



Setti D. Warren
Mayor

Newton Parks & Recreation Commission

Meeting Minutes



Robert J. DeRubeis
Commissioner

Cafeteria- City Hall

7:00 p.m. – Monday, November 20, 2017

Attending: Arthur Magni, Chairman, Richard Tucker, Vice-Chairman, Commissioner DeRubeis, Andrew Stern, Byron Dunker, Jack Neville, Pat Palmer, Michael Clarke

Meeting Began 7:00

1. **Meeting Minutes - October 16, 2017 - approved 7-0**
2. **Commissioner's Reports on Programs, Forestry and Maintenance**
 - The Commissioner is meeting with the Mayor-elect on Wednesday. The discussion will be focused on the transition document created for the Mayor-elect. Other discussion points will be staffing issues within the department; there are potential retirements in the new year and several staff out with illness.
 - Received a proposal for a two day fundraising event with Kansas City Barbeque Society and Brigham and Women's Hospital to raise money for childhood cancer research from Patti Proia. The possible location is Forte Park, the date for the event is tentatively scheduled for 18 months out, due to the process and all departments involved. The Commissioner will keep the Commission updated.
 - Stephanie Lapham completed the playground at Underwood School and an ADA complaint was received. The playground meets the minimum standards. Stephanie is working with Jini Fairley, ADA Coordinator to address the complaint.
 - The Crescent Street project is moving forward, the cost is higher than expected. The park portion is moving along. The group is working with the Myrtle Baptist Church to allow access to the roadway that leads to Crescent Street/Robinhood Rd on Sundays.
 - Craft Street move: reviewed site plans last week
 - Farlow Park Bridge & Pond Project: The bridge footings are being installed this week
 - Pellegrini Wall is being installed, there was an issue with conduit at the location but the issue has been resolved.
 - Mr. Tucker asked if there is an update on the bridge at Nahanton Park. Commissioner DeRubeis stated an Eagle Scout cleaned up the area, but there has been no news when the bridge will be installed.
3. **Waban Hill Reservoir - Re-naming proposal- Gail Silberstein & Gerry Butter**

- Friends of Waban Hill Reservoir Park are requesting a name change of Waban Hill Reservoir Park to Heartbreak Hill Reservoir Park, submitting the following proposal. During the October meeting the Commission requested the following information before scheduling a public hearing.
- The Commission requested additional information before moving to a public hearing:
 - ❖ *Why the area was originally named Waban Hill Reservoir? The following response is research completed by Jerry Butter:*
 - **Jackson Homestead:**

I communicated with the historian located at the Jackson Homestead regarding the origin of the name of the reservoir-Waban. She sent me an e-mail suggesting that I should check old maps and that I should also visit the Newton Section of the main library. I checked the web site she suggested regarding the old maps. It only indicated that a reservoir was located at the end of Ward Street and it gave no indication of the origin of its name. I then went to the Jackson Homestead to speak directly with the lady. She was not there, and I was told by the attendant that the historian only communicates by e-mail.
 - **Newton Library:**

I then went to the main library in Newton and spoke with the Librarian who oversees the Newton Section. She did a search on their web site. We found nothing. She then went to ask the Librarian that specializes in finding such info. She had nothing additional to offer. I then went to the Newton section in the library and did a search there. I did find a section that had Newton reports for each year going back before 1900. In these books there were reports from each department of the Newton government from the Milk Inspector to yes-the Water Department. I checked the books for 1907 and 1905. I found nothing regarding Waban Hill Reservoir. I did find a statement saying that the Water department was to keep records of the names given to each water truck, etc.
 - **Sale of reservoir to MDC:**

I went to the 1900 book, as I thought that was when the Reservoir was sold to the MDC. It was for \$60,000 and certain water rights. It also stated that this reservoir was built and started operation in 1876. I found out everything one wanted to know about the Waban Hill Reservoir, such as who designed it, who constructed it, why it was built where it was, the costs of each stage, etc. I found out all except the origin of the name. I did find out that they picked this spot to build the Reservoir because of the height of the location-high enough to supply water to all sections of Newton in case of fires. This was the reason for the location and not because someone or something was done there and because of that the Reservoir was named Waban. From my reading I learned the land chosen was at the top of Waban Hill Road. I therefore concluded that most likely the reservoir was named Waban Hill because it was located at the top of Waban Hill

Road. Why that street was named Waban Hill Road at some time before 1876 I do not know, but this is why the reservoir was named Waban Hill Reservoir.

▪ **Google Search:**

I did find out from my google search that the village of Waban was named after an Indian chief named Waban (actually a different spelling) because the area now called Waban was this chief's favorite hunting grounds. I believe his tribe was located around Nonantum.

▪ **Conclusion:**

Based on my research I do not foresee any issue with the changing of the name of the reservoir to Heartbreak Hill Reservoir Park, as more people in Newton and also outside of Newton know the location of Heartbreak Hill, than they know where Waban Hill Road is. There does not seem to be any historical significance to the current name. However, since the City of Newton is the owner of the property, it would be beneficial for the City to conduct its own research.

❖ *Is there any historical significance to the current name?*

- See response above
- Mr. Clarke stated that since it was named around the same time the nearby Eliot Memorial <https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:c821gp633> was erected, there is a relationship between them. The Memorial was to mark "the place where John Eliot preached to the Indians in 1646" among whom was Waban, a sachem of the Massachusetts which then converted to Christianity", and formed the first of Eliot's "praying Indian" villages.

❖ *Notify the Boston Athletic Association (BAA) of the proposal*

- Will notify BAA once a public hearing and vote has been done

❖ *Has the name Heartbreak Hill been trademarked?*

- City Law Department is researching trademark information

❖ *Verify there are no issues with the name change by the City's Law Department*

- The Law Department does not see any issues with change, pending trademark search

❖ *Check with the City Clerk, David Olson, on the materials cost to change the name in documents, maps, etc.*

- No previous history on costs for a name change, each department would absorb the cost as changes are required.

- The Commission requested the Historic Commission be notified before the public hearing.

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Mr. Tucker made the motion to move the proposal to a public hearing pending results of the trademark search by the Law Department and requesting input on the proposal from the Historic Commission.

Chairman Magni seconded the motion. Motion passed 6-1.

4. Committee Reports

- **Community Preservation Committee**

- An open seat of the CPC must be filled by a Commission member. Mr. Dunker has volunteered for the position.

Chairman Magni made the motion to recommend Mr. Dunker represent the P & R Commission on the Community Preservation Commission. Mr. Neville seconded the motion. Motion passed 6-0.

- **Farm Commission** – no report
- **Cabot Redesign Committee**
 - The contractors had a sub pump break down because it was not strong enough to pump the volume of water and this created flooding in several houses during the rain recently.
- **Commonwealth Golf Course**
 - Committee received three proposals for the maintenance building – the one accepted by the committee sits on the golf course and takes away green space.
- **Off-Leash Area Working Group (OLAWG)**
 - The Commissioner met with Representative Balser and the DCR Commissioner to discuss use of land near Chestnut Hill Mall for an off-leash recreation area.
- **Crystal Lake Working Group (CLWG)**
 - Mr. Stern inquired about a group working to update the enforcement ordinance. Chairman Magni confirmed a neighborhood group is working to make the change to the ordinance.
 - Commissioner DeRubeis commented the low bidder for the Levingston Cove RFP is Weston & Sampson. Mr. Stern asked the impact of the work to be done. Commissioner DeRubeis stated the objective is to reduce erosion, the walkway will remain but there will be less area for congregation at the cove. Mr. Stern asked if the work will be done all the way to the water's edge. Commissioner DeRubeis replied yes, the lake terrace work is under discussion
- **Athletic Fields Committee**
 - The committee met. There is a lot to be done and discussed. Lacrosse wants more fields and does not think there is even distribution and would like to start over. Mr. Dunker commented the Commission has never micromanaged the day to day operation of the Parks and Recreation Department and should not start now. Mr. Neville asked if the leagues pay for fields. Commissioner DeRubeis replied yes, the issue is the leagues will blanket the fields for use but not use all of them.
- **Nahanton Park Committee**
 - Mr. Clarke requested permission to post an interpretive trail sign at the location of the previous location of the Alms House at the entrance of Nahanton Park (see sign attached). The sign would be made of wood, there will be one sign constructed and installed by Mr. Clarke.

Chairman Magni made the motion to allow Mr. Clarke to construct and install one interpretive sign at the entrance of Nahanton Park as proposed. Mr. Tucker seconded the motion. Motion passed 6-0.

5. New Business - no new business

Meeting adjourned 8:07 pm
Respectfully submitted,
Robin McLaughlin
Commission Secretary

Newton's Almshouses

This is the site of Newton's 20th Century Almshouse.

The Puritans brought the idea of the almshouse (then a workhouse) to New England. The story of Newton's Almshouses is the story of the social and political history of a New England town conscious of its civil obligation to care for the poor, while keeping its costs to a minimum. The 20th Century Almshouse also coincides with the beginnings and development of professional social work and national welfare legislation.



English Almshouses began in 936 C.E. with a monastic almshouse in York and continued through the middle ages. After Henry VIII disestablished the monasteries in 1538, England later established the civil right for citizens of a town to reside in a local almshouse through the Poor Law legislation of 1601. These concepts were brought to New England by the colonists with Newton establishing its own almshouses, workhouses or poorhouses beginning around 1733.

Dedicated almshouses with poor farms were placed in Auburndale (1820-1834), Waban (1834-1900) and on this site in Newton Highlands in 1900. This Almshouse contained rooms for 28 inmates, as they were then called, divided into two wings one for men on the left and the other for women on the right. The center part of the house was a spacious abode for the Warden and Matron, who were typically a married couple. The circular planted area can be seen on your left and one corner of the Almshouse foundation is evident on the left of the field in front. The original Almshouse was 128 feet long with 17' sleeping porches added later, as shown in the picture. Inmates raised much of their own food and the community gardens are part of the old Poor Farm.

The Almshouse had a large barn, a large brick and stone storage house, a piggery, and a chicken house, the remains of which are on the trail beginning at the right of the long wooden fence. The barn burned down in 1956, the Almshouse was demolished after it closed in 1964, and the stone storage shed was destroyed in 2017. When built, the almshouse was home to a variety of destitute populations including those with disabilities; however, when it closed, its population was exclusively the elderly. As the Almshouse was being phased out, Jackson Gardens housing for the elderly was built by the Newton Housing Authority in 1962.

For more information about the Newton Almshouses use the QR code in the corner or visit the Nahanton Park pages at newtonconservators.org/parks.htm. Photo Credit: *Jackson Homestead Archives*.






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When Pannier created the art of Fiberglass Embedment, it was primarily to serve the needs of the transit industry. They needed durable outdoor graphics. Since then, that tough-as-nails sign has evolved, and been made beautiful to serve museums, zoos, parks, college campuses, and so on. We have not stopped improving the product, and through utilizing better raw materials, improved processes, and advanced technology, FE has become the only product on the market today that has proven its endurance – since 1978.

Pannier's embedment process ensures optimum graphics quality that stand the test of time. Each sign and panel features solid, one-piece construction, leaving no seal to compromise. Fiberglass signs and panels are virtually maintenance free, giving you sustainability and cost-effectiveness over time.





