

Minutes of the Newburyport Parks Commission 19 September 2014

Call to order at 7:12 p.m.

A quorum was present.

In attendance: Bob Uhlig, Ann Lagasse, Steve Sawyer

Also in attendance: Lisë Reid, John and Betty Leary, Tim Ragan, Phyllis and Art Levine, Karen Kelley, Mary Krasci, Juliet Walker, Mary Ellen D'ambrosio, Kevin Fruh, Pam Armstrong, Joshua Porter, Patty Spalding

NEW BUSINESS

Issues

Cushing Park Order

A resident pointed out the most heavily used area is around the playground. Improvements including more plantings, gardens, more site furniture in that area would be an improvement.

Patty Spalding expressed concern about reducing parking spaces.

Commissioner Sawyer answered that in his experience summer use is fairly light. Kent St. is also available for parking. He estimated 35 spaces exist on Kent, Washington and Buck Streets. Ms. Spalding also spoke against planting beds for trees in the parking lot as it would further reduce parking spaces.

Tim Ragan asked how many winter parking spaces there are now and how many will be there after planned changes are made. Commissioner Uhlig answered that we will lose 11 spaces if we install the landscape buffer against the Congress Street residents' property lines.

John Leary said they counted 135 cars in the lot during a snowstorm. He is concerned about spaces lost with the buffer installation.

Pam Brockmeier said that transferring the park to Parks Commission jurisdiction is very important and she is very much in favor of it. She added that she observes heavy use of parking in winter.

Juliet Walker said that she supports activating space in the summer months, saying it doesn't make sense to waste that space during summer months.

Another resident said she does not want islands of trees in parking lot.

Ms. Spalding said she is completely opposed to taking out any parking and increasing green in the parking area. She mentioned parking variances.

Commissioner Sawyer asked Ms. Spalding to allude to specific projects that involved the variances. She answered 52 Kent Street commercial business; two variances: one to make it a three-family home in 1979 and the other a real estate office in 1982. She gave evidence to City Council after the last meeting and asked Lisë Reid to check records with the City Clerk's office.

Tim Ragan, cited his deed for 45 and 47 Kent Street, saying a variance and deed guaranteed parking for a multi-unit apartment building.

Karen Kelly of 31 Kent St. said regarding the Courtyard project, it was made very clear to developers that they could not count any space at Cushing toward requirements for their units. She added the most important thing to her is maintaining open space. She has concerns about blocking off the Kent Street entrance because it will direct all traffic out into Washington.

Mary Cracie said she likes the plan, but suggested could use artificial turf to test out the landscape buffer idea to see how it impacts parking in winter before installing a permanent buffer.

Mary Ellen Dambrosio agreed with Karen Kelly about having all traffic going in and out of Washington Street entrances. She asked if the Kent Street blockade could be used in summer only. She is in favor Parks Commission taking control of the space. She has only seen city usage of parking lot in summer. She doesn't see local cars being parked there but primarily construction workers' cars.

A resident of 43 Kent Street said they like the buffer improvements. They pointed out that the parking lot used in summer for Yankee Homecoming, fireworks, etc. Commissioner Uhlig replied that what is proposed is intended to be flexible and can make such accommodations.

Another resident said he likes that the park will be open to winter parking emphasizing the need to maximize winter parking, and is very much in favor of the transfer because it guarantees that something else won't be built there.

Juliet Walker agreed with flexibility being important and said that it will help us understand actual usage better. She recommended a park management plan for winter, suggesting there might be other solutions to more effectively park there.

Patty Spalding wondered if the Parks Commission could have permitted parking.

Ms. Brockmeier spoke in favor of the effort again.

Commissioner Uhlig said we will go back to design and work with all the comments we have received tonight and recapped that step one is to get the space designated as a park, then work out kinks to deal with seasonal issues.

There was discussion about pavement in the non-basketball area and a suggestion of using porous pavers was put forth.

Councilor Cronin said he hasn't seen order yet and did not know when it would be in front of City Council. He said he would hold his own neighborhood meeting to make sure everyone is on same page. He warned that Newburyport has been historically resistant to parking management with a hesitancy to

enforce parking rules. He added that anyone within 300 feet of a municipal lot can use that lot in their parking calculations for their buildings.

Frog Pond Renovation Update

Lise provides update on pond project. Commissioner Sawyer asked to see the contract that went to Horsley Witten.

Commissioners discussed the off leash program at Cashman. Commissioner Sawyer said he feels it is an experiment that isn't working. Commissioner Lagasse agreed. Commissioner Uhlig wondered what alternative we can provide for the dog walkers who use Cashman.

Motion to recommend elimination of Cashman Park as an off leash area due to the number of persistent conflicts the Parks Commission has seen that are potentially harmful to the general public revealing that the shared use of Cashman is not working by Commissioner Lagasse, seconded by Commissioner Sawyer. So voted on a unanimous voice vote.

Donation Of Outdoor Fitness Equipment

Commissioners asked Lisë Reid to consult with fitness equipment suppliers to find out if, in their experience, equipment would get used if it is installation at locations which hare spread out. Commissioner Uhlig suggested putting two pieces at one end of the trail between Clyde and the Alchemical Garden and two at other end along the spur pathway leading to the waterfront overlook.

Donation of Dale Rogers' Dog Sculpture

Commissioners agreed it would not be suitable south of High Street on the Rail Trail nor at March's Hill and thought Bartlet Mall makes the most sense.

Jason Sawyer Bench Donation

Commissioner Uhlig recommended different site seating from the benches proposed by the Plum Island Mother's Club and said he will email information about it for their consideration.

Solar Powered Benches

Commissioners had no interest in installing the Soofa, in the parks and suggested it would be more appropriate in a downtown location. As an aside, they did add that if grant money were available for funding they would be open to installing solar lighting along the Rail Trail.

Lighting Hours at Perkins

Commissioners asked if Dave Zinck can install a photo cell which would turn the lighting on at night and off in the morning.

REVIEW STATUS CURRENT PROJECTS

Capital Improvements / Repairs Projects

Inn Street

Commissioner Uhlig said the plantings appeared to require high maintenance and asked if there were plans for irrigation. He said he prefers another hoop fence than the one indicated on the current plans.

Commissioner Uhlig suggested Landscape Forms silver chairs for Inn Street.

