

HOLLIS CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Minutes of Meeting

May 1, 2019

Approved May 15, 2019

Members Present: Tom Dufresne, Thomas Davies, Cathy Hoffman, Mark Post, Jonathan Bruneau;
Alternate Members: Laura Bianco, Paul Edmunds
BOS Ex-Officio: Peter Band
Staff: Connie Cain
Guests: Dave Belanger, Chairman, Hollis Recreation Commission; Joe Garruba

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm.

PROPOSED RECREATION FIELDS – Dave Belanger

Before the discussion began, M. Post recused himself from the HCC as the Agricultural Commission Chair, and stated that any comments or questions from him would be as a resident, not as a HCC member.

D. Belanger explained that the Recreation Commission has come up with 3 proposals for an additional playing field and Equestrian riding ring in order to free up space at Nichols Field. The Selectboard has tasked the Recreation Commission with presenting these plans to the HCC, the Agricultural Commission, and the Trails Commission for input before the Selectboard reviews the plans further, and makes a decision to proceed or potentially look at other properties. Each site has specific pros and cons which differ significantly.

Hollis-Brookline High School

While it is hoped that the approved Hollis-Brookline High School (HBHS) turf field will ease some of the Nichols Field use, the Recreational Commission has proposed an additional field to the site. This is the least preferred site as there may not be enough water to support the field irrigation. Should this be chosen as the site, there is a potential cost of approximately \$500,000 to add a second well to the school well site on Rocky Pond and pipe the water down to the field. The Recreation Commission feels that this is their least desired choice due to the increased cost, and would not include moving the Equestrian riding ring. Depending on the final site location, the field would be constructed in the area between the McLaughlin house and the school, or on the other side of the turf field abutting Beaver Brook land.

T. Davies asked if surface water at the high school could be used to provide irrigation; unknown. D. Belanger felt that if the existing rear parking lot had been slanted correctly, this may have provided some run-off that may have been able to be collected and used for irrigation. T. Davies asked if the land in the front area of the HBHS could provide an additional water source; D. Belanger felt not, as the HBHS drinking water well is in that location.

Stefanowicz Field – Pine Hill and Nartoff Roads

The Recreation Commission had originally proposed 2 playing fields for this property, further up near the existing house lot, but based on comments from the public and the comments made during the proposed Siergiewicz purchase last year, the Recreation Commission relooked at the property, and determined that one playing field at the lower end on Pine Hill Rd with parking and room for the Equestrian riding ring would be more suitable for the property. D. Belanger does not yet have cost estimates as the prices over the past year have increased, and the original proposal did not include any costs for wetlands mitigation. At this time, it is estimated that the cost for the field and parking lot is about \$250,000 not including any wetlands mitigation costs. The area estimated to be used by the fields, parking area, and riding ring is approximately 10 out of the 200 acres.

Part of the reason to move the Equestrian riding ring to this location is that the horses need to come on to dirt when they come off of a trail or out of the ring. This is why the portion of the parking lot around Lawrence Barn has not been paved, and why the Stefanowicz Farm would be a good location for the ring. There is a potential issue involving a Trust fund that was donated to the Equestrian riding ring, but the Hollis Equestrians would be willing to give that fund up in order to move to an area which is more conducive to horse activity and has lower traffic impacts to the animals. Additionally, there is a greater need for additional tennis courts, a new basketball court, and volleyball courts, as these sports are becoming more popular at the HBHS and with the local residents. The riding ring move provide additional space for these activities at Nichols Field.

P. Edmunds asked about the wetlands, and some discussion occurred. Consensus of the HCC was that the proposal shows that all areas that would be impacted are in the wetlands and buffers; T. Dufresne noted that the disturbance areas for both wetlands and the wetlands buffers must be shown on the final plan, with the square footage totals provided. C. Hoffman agreed, and reiterated that wetland buffer impact must be included on all of the plans. M. Post asked if the fields would be fertilized; yes. M. Post recommended that everyone on the HCC and the Recreation

Commission to walk the fields in the proposed area, they are wet year-round due to the Flint Pond aquifer in that location, and he believes that that the ground is more saturated at 5 feet below the surface than on the surface. This location is one of the lowest points in Hollis, and this aquifer drains into Flint Pond, and that impact has not been studied. He thought that it would difficult to use in the spring due to standing water at that time of the year. Some additional discussion along these lines occurred, with M. Post revising his request to walking the area after 3 days of no rainfall.

P. Edmunds stated that he understands the need for additional field space as a former Recreation Chair, but he did not feel that Stefanowicz Farm was an appropriate venue to construct recreational fields.

L. Bianco stated that many residents had voted for the property at Town Meeting with the understanding that any recreational use of the property would be limited to passive recreational use, not the construction of fields. She felt that the reason the former owner had sold the property to the Town was to keep it in agricultural production, not to be developed in this manner.

Dept. of Public Works – Muzzey Road

This location has a higher elevation than the other two proposals. At this time, no test pits have been conducted, so it is unknown if ledge or other subsurface issues are on the site. It is felt that the undercurrent is similar to the HBHS proposed site, and the Recreation Commission will be requesting that the BOS approve funding in order to hire a hydrologist to determine if water can be found at the site. There is enough room on the site for the field, parking and the equestrian riding ring on the property. Water for irrigation will be an issue at this site as well.

D. Belanger stated that they are reviewing the potential need for a “trip” light at the Muzzey Road intersection with Silver Lake Road to address perceived traffic issues. This would need to be addressed through the State DOT as Silver Lake Road, or Route 122, is a State road. This is being reviewed at the request of the Selectboard, and P. Band interjected that the light would only be used at times when both the field and the road are experiencing high traffic volumes, such as the evening rush hour.

J. Bruneau asked if the DPW Director, Todd Croteau, had been consulted in regards to this plan; not yet. D. Belanger stated that he had spoken to the former Director Tom Bayrd, who was not in favor of the plan as it advertised the location of expensive vehicles and other Town property. J. Bruneau stated that he had heard that the Director Croteau was looking into renovating some of the DPW areas to better utilize the site. The Recreation Commission will follow up on these comments.

M. Post asked about the potential for a timber harvest on the property as it is wooded; has an estimate of the timber value been factored in to the estimated cost to offset the construction of the recreation field? J. Bruneau felt that any proceeds received from a harvest would probably cover the cost to stump the field, so it would be a wash. M. Post would like to see that factored into the cost estimates.

Additional discussion

T. Davies knows that the Selectboard would have to approve any action, but asked if the Silver Lake State Park field to the north of the parking lot has been investigated. This area has gone unused by the State for a number of years, and there used to be a baseball diamond on the site. D. Belanger stated that they had investigated that area a few years ago, but 2 issues: 1.) The area is not deep enough for a field; it must be at least 300 feet in length to meet field requirements, it’s about 250 feet. 2.) The State would not allow more than a 5 year lease for the area, and with that, it was felt that it would not be economical to expend Town funds for such a short window of time. If the State were willing to agree to a 25-year lease, it would be revisited. Further discussion of the pros and cons of site took place, with T. Davies stating he would like to see further investigation to the property occur.

T. Dufresne reminded members that they were only discussing the three proposed field locations at this time, and discussion should be limited to those sites only. D. Belanger stated that the final plans should be available in June, and he would like to present those to the HCC for an official decision at that time. This would allow time for opinions/decisions to be forwarded to the Selectboard in time for their August meeting deadline. D. Belanger stated that the Trails Commission will be providing input, but wanted to have plans “vetted” by the HCC, Agricultural Commission and the Selectboard prior to their input.

L. Bianco asked what the Recreation Committee defines as a “need”. She did not feel that there was any clear definition given, and did not feel that the whole issue was being discussed. D. Belanger stated that the main issue is that there is not enough rectangular shaped fields for various sports, and while they can and do repurpose some fields, they also need “downtime” to recover from the heavy use. At this time, this downtime cannot be provided for. L. Bianco disagreed with that statement, and felt that the Recreation Commission should work with what they have.

T. Dufresne stated that this was a conversation that should be had with the Recreation Commission during one of their meetings so that L. Bianco's questions and concerns could be addressed by them. D. Belanger added that additionally, the HBHS does not always take care of their fields as well as the Recreation Commission, and this creates a safety concern.

J. Garruba asked why a stop light would be considered at the Muzzey Road location, when there are other more heavily used areas along Route 122 that have more issues, such as the HBHS and the Middle School entrances. P. Band clarified that it is just conjecture at this time, but has to be investigated as part of the process.

As soon as the final plans are completed by Meridian Land Services, D. Belanger will forward to the HCC and request another discussion. At that time, a more formal opinion will be asked for from the HCC.

(D. Belanger departed the meeting at 7:55 pm.)

M. Post returned to the meeting as a member of the HCC.

BOARD & COMMITTEE UPDATES

Selectboard – Peter Band

Other than the discussion on the proposed Recreational Fields, no other items of importance to the HCC have been discussed.

Planning Board – Cathy Hoffman

Due to an unexpected family emergency, C. Hoffman was not able to attend the last Planning Board meeting. L. Bianco had been able to fill in the HCC at the last meeting, but J. Garruba added that he had not been aware that the HCC can do a Wildlife & Habitat study as part of the Workforce Housing project, and is allowed to choose a biologist for the study. Both T. Dufresne and C. Hoffman stated that they were aware of this, and had a list of biologists to choose from. They need to wait for Planning Board request before doing the study.

Treasurer's Report – T. Davies

As of April 29, 2019, the HCC account balance was \$716,197.36, with \$10,000 held in stewardship reserve, and \$450,000 committed to the Ernest Hardy Lot purchase, this leaves the HCC with \$256,197.36 available as cash.

ONGOING/NEW BUSINESS

Howe Fields Conservation Easement

On Thursday, April 19, 2019, T. Dufresne forwarded a message received by the Town Administrator's office from Sharon Howe, Trustee of the L&H Trust, advising the Town that she would not be signing the proposed Purchase and Sales Agreement, and thus the easement would not be able to be consummated by the deadline of April 20, 2019. T. Dufresne explained that the 2019 Warrant Article, which was approved at Town Meeting, stated that the language shall not be changed from the agreed upon language in place. Just prior a few days prior to the deadline, Ms. Howe proposed language changes to meet what she felt were minimum deed terms under the Federal requirements. As the Warrant Article stated that no language changes could occur, the Town could not change the language except by Special Town Meeting and a revote by the public. Due to legal restrictions and unbudgeted costs for such a meeting, this meeting could not take place before the deadline. Ms. Howe was adamant that the language change had to occur before the submission of the Purchase and Sales document, and as the Town was bound to the Warrant Article language approved, she chose not to sign the Purchase and Sales. P. Band, P. Edmunds and T. Dufresne all spoke with her at length over the 3 days prior to the deadline, but to no avail.

T. Davies was concerned with Ms. Howe's statement, and did not want it to reflect badly on the Town. P. Edmunds stated that thousands of hours were spent by both Town Staff and volunteers to create the agreed upon document over the past several years, and he was very disappointed that it had been for naught. He expressed his gratitude to Lori Radke, Town Administrator, spending most of the 3 weeks previous to Ms. Howe's decision dedicated to making sure that the information required by the USDA-NRCS was prepared and ready to be submitted by the deadline. P. Band stated that the Selectboard will be issuing a press release in the near future.

Worcester Mills – Rocky Pond Parking Area

Brandon Rackliff has completed the tree cut at the Rocky Pond parking area, as discussed at previous meetings. T. Dufresne will speak to DPW Director Todd Croteau about stumping and fixing area when the DPW works on Wood Lane later in the year. Mr. Rackliff submitted his bill for the cut, which came to \$1700.00 for removing the trees and chipping. T. Dufresne noted that another estimate for the cut had been received at \$2000.

184
185 *Motion made by T. Dufresne to expend \$1700 to Brandon Rackliff for the work performed as described above;*
186 *seconded by P. Edmunds. All those present in favor, none opposed or abstained. The motion to expend funds*
187 *passed by a vote of 7-0-0.*
188

189 **ROADSIDE CLEAN-UP PLANNING – Saturday, May 4, 2019**

190 The posted signs state that the event will take place from 8:00 am to 2:00 pm at the Transfer Station. Transfer Station
191 personnel should be available at about 7:30 am so that the tent and table can be set up. T. Dufresne will bring the
192 tent, T. Davies will bring the tables and chairs and both will meet at the Transfer Station at 7:30 am.
193

194 Karen Bridgeo was to provide printed copies of the NRPC Hazardous Waste flier, T. Davies will have a map of roads
195 assigned as volunteer's sign-in. T. Dufresne will speak to both Joan Cudworth and Todd Croteau of the DPW to inform
196 them of these items, and to find out if anything is needed beyond the normal scope.
197

198 T. Davies asked members to sign up for two-hour shifts, as follows:

199 7:30 am to 9:30 am, T. Davies and L. Bianco;

200 9:30 am to 11:30 am, J. Bruneau;

201 11:30 am to 1:30 pm +/- , M. Post.

202 T. Dufresne can fill in as needed, as he will be working on South Merrimack Road. P. Edmunds will be out of Town, but
203 volunteered to clean-up Dow Rd from Depot Rd to Blood Rd prior to the event. T. Davies will be calling other HCC
204 members to ask them to fill in open spots. Amherst will also be holding their roadside cleanup on the same day.
205

206 **MINUTES**

207 *T. Dufresne made the motion to accept the public minutes of the April 17, 2019 meeting as written; seconded by*
208 *J. Bruneau. All members voted in favor, none opposed or abstained, and the minutes were approved by a vote of*
209 *7-0-0.*
210

211 **ADJOURNMENT**

212 *T. Dufresne made the motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by J. Bruneau. All members voted in favor, none*
213 *opposed or abstained, and the motion carried by a vote of 7-0-0. The meeting adjourned at 8:25 pm.*
214

215 Respectfully submitted,

216 Connie Cain

217 Staff