstructing view and approach to river.

Commissioner Lagasse noted we have looked into different barriers in the past and, if we install something, we want it to work. She said she doesn't believe a hedge alone will work. She thinks there is a need for a fence too. She would like to see a solution that really works. She stated the city is committed to finding the money but we need to spend time on it.

A resident commented that they would like picnic tables with benches to help act as a semi-barrier, or barrier.

Deb Masia suggested installing benches that are spread out with natural vegetation in between and bike racks on both ends of the barrier.

Kim Kudym suggested benches with seating on either side.

A resident asked if there is a foregone conclusion that we are building a fence. She commented about making it inconvenient for people to use the walkway; she commented the problem is really at the lawn.

She also said she would be concerned with the maintenance of a vegetative barrier, in terms of overgrowth, weeds, as witnessed by poor maintenance of other plantings.

There was clarification of where the barrier would be going, i.e., it would stretch along the Harbor Walk between tennis court and condos.

Deb Masia suggested maintenance signup sheets.

A resident of 6 Woodman Way uses Cashman often to walk. She does not have any problem with dogs and said they are not out of control. She has a dog. She can't bring him there because he needs to be fenced in. She said she thought a hedge would not work and that the entire area would have to be fenced in.

Kim Kudym said she thinks it would be good to have a fenced in area but she doesn't think Cashman is the place.

Don Rogers said he likes to fish at Cashman. He said dogs are always coming over, licking his legs, and he feels it is unacceptable. He volunteered to pick up litter and found lots of feces all over the park. Some pick up, a lot don't. He says there is a dog owner problem, not a dog problem. He said that signs don't always work as witnessed by dogs being on the baseball field even though "No Dog" signs are posted there. He questions why we should spend money for barriers and signs, but rather just don't allow dogs to run free. Read out of his letter to the editor, attached, and asked why residents should pay for this.

A resident commented that there is a need for fencing a dedicated dog park.

Gail DiNoto said she is all for a dedicated park, with proper demarcated lines for big dogs, little dogs, etc. Where the off leash area is now, dogs go under the guard rail, she got pinned up against condos & fence, and has seen a dog by the public boat ramp. She said owners don't respect that they're doing something wrong.

Deb Masia would like a place for her dog. She said she doesn't feel it would take much tax payer money.

Parks Director indicated that the ordinance states more of Cashman than just the lawn is off leash. She suggested Parks Commissioners investigate the wording of the ordinance further.

Sue Cronin, 126 Merrimac, at first had issues with off leash. She added she has noticed recently the new Animal Control Officer (ACO) and said there is a concerted effort to bring dogs more towards Pop Crowley Way. She said she thinks the ACO is making a presence and sees a big improvement. She would like to see it play out in spring and summer.

Laurie Evans Daily, of Rivers Edge condos, said she lives on the ground level. She doesn't think a fence along rail trail and or vegetative barrier will work due to maintenance issues and that it will impact their river view, which is part of why they live there. She said she enjoys seeing dogs enjoying themselves but that there are times when kids are playing there and feels because it's not a dog park, it's Cashman Park, that we shouldn't call it a dog park. Commissioner Popken agreed it's "shared mixed use."

Councilor Bob Cronin stated that if we're going to investigate fencing another public meeting should be held so more people can weigh in on it. He said a number of medical people walk along the trail in mid-

day and would definitely use benches and picnic tables. He said street furniture would be nice, and is a great idea either looking inward or outward. He added the ACO is doing a fantastic job.

Hilde Champion of Hillside Road asked to go on record that she would be opposed to any sort of barrier or fencing for the same reasons mentioned, that it wouldn't work. She said a couple of weeks ago she talked with someone who mentioned the "dog park" at Cashman and pointed out that people really think of it as a dog park and that perception disturbs her. She said she agreed with Don Rogers that as a tax payer we have no obligation to build a playground for dogs.

Commissioner Turner said the Parks Commission will do more research on a barrier, will talk more about it and keep the public involved in that discussion.

Increase In Pet Waste Management Contract For Cashman Bags

Director Reid reports that pet waste management service is inadequate.

Commissioner Popken said the city should not have to provide bags. She said she didn't think we should reduce the service we currently provide, but also thinks it is a citizen's responsibility.

Andy Masia suggested using resources in the areas most used by visitors, i.e. those who might not have a bag, rather than in an area where residents go everyday with dogs.

Commissioner Sawyer said the Rail Trail is one of the worst places where people don't pick up.

A resident suggested there are plenty of bags at Cashman, i.e. bags brought in by off leash users, removing the need to fund the service and said the Rail Trail is the problem.

Commissioner Popken said receptacles on rail trail promote people cleaning up and thinks they are staged at good locations.

Deb Masia said she finds it confusing at Cashman that there are both a dog waste receptacle and a large city trash barrel. She said the dog waste receptacle frequently overflows, so people put waste in the round barrel. She believes at Atkinson park users bring out what waste they bring in.

Commissioner Popken feels increased pickup is needed at off leash areas, especially at Cashman.

Commissioner Turner asked for a revised quote for more frequent pickups but not more bags. She asked Director Reid to bring a list of locations to the next meeting.

Commissioner Lagasse said she thinks having the bags projects a good image to visitors that Newburyport is animal friendly. She feels we need both receptacles and bags. There was a suggestion to investigate vending machine bags.

No receptacle for Harbor Walk near boat ramp. Director Reid said she will talk with DPS about getting a trash receptacle in that area.

Complaint About Lighting The Rail Trail

Commissioners pointed out the southern stretch of rail trail is green commuting and wondered if there could be funding in green fund initiative.

Andy Masia suggested checking with the Mass Bicycle Coalition.

Complaint About Bike Hazards On Rail Trail

Commissioner Lagasse suggested share the road symbols rather than worded signage. Commissioner Popken suggested painting a stripe down the middle. Andy Masia again suggested contacting Mass Bike Coalition for advice and to look into standards. Commissioner Sawyer said he would check in with their (Design Consultants, Inc.) cycle track design team for recommendations.

Donation of Dawn Sequoia at Bartlet Mall

Commissioners liked the idea of donation of a specimen tree to the park. Bartlet Mall Commission will review the topic.

Health Department Signage In Parks

Commissioners discussed removing signs warning about the hazards of dog waste that were installed by the Health Department without Parks Commission or Bartlet Mall Commission approval. Walt Thompson said he thought it made sense to put the signs on existing poles. All commissioners agreed to remove them.

Winter Carnival

Director Reid presented an inquiry by Councilor Ari Herzog about charging admission for the Winter Carnival. Commissioners agreed they would like it to remain a free event.

Wildlife Feeding Signage at Bartlet Mall

Director Reid presented information about an inquiry by Ari Herzog about the validity of the wording on signs at the Bartlet Mall citing Board of Health regulation 5.5.001. She said after consulting with Health Director Robert Bracey she discovered the wording was incorrect suggesting that something should be done to correct the error. Walt Thompson asked that the Parks Commission recommend appropriate wording for the signs.

Permitting

Commissioners considered permit applications for the B & S Fitness Program's High Heel Dash and 1st Lt. Derek Hines Soldiers Fund annual road race and race reception.

Motion to approve High Heel Dash permit contingent upon approval by Police Department and City Council by Commissioner Lagasse, seconded by Commissioner Popken. So voted on a unanimous voice vote.

Motion to approve Derek Hines Road Race permit contingent upon approval by Police Department, City Council, Licensing Commission and Harbormaster by Commissioner Sawyer, seconded by Commissioner Lagasse. So voted on a unanimous voice vote.

Meeting adjourned 9:10 p.m.

Sign-In Sheet
November 20, 2014

Gail DiNoto
Laurie Evans-Daly
Lori Daniels
Sharon Ransom
Deb & Andy Masia
Bob Cronin
Steven Presti
Kelly Presti
Dick and Judy Corsetti
Walt Thompson
Kim Kudym
Vany Purcell
Hilde Champion
Sam Merabi