



Town of Weare Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes January 16, 2024

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER: 7:00pm

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Chair, Pam Moul; Vice Chair, David Lundeen; Denise Purington; Director, Lisa Grolljahn, Salim Blume Ex-Officio.

EXCUSED:

NOT PRESENT:

Pledge of Allegiance

AMENDMENTS TO AGENDA: Minute taker Job Description, and field Usage

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Tara Mann Worthley Road Weare – Speaking in regard to the East Road/Schmid Property. Ms. Mann wanted to express her concerns as to why it is of importance to so many and she shared a letter she sent to the Weare Athletic Club last evening.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Ms. Grolljahn made a motion to accept the minutes of December 12, 2023, and Mr. Lundeen seconded the motion. All present were in favor and the motion to approve the minutes passed.

Agenda Topics

Topic: Minute Taker Job Description

The members indicated that they had reviewed it and ok the posting of the job description.

Action Items: Ms. Moul to post.

Topic: Field Usage Request form

The Commission received a field usage form from Weare Athletic Club related to scheduling baseball. We will postpone addressing it until the field usage meeting in March.

Action Items: Ms. Grolljahn to reach out to the requester letting them know it will be reviewed at our March meeting.

Topic: Facilities Update

Ms. Grolljahn reported that she was unable to purchase trashcans by year end for Chase Park. One she does purchase them she will store them in the bathhouse at Chase Park. 18 of the Eagle Scout project benches are also stored in the bath house. She has purchased the necessary locks for the gates and will install those. She will be taking down the decorations at the Gazebo in the next few weeks.

Action Items: Take down the decorations at the Gazebo.

Topic: East Road Property Update.

Ms. Purington shared that she attended a Board of Selectmen meeting where they were discussing Board and Commission warrant articles. After some discussion it was agreed upon that for now the Parks and Recreation warrant article asking for thirty five thousand dollars (\$35,000) for an engineering study for East Road would remain on the warrant until further discussion could take place at the January Parks and Recreation meeting. Ms. Purington reported that legal has sent an opinion on the East Road property however Mr. Blume reported that it was determined that she did not have all the documents needed to render a full determination and sharing her initial email would be premature at this time. Ms. Purington asked Mr. Blume how it came to be that all the documents hadn't been shared with Town Counsel since all parties agreed to do so at the December meeting. Mr. Blume indicated he had the same questions. He feels it is an ongoing problem that needs to be corrected. Mr. Blume also indicated that there was an agreement to have an in person meeting with Town Counsel and all parties involved which hasn't yet happened and he expressed his opinion that it should still happen.

Ms. Purington asked Mr. Blume if all documents have been sent. He indicated that as far as he knows she should have all documents but nobody has heard back yet.

Ms. Purington reported that on January 15th the proposed warrant articles were presented in a public hearing including the Parks and Recreation warrant article. Ms. Purington reported that two weeks ago a warrant article was submitted by petition by the taxpayers directing the Conservation Commission under the direction of the Board of Selectmen to place the issue before the voters as to how to disperse the East Road property related to the 12 acres of recreational use and the 8 acres for gravel and remaining land in conservation. This creates a challenge for Parks and Recreation as to whether to leave the article on the warrant since legal has not rendered a decision. Ms. Purington recommended not advancing article since there is so much still undetermined at this time and Mr. Blume also commented that we must consider that a no vote means no and no further action could be taken for a year should this warrant article fail. Ms. Purington also reported that another warrant article has been submitted that didn't make the document she shared. She also reported that last night's public hearing was suspended and to be continued next Monday night to finish review and public input into the remaining articles that they were not able to get to last night. Therefore, we still have an option to pull our warrant article. Mr. Grolljahn also stated there was confusion related to the new article. Mr. Lundeen asked for clarification on what the difference is between the two competing articles. Ms. Purington shared the two articles, the petitioned article and the Conservation Commission article which was submitted late. Additional discussion took place over the engineering study warrant article. Ms. Purington made a motion to pull the warrant article due to lack of clarity on the property. Ms. Grolljahn seconded the motion and there was no further discussion. Ms. Grolljahn, Ms. Moul, and Ms. Purington voted in favor of the motion, Mr. Lundeen abstained.

Action Items: Ms. Purington will notify the Board of Selectmen of our decision.

Topic: Board of Selectmen January 15th meeting.

Ms. Purington gave an update on the warrant article submitted by the Conservation Commission. Ms. Purington asked Mr. Blume several questions. One question was what is the cost to place this property in conservation. She expressed her feelings about full disclosure as has been the case with all the other warrant articles, and that this information should be shared with taxpayers. Ms. Purington also shared her concern about how the warrant article is worded. Particularly related to the use of the words "contiguous" as the original warrant article in 2013 did not use the word "contiguous" to describe how the land would be divided. Mr. Blume stated, "that was THE question and that a lot of people feel that was the intention and a lot feel it was not intended that way". Ms. Purington read the original warrant article to compare against this new warrant article submitted. Ms. Purington explained that the offsetting grants were never obtained to contribute to the purchase of this land. She also explained that a public hearing was held, no one was in attendance, and the Conservation Commission voted to increase their contribution from \$50,000 to \$180,000. She also spoke about the Mildred Hall contribution and other comments made in their minutes related to types of things these fields could be used for. Ms. Purington shared a copy of the Zoning Variance that is one of the documents being looked at by Town Counsel.

Action Items: None

Topic: Mr. Fulton 37 Hemlock Drive and Chairmem of Conservation Commission

Mr. Fulton asked for the opportunity to speak, and he was granted the opportunity.

Mr. Fulton made a public apology to Ms. Purington, for conversation that was threatening to her. He stated he meant no harm nor had any ill will. Ms. Purington thanked him and accepted his apology. Mr. Fulton then spoke to the original warrant article. He spoke to the grants and that they were sought for preservation of the agricultural value of the fields. He spoke to the intent of conserving the fields and where does the easement go. He spoke to his recollection of what transpired. The original article warrant article was written by the Board of Selectmen, and he stated that had the Conservation Commission written that article the word contiguous would have been written in. Mr. Fulton continued to speak to their intent. Mr. Fulton indicated he was speaking for himself and that the Conservation Commission did not send him. A discussion around promised made to both sides took place. Ms. Purington asked Mr. Fulton why he felt the land needed to be contiguous to the gravel pit. Ms. Purington asked Mr. Fulton about another section of the land that he had spoken about at a Board of Selectmen meeting. Mr. Fulton indicated he had walked the property and shared a notion, not vetted, and it did surprise him that the areas North-East of gravel pit was relatively flatlined, not a huge grade change. He stated it doesn't meet a lot of the other desires and conditions of where to put a facility. He spoke about a two-tier facility, it could be a grander vision than what we are talking about today and it would require more financing to do it, but he felt it wasn't like a field that is bedrock or needed blasting. Ms. Purington raised the concern that the town has been mining gravel for ten years and they still are not done. Mr. Fulton acknowledged that Ms. Purington was speaking of current needs, and he is speaking about when the gravel mining is completed in the future. When talking about the use of the word "contiguous" he indicated that with input from other town boards and officials they could look at the property and could rule out 85% of the property like they did at Bolton therefore leaving 15% of the land, but he clarified the fields would not be in consideration. He indicated that this could be figured out now using mapping. This would include looking at all the grades. Ms. Purington reinforced the concerns that the grades and distance out there is going to be extremely expensive. Mr. Fulton feels that back property could provide a grander option and did state that it might required asking for a bond and time.

He did state that if the town voted to use the fields in comparison it could be done in a fairly short time with less dollars but gives you less options. Mr. Lundeen asked if there was any other conservation land that would be available. Mr. Fulton indicated they have looked at that including the vice chair, is there something in their possession that is tailor made and the answer is no, partially because we are a hill town. He spoke of Eastman and a field but it is not available. Any conservation land currently in place cannot be used for anything that will disturb the soils or modifies the lay of the land. It would be a tough sell. A brief discussion took place over the amount of conservation land in the town of Weare, with close to 23% being in conservation albeit that the Conservation Commission only manages 8%. This information makes the East Road property even more valuable because it one of few pieces of land that is available for developing a recreational facility. Addition discussion took place regarding the other warrant articles and funding sources for both Conservation Commission and Parks and Recreation and how Land Use Tax could be used to help fund both. Ms. Purington spoke to the pent up demands and Parks and Receptions inability to meet the needs due to lack of land for field development. Mr. Lundeen spoke about looking at other locations on this property. Mr. Fulton spoke about sitting down before the Deliberative session and speaking about other options on this property. Mr. Blume clarified the two items PaRC's would like addressed, for the cost of putting this into conservation to appear on the warrant article, and the reference to "contiguous to gravel pit language.

Action Items: Mr. Blume to present PaRC's questions and concerns

Topic: Field Usage Meeting

Ms. Moul clarified that the field usage request would be tabled until our March meeting and asked if the Commission members were in agreement which they were.

Action Items: Ms. Grolljahn will let the Director of WAC know it will be discussed at the March meeting.

Topic: Financial Items

Ms. Moul asked if there were any financial items that needed to be addressed. Ms. Grolljahn brought up that end of year purchase of items other than locks were unable to be purchased.

Action Items: Ms. Grolljahn will install the locks on the gates at Ineson, Bolton and Tennis courts.

Topic: Chase Park

Ms. Grolljahn brought up that typically the gates are opened once the lake has frozen over. Since there is still open water the gates have not been opened. Ms. Moul indicated we will need to keep an eye on the weather conditions and take action when necessary.

Action Items: None

Topic: Additional Business, Minute taker position

Ms. Moul indicated she did have an individual who is interested that she will speak with. Ms. Purington reminded Ms. Moul that when meetings aren't in a room that has on camera availability this individual

would need to be in attendance. The per diem is \$750 dollars annually, about \$60 dollars per meeting. This comes out to 10 meetings per year.

Action Items: Ms. Moul will have it posted to website and Facebook page. Goal to have in place for March.

Topic: March Meeting

The March meeting is on election night March 12th so Ms. Moul will not be available. Group suggested rescheduling to March 5th.

Action Items: Reschedule meeting for March 5th

Topic: New applicants for vacant positions.

Ms. Purington asked about where we are at with those individuals who showed interest in our vacant positions. Ms. Moul indicated she hasn't seen any emails. Mr. Blume indicated there were 1-2 individuals interested. Ms. Moul indicated that there is an issue with the PaRC email. Ms. Purington suggested we get all interested individuals to attend our February meeting.

Action Items: Ms. Moul to reach out to Town Administrator for any applications that have come through.

Topic: Meeting with Conservation Commission

Mr. Blume asked the members regarding their interest in meeting with the Conservation Commission. Ms. Grolljahn indicated that it would be nice. Mr. Lunden indicated it would be nice if they had other town land they could put forth to us. Mr. Blume indicated that Conservation Commission members may know of other avenues or potential land that may be coming available. Ms. Grolljahn indicated that she has been on several commission over the past few years and it was her understanding that these East Road fields would be athletic fields by now. Starting over is fine but reinforced our urgent needs now. She also stated that when future land becomes available it is important for Parks and Rec and Conservation to be involved together so we can address the needs. Our current fields are being over used with no options to rest or rotate fields. Ms. Purington addressed Mr. Blume's question by reinforcing the urgent need we have for options to be put on the table that are available now and cost effective. She asked if there was an opportunity to talk with the Board of Selectmen about future funding. She raised the land use tax option stating that over the past ten years more than \$600,000 dollars has come into the town as revenue, and is there an opportunity to look at Parks and Rec getting access to some of that money to purchase land that may be brought to our attention by the Conservation Commission. Parks needs to begin to develop a fund that can be used for future land purchase. Mr. Blume stated he is not trying to be rude, but his questions was about having a meeting. Mr. Lundeen said yes, Ms. Grolljahn said yes, Ms. Purington was not given the opportunity to answer this question and Ms. Moul did not respond.

Action Items: Ms. Moul asked Mr. Fulton if he had any dates they could put something together. He indicated in general that Wednesday evening are available or possibly Fridays. He suggested a meeting in the next two weeks. He suggested Ms. Moul email the Conservation Commission.

Next Meeting: February 20 2024 at 7:00 PM

MEETING ADJOURNED: A motion was made by Ms. Grolljahn to adjourn the meeting, it was seconded by Mr. Lundeen, all were in favor. Motion passed and meeting was adjourned at 8:35 pm.

Minutes Recorded by Denise Purington