



Setti D. Warren
Mayor

Newton Parks & Recreation Commission
Meeting Minutes
City Hall - Room 209
7:00 p.m. –Monday, June 16, 2014



Robert J. DeRubeis
Commissioner

Attending: Arthur Magni, Chairman, Richard Tucker, Vice-Chairman, Commissioner Robert DeRubeis, Peter Johnson, Don Fishman, Bethel Bilezikian Charkoudian, Byron Dunker, Andrew Stern, Jack Neville, Peter Kastner, Robin McLaughlin, Secretary

Youth Awards were held in the Aldermanic Chambers at 7pm.

Meeting began at 7:50 pm

1. Meeting Minutes – May 19, 2014 - Approved 8-0

2. Commissioner's Reports on Programs, Forestry and Maintenance

- Swim season has begun at Crystal Lake & Gath Pool
- Summer camps begin next week
- The department received a complaint from Forte Park about softballs being hit into neighbor's yards and causing property damage. The same issue is occurring at NNHS on Hull Street. Solutions are being looked into.
- June 14th the first Plant Exchange was held at the Recreation Office with the support of Commission member Bethel Charkoudian and resident Mary Morganti. The event was a fun day and there will be a 2nd annual Plant Exchange in 2015.
- Preparations are under way for the 4th of July celebration.
- Farmers Market begins July 1st. The Cold Spring Park Market opens July 1st. The Friday market at the Post 440 has been cancelled. A new market will open on Elm Street in West Newton on Saturday July 5th 10am-2pm.
- The field renovation program has begun. All fields will be cycled through in three years.
- Forestry Division: currently there is a pruning back-log. Over 800 trees have been identified as dangerous and the tree crews have spent the majority of their time removing the dangerous trees. Over the winter a contractual crew will be on board to assist with the back log.
- Jason Roberts, Off-Leash Recreation Specialist has been doing a great job educating park users and working with pet owners and the Animal Control Officers. We are still working with the Police to get citation powers for the Off-leash Specialist position.
- Mr. Roberts reported:
 - Off-leash permit numbers increase each year
 - The issues are continuously improving at Cold Spring Park
 - The biggest issue is at Hunnewell Park, people from Brighton and professional dog walkers are using Hunnewell Park without permits and they do not use the off-leash area, they use the entire park. Animal Control is aware of the issue.
 - Community groups are forming in each of the off-leash areas.
- This summer there is a "Vets with Pets" program scheduled in Cold Spring Park off-leash area on July 26, August 16 and September 20th. This event is co-sponsored with the Veterans Service Center.
- The installation of the Nahanton Park temporary fire station is moving forward.

3. Waban Hill Reservoir – Public Hearing

- Gail Silberstein, Co-Chair, Waban Hill Reservoir Advisory Group presented the process and content of the Waban Hill Reservoir proposal at an informational meeting for the P & R Commission on May 19th.
- Process:
 - Goal: what does the city want from the Advisory group

- Vision: best use of property
- January – April 2013, public meetings with comments
- A survey was completed of the area
- A friends group has been formed with a lot of support from the community
- Content:
 - The reservoir is has a unique topography including a body of water.
 - When you are at the reservoir you feel removed from the hustle and bustle of the city.
 - The main feature is the water, the group has suggested removing the existing fence and install a new fence and make the area handicap accessible.
 - Cost: the group has created a feasible plan through phases so this will remain a quality project.
- Alderman Baker read a letter from the Waban Hill Advisory Group (WHAG) supporting:
 - Purchase of the property
 - Completion of the appraisal
 - Secure funding
 - Make the area safe for visitors
- Alderman Baker commented a possible conservation restriction could reduce the cost of the property and the Newton Conservators would hold the restriction.
- Laurie Gaverson, Chestnut Hill Association representative supports the WHAG recommendations.
- Madeline Bell, 155 Waban Hill Rd. stated she has been in attendance for the WHAG process. The area is a wonderful place with an abundance of wildlife it would be a shame not to purchase the property.
- Ann O. Koloski-Ostrow, 44 Travis Drive stated a lot of pledges have been made to help with the maintenance costs.
- Resident, 99 Woodlawn Rd. supports the proposal.
- Mr. Butter, 81 Woodlawn Rd. has spoken to many people who enjoy the reservoir and he supports the proposal.
- Linda Gillespie, 41 Woodlawn Rd stated the views are spectacular. There is a lot of excitement about this proposal. The proposal has brought the neighbors together.
- Chairman Magni closed public comment. Proposed language for the motion was submitted to Chairman Magni. Chairman Magni reviewed the proposed motion with the members. All agreed the language was fair and acceptable.
- Ms. Charkoudian referred to the Engineering evaluation report with concerns regarding the cost of maintenance and annual inspections and the statement that the dam is a high hazard dam. Additional threats to the dam are the trees growing around the perimeter and the animals burrowing near the dam.
- Alderman Baker and City Engineer John Daghljan addressed Ms. Charkoudians concerns:
 - The dam is classified as high hazard but with the current water levels the dam is a low hazard dam. The water level will be kept at the low level.
 - The last inspection in 2012 showed the dam was stable and there were no signs of leakage.
 - A fence is proposed to be installed for safety purposes.
 - Regular maintenance of the area will prevent shrubs, trees, etc form growing around the perimeter.
- Mr. Tucker stated he is in favor of the acquisition but is concerned about safety at the Waban Hill Reservoir and the Parks & Recreation Department absorbing the maintenance costs.
- Mr. Neville commented he visited the site and supports the acquisition but is also concerned about safety and maintenance costs.
- Mr. Johnson supports the acquisition but is also concerned about the maintenance costs and inspection costs, and asked where will the money come from?
- Alderman Baker replied the upfront costs will be in the acquisition and deferred to Commissioner DeRubeis regarding the Maintenance costs. Commissioner DeRubeis stated the grass cutting and tree work could be done in-house and/or contractually.

- Mr. Fishman stated this is a unique site. Mr. Fishman is a member of the Community Preservation Committee and maintenance of proposed projects has been an issue with the Committee. Mr. Fishman is surprised the neighborhood would allow the additional parking. Once the area is acquired and becomes a property for all Newton residents to enjoy people from all over could come into the area.
- Ms. Gaverson stated the report addresses parking and shows the existing parking pathway.
- Mr. Tucker asked where the proposal goes if the Commission approves it. The proposal will go the Board of Alderman and Mayor Warren.
- Mr. Stern stated he supports the acquisition but is not sure if the Commission can vote on open space. Alderman Baker commented he checked with the Law Department.

Mr. Tucker made the motion that the City of Newton acquires from the Commonwealth the Waban Hill reservoir for use as open space or passive or active recreation purposes in accordance with recently enacted enabling state legislation and the Report of the Waban Hill Reservoir Advisory Group. Mr. Fishman seconded the motion. Motion passed 7-1.

4. Bowen PTO- Thompsonville Playground- Basketball Court –2nd Informational Meeting

- The Bowen PTO appeared before the P & R Commission for an informational meeting on May 19th. The PTO proposed a half-court basketball court in Thompsonville Playground. Bowen Elementary School is overcrowded and modular buildings are being installed. The play area currently used has drainage issues and is referred to as the “mud pit”. There is an issue getting the kids outside for recess. A comprehensive plan is being developed which includes use of the upper field (Thompsonville playground). The Commission requested the Bowen PTO come back with a detailed presentation for the Monday, June 16 P & R Commission meeting.
- Mr. Jed Shugerman, Bowen PTO representative presented a detailed drawing of the location of the proposed half-court basketball court.
- Mr. Tucker asked if the location would interfere with sports leagues. Mr. Shugerman replied no, the location is off to the side away from the field.
- Mr. Ken Temkin, abutter of Thompsonville Playground stated he visited the area with the Bowen PTO and this location is the best option, it is out of the way and closest to the school.
- Chairman Magni asked if a fence will be installed around the court. Mr. Shugerman stated the proposal does include a fence. Mr. Stern asked Commissioner DeRubeis if a fence is in the Departments budget. Commissioner DeRubeis replied yes.
- Mr. Shugerman requested a special commission meeting over the summer so the installation of the court will be complete before school starts in September.

Mr. Johnson made the motion to move the proposal to a public hearing at a special meeting in July. Mr. Fishman seconded the motion. The motion passed 8-0.

5. OLAWG (Off-Leash Area Working Group)- Thompsonville Playground proposal – Informational

- Commissioner DeRubeis presented a proposal for an off-leash area in Thompsonville playground at the far end of the field, along the tree line. OLAWG continues to meet weekly. The group has met with sports groups that use Thompsonville Playground and they have OK'd the proposal. If the Commission approves the proposal a public hearing would be scheduled for fall 2014.
- Mr. Tucker asked the dimensions. Commissioner DeRubeis replied ~35'x120' fenced area.
- Mr. Neville asked how people would get to the area and what are the proposed times. Commissioner DeRubeis stated the dogs would be walked from Langley Path to the off-leash area on the edge of the field.
- Mr. Tucker commented Langley Path is not convenient to get to and walking the length of the field will have kids and dogs on the field at the same time.
- Mr. Dunker suggested an alternate location behind the baseball field next to Langley Path. Commissioner DeRubeis commented the area has been discussed, brush would have to be removed and it would be on top of the neighbors.

- Mr. Stern commented he is reluctant to add additional locations until the off-leash specialist has the ability to enforce the rules. Mr. Tucker agreed with Mr. Stern and asked how the Commission can help support the request for Jason to be allowed to write citations.

6. New Business

- Chairman Magni has received information that a group of people did not know about the public hearing regarding the Bullough's Pond building and they do not want a pavilion built they would prefer to have the area go back to nature. Mr. Stern stated the vote taken requires the group to come back to the Commission for final approval.

Meeting Adjourned 9:50 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Robin McLaughlin