

Newburyport Waterfront Trust
Online Meeting
July 28, 2021
Minutes

1. Call to Order

Chair Wilbur Shenk called an online meeting of the Newburyport Waterfront Trust to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call

In attendance were Trustees Wilbur Shenk, Matt Pieniazek, Mike Sullivan and Dan Mello. Sean Bradley was absent. Also in attendance were Andy Port and Geordie Vining.

3. Minutes

Dan Mello moved to approve the minutes of the June 22, 2021, meeting. Matt Pieniazek seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 4-0 vote (Wilbur Shenk, yes; Matt Pieniazek, yes; Dan Mello, yes; Mike Sullivan, yes).

4. Regular Business

Treasurer's Report

No report.

5. Ongoing Projects

a) Park Expansion Plans

Representatives from Sasaki Associates presented three concepts for the expanded park. The goal is to create an active and resilient year-round destination with a functional connection between the waterfront and the downtown. The concepts explored different configurations for parking and a shared-use path. One design concept will be refined based on the comments received. The next meeting with the ad-hoc committee is expected to occur mid-September.

One of the concepts presented had a central spine, with the shared-use path being located in the middle of the park. Parking would be balanced between the east and west lots. There would be no added green space in the parking lots. This concept would not result in the removal of any trees. The path crossing the park would bisect the lawn but would create the least potential pedestrian conflict.

In the braided oasis concept, the length of the shared-use path would be maximized. It would sweep from the water to the Firehouse. More parking would be located in the east lot than the west. The amount of new park space on the west side of the existing park would be increased. The path would be moved the furthest from the boardwalk. There would be only a minor impact to the lawn. In this concept, the distance of impact to the park would be the greatest. Some planting beds would be disrupted and trees would be removed.

With the shoreline bands concept, the path would be the straightest and as close to the river as possible. Parking would be balanced between the two lots, which would be expanded with green space. In this concept, the path would not impact the lawn and it would provide access to the embayment. The impact to the existing park would be the shortest distance, but it would be necessary to add breaks to the berm and to remove some trees.

A discussion took place on the potential conflict between pedestrians and cyclists. Andy Port said it would be necessary for bikes to be walked through the central portion of the park. Geordie Vining said enforcement or expectations could be reduced during the off season. He favors the most direct route along the boardwalk. He said cyclists along the Rail Trail would want to ride the shortest distance. The park design should include features that manage the interactions between the two groups.

Mike Sullivan said he would prefer to locate the path near the waterfront to minimize the disruption to the passive park. Wilbur Shenk said he is concerned about cyclists being funneled straight across the park near the stage. His initial thought is that the path should be closest to the Firehouse. Andy Port pointed out this concept would impact the greatest number of trees.

Dan Mello said the lawn is the most defining element of the park. The shared-used path is only one design element that must be considered. He said he would be inclined to prefer the path near the boardwalk. Matt Pieniazek said cyclists would prefer to be near the water and many would chose to ride on the boardwalk if the path were to sweep up to the Firehouse.

Wilbur Shenk agreed that the shoreline bands concept might be the preferable one. It would access for emergency vehicles to the embayment. It also would not result in damage to the planting beds near the Firehouse and the removal of many trees. Tools for managing the cyclists should be explored.

There appears to be a consensus that the parking should be balanced between the two lots. This would require the removal of as few spaces as possible from the most desirable parking area.

Geordie Vining asked the Trustees to consider the amount the Trust could afford to pay for construction. He said it would be important for all stakeholders to contribute.

b) Bulkhead Repairs

Geordie Vining provided an analysis of the bulkhead condition. He said in 2013 repairs were done to the areas near the fish pier and transportation dock, which were in the poorest condition. The engineering work was done for the entire bulkhead at that time. He expects work to begin on the eastern section in the upcoming months. Currently the permits are being updated and the existing conditions are being investigated. The drive crew has been assessing the thickness of the steel and the severity of holes that are opening below the waterline. A conditions report is expected in the next few weeks. It will be conformed at that time if the original approach could again be employed. This would involve the installation of polymer

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sheets that are attached to the existing steel bulkhead and infilled with concrete. The cost of the project is estimated at \$3 million. It will be necessary to obtain grants for the work.

c) Memorandum of Understanding

The MOU with the City was signed on June 7 and invoicing is taking place under that agreement.

d) Harbor Commission/City Lease

The lease with the Harbor Commission was signed on July 26.

e) Light Replacement

Some minor remaining issues will be addressed in the fall.

f) Boardwalk Repairs

Tom Joy will continue to plane the boards that create a tripping hazard.

g) Summer Commercial Boat Leases

Dan Mello will follow up on the leases.

h) Bill Harris Memorial

Fourteen contributions totaling \$2,450 have been received. Fred Hufnagel suggested that it would be appropriate to locate a memorial plaque on Ferry Wharf Way.

i) Browns Wharf Sidewalk Extension

Wilbur Shenk is preparing an application for the Planning Board.

6. Parks Committee Report

a) Park Use Applications

Mateo McDermott was not able to be present to describe his proposal to install a piano in the park. The sculpture garden would be a good location for the piano, which would be open to use by the public. Matt Pieniazek has volunteered to provide a cover for the piano. He would also provide a storage container for the cover if this proves to be necessary. The details on the use of the piano have not yet been determined. The goal is for it to be available for Yankee Homecoming. A written agreement should be drafted that states Mr. McDermott would be responsible for the installation the piano and its cover. The date by which it is to be removed must be specified. The Trust would not be responsible for any damages.

Mike Sullivan moved to approve the application contingent upon the signing of an agreement with the conditions discussed. Dan Mello seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 4-0 vote (Wilbur Shenk, yes; Matt Pieniazek, yes; Dan Mello, yes; Mike Sullivan, yes).

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Michael Wilson is running across the country to support Lucy's Love Bus, an organization that helps children with cancer. He is expected to finish in Newburyport in late August or early September. An applicant has been received from Planet Fitness for locating the finish line in the park.

Mike Sullivan moved to approve the application with a fee of \$135. Dan Mello seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 4-0 vote (Wilbur Shenk, yes; Matt Pieniazek, yes; Dan Mello, yes; Mike Sullivan, yes).

Yankee Homecoming conflicts with the regular yoga classes in the park. The classes will be cancelled and a portion of the fee will be returned.

b) Park Manager's Report

Edith Heyck said the last park bench has been sold. She has ordered four Adirondack chairs. She is researching new trash barrels and picnic tables for the park. She said the gardens along Custom House Way are now in good condition. She has asked Nunan's for a plan for planting hosta along Somerby's Way.

7. New Business

The August 18 meeting will be rescheduled.

8. Public Comment

Jane Snow ask for a copy of the MOU. One will be sent to her.

9. Adjournment

Matt Pieniazek moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:25 p.m. Dan Mello seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 4-0 vote (Wilbur Shenk, yes; Matt Pieniazek, yes; Dan Mello, yes; Mike Sullivan, yes).