



**Board of Parks & Recreation**  
Meeting Minutes

October 26, 2016

***Please be advised that these minutes are in DRAFT form and will not become "Public Record" until they are formally approved by the Board of Parks and Recreation at their next regularly scheduled meeting planned for December 7, 2016.***

**Board Attendees:** Nancy Caplan, Gary Dell'Abate, Frank DiVincenzo, Scott Johnson, Rick Loh, John Hartwell, and (Christian Thalheim by phone)

**Staff Attendees:** Joe Siciliano, Susan Snyder, Billie Schock, Jeff Freidag, Bruce Spaman and Tom Greco

**Ex-Officio Attendees:** None

**Guest Attendees:** Mary Lee Kiernan, Kristin Sterling, Brooke Bohnsack, and Dean Gamanos

- I. The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m. at the Eastern Greenwich Civic Center.
- II. A motion was made by Mr. Hartwell seconded by Mr. Johnson to approve the Board Minutes from the September 21, 2016 meeting. 5-0-0
- III. Ms. Caplan opened the meeting by introducing the Board's newest member, Frank DiVincenzo. Mr. DiVincenzo will audit and decide which subcommittees to join.

Ms. Caplan opened the floor up to Brooke Bohnsack, who had some concerns about the new concessionaire at Greenwich Point. Ms. Bohnsack addressed the following concerns:

Hours of operation, cleanliness of deck, Pepsi umbrellas, prices, and the quality of food.

Mr. Siciliano responded that these are all issues that the Department is aware of and have been addressing throughout the season. The Superintendent and Operations Manager have addressed the issues up front with the concessionaire regarding the complaints that were received.

Mr. Siciliano reviewed the Purchasing Department's process for the development of a concessionaire contract and the issues that surfaced this season:

A Request for Proposal (RFP) was drafted to include upscale beach fare and provide some healthier options in response to comments/complaints (regarding the previous concessionaire) received by beachgoers. Also included in the RFP are hours of operation, the do's and don'ts, responsibilities, sample menus, history, background and references. The RFP is released by the Purchasing Department and a public notice is published in the newspaper as well as posted on the Town's website for any interested parties to consider. The Purchasing Department also maintains a list of those who have asked to be on the list when the contract becomes available, and they were mailed a copy of the RFP. Upon the advice of members of the Conservancy, some food providers who they thought would be ideal for the concession were provided a packet, however none of them bid.

There is a Pre-bid conference open to those interested. The pre-bid allows interested parties to meet with representatives from Purchasing, Parks and Recreation and DPW to ask questions. These questions/answers are then sent out to all interested parties to level the playing field.

Then proposals are accepted; which includes all the requested information from the RFP and also how much they are willing to pay for the rights to operate the concessions (both north and south stands run by the same concessionaire).

This year only two bids were received from the previous concessionaire and the current concessionaire. The Town sets a minimum for the contract bid but potential operators strive to outbid each other, for the contract then question if it is worth it. Mr. Siciliano added this operation is an expensive proposition, the Town provides the building and permanent structures, but not the equipment.

The concessionaire that was selected also operates a restaurant in Woodbridge and a beach concession in Fairfield. This season got off to a late start at due to some construction issues and as a result, the concessionaire lost managers who were expecting to start in May. There wasn't an opportunity to work out the kinks prior to the height of the season.

As for the issues regarding the umbrellas and deck clean up; the concessionaire only has general responsibility for the deck with cooperative effort from the department, we do not have someone designated for this task, Sue Baker has been assisting with this. The concessionaire does not get exclusivity for the deck, some people bring their own food/drinks, etc.

The current contract is for 2 years, with 3 one-year options. We are hoping his performance goes up next season. The option years can only be executed upon mutual agreement.

The intent going forward is to work with the concessionaire towards improvements.

Mr. Siciliano added that he feels that there is a disconnect with what is perceived as upscale beach fare. The concessionaire is trying to meet the demands for a better quality food product, this will be higher cost to the customer. Prices cannot be compared to others around Town who have a 12-month operation compared to a 3-4 month seasonal operation.

Ms. Bohnsack advised that she knows someone who is very interested in the concession at Greenwich Point and inquired what they should do. Mr. Siciliano replied that they should contact the Purchasing Department and ask to be placed on the mailing list.

Mr. Siciliano further added that since the contract was published, the attendance numbers have significantly changed as a result of the change in the Provisional Beach Policy. This year attendance figures are 20% lower than published, this has a direct impact on the concession.

Mr. Johnson stated, the structure of the concession contract needs to change to make it more attractive to prospective concessionaries who have the potential to make money and produce a better product.

Upon extensive discussion, Mr. Johnson suggested Ms. Bohnsack write a letter to the Director and Board about the complaints and provide suggestions.

#### **IV. Courts, Playgrounds, Bruce Spaman**

The Parks division maintains 36 tennis courts and 31 playscapes. The playscapes are inspected with a professional consultant on a quarterly and annual basis. There is going to a new playground opening at Byram Park on November 8. North Mianus School has a fairly new playscape, Cos Cob Park playscape is about a year old and is holding up well, North Street School is fairly new with an addition of a handicapped swing. The Town uses wood fiber surfacing and sealed rubber which is very forgiving and durable.

Mr. Spaman stated that the new Parks Operations Manager, Darrin Wigglesworth has instituted a program at Bruce Park for a staff member to clean up the playground, sweep wood chips from sidewalks, etc. before the park opens in the morning.

No basketball court resurfacing this year.

Tennis court resurfacing: 4 at Binney, 3 at Bruce, and 4 at the High School.

V. **Binney Park Project**

Mr. Spaman stated a Master Plan was drafted for Binney Park, the dredge of pond is expected to commence in July 2017, the planting plan will focus on the south side until the dredge is complete. The plan includes paving paths, plantings, new bridges, some tree removals. As of right now, there is a halt on tree planting due to the water shortage.

Ms. Caplan advised that the Binney Park Master Plan Committee has been working on a sign to be posted at Binney Park outlining the work to be done. **(ATTACHMENT A)**.

Ms. Caplan added that it is nice that everyone is on the same page with the details of the plan.

VI. **Sub-Committee Reports-EGCC**

Mr. Dell'Abate reported that the committee met a couple of weeks ago. Erf Porter and Karen Sadik-Khan spoke about the plan they had worked on several years ago. There is a current plan that the committee is trying to move ahead with, however there are people who are for a bigger plan.

Mr. Siciliano added that there are two different thought processes out there. There is a concept that addresses a multi-use facility that incorporates the needs of various user groups at an estimated cost of \$15M and interest groups who are pushing for a 25,000-30,000 sq. ft. field house estimated to cost \$30M in the rear of the Civic Center building and a concept to possibly eliminate the civic center aspect.

This/these interest groups have offered to fund-raise, however do not have any heavy hitters for this estimated \$30M facility. They want the Town to take on the risk of the financial aspect, upkeep, etc. and they want to operate the facility. The area they want to build the field house is unbuildable, it is a wetland; both the Directors of Inlands/Wetlands and Planning and zoning have expressed their concerns for the challenges with wetlands and zoning/parking– these are realities that need to be accepted in order to move forward.

Mr. Siciliano stated this project has not gotten off the ground since 1998 when Erf Porter and Karen Sadik-Khan ran the committee for the project, and this is the same conversation that has been going on since.

Mr. Johnson added that if the opposing proposal was considered, there would be a disproportionate increase to the cost because of parking with significantly higher maintenance costs. It is unrealistic, and we are wasting our time.

Mr. Dell'Abate expressed his frustration, and advised that he does not know where the project is going, but advised that if not addressed realistically, the project will not progress.

Mr. Siciliano stated that the field house is a nice component, but it doesn't serve all of the community, maybe that will grow but his intent is to design a reasonable building, funding, staffing, and ultimately a facility that serves the whole community.

Mr. Siciliano stated that when it comes down to the funding, the BET will ask, what does the Town need? Mr. Siciliano stated not to discount the field house, but he cannot justify the field house as a need; it is not a facility that is representative of what the overall community is looking for.

Mr. Loh suggested that the supporters of a field house be asked to write a business case for the justification of a field house facility and how it will operate.

Ms. Snyder added that there will be lots of dead time at the field house as everyone will be in competition for the prime times.

Mr. Dell'Abate advised that the committee is scheduled to meet next week.

VII. **Director's Report, Joe Siciliano**

At the end of last year, after the budget was completely vetted at the BET level, but the RTM's Budget Overview Committee, (BOC) made arbitrary reductions. The Parks and Recreation

Department received a \$97,997 reduction in the 100 series of the administration budget; the department is left to decide where to take the reduction within this series. If they wanted the cut, they should decide what service(s) to eliminate. The BET put out the budgetary guidelines, in addition the BOC is proposing a 0% increase budget (which includes benefits).

Ms. Kiernan added that if the BOC's proposal is put into place, there would be 160 job cuts across the Town.

Mr. Siciliano stated that the Department is currently preparing a two tier budget following the BET guidelines and a secondary budget that takes into consideration the BOC's proposal for a 0% increase.

Mr. Siciliano advised that several departments across the Town took various hits; including the Board of Education with a \$660,000 reduction, that the RTM voted to reinstate.

Mr. Siciliano stated the Board needs to keep abreast of the budgetary issues facing the department.

Mr. Siciliano stated that the department has fostered private funding in the amount of \$6.7M (roughly) in projects over the last 5 years. As a department and a Board with support from constituents, Parks and Recreation has been doing their part for community improvements.

Ms. Caplan stated the department has had to increased productivity exponentially with less resources.

Ms. Caplan asked how the Board can help, Mr. Siciliano responded that the Board needs to advocate for the department. There are now plans for the board member to attend RTM district meetings to discuss the potential impact of these cuts on the department services to the town residents.

Ms. Kiernan stated she and other members of the BET are meeting with RTM members to educate them.

Mr. Siciliano expressed concerns if the Town runs out of water, the Town supply is currently at 27%.

Mr. Johnson inquired how the shortage impacts the golf course.

Mr. Siciliano replied that the golf course gets their water from a pond, but abides by the restrictions. The golf course has only been watering tees and greens, but have not been for the last two weeks.

Upon extensive discussion, Mr. Siciliano added that the Town would need 34" of rain in order to wipe out the deficit.

**VIII. Chairman's Report, Nancy Caplan**

Ms. Caplan thanked Billie Schock for hosting the meeting this evening. Ms. Caplan yielded her time at the top of the meeting to discuss the issues at Greenwich Point and stated she would table the discussion on the POCD until the next meeting.

**IX. Sub-Committee Reports-Dog Season Extension-Greenwich Point-Gary Dell'Abate**

Mr. Dell'Abate reported that he met with a couple of women a month ago. Mr. Dell'Abate stated that he explained to them what has happened in the past. Mr. Dell'Abate stated how impressed he was with them; they are taking a different approach. They will be back to provide a presentation.

Mr. Siciliano added these women have a different perspective on extending the dog season at the end of the season. They want to problem solve and support the management of it. They have innovative ideas and may have a real shot at being successful.

**X. Harbor Management Commission-Scott Johnson**

Mr. Johnson stated the new draft Harbor Management Plan was recently released. They are seeking agency comments. Mr. Johnson added he will contact the Committee Chairman to

discuss and gain a better understanding of the changes. Some important sections were eliminated, particularly chapter 5 on policies. Trying to figure out where it stands with the state. Mr. Johnson further advised that one subject that will be very controversial is private docks.

Mr. Siciliano stated that the Mianus dredge has begun.

Mr. Freidag added that they are starting at north end and moving south, 6ft MLW, the material is going to western LI Sound.

**XI. Sub-Committee Reports- Field Sub-Committee**

Mr. Hartwell stated the committee is working on the impact the change in school start times will have on user groups.

Mr. Siciliano added that he met with the school Superintendent and learned that they hired a consultant to collect the issues and help them address concerns. Mr. Siciliano stated that he is expecting the consultant to contact him for input.

Mr. Siciliano stated that Mary Lee Kiernan was a prime supporter of funding in the amount of \$40,000 to look at the potential for artificial turf at the middle school fields. The department currently has layouts and rough estimates for each of the middle school fields.

Mr. Siciliano advised that he was approached by Sue Snyder and Don Mohr who suggested that consideration be given to artificial turf at Teufel Field as there are already lights at this location, making this field more playable during fall and spring. Sue Snyder, Tim Coughlin and Don Mohr are looking into the concept of making Teufel field the number one priority for artificial turf.

Mr. Hartwell stated that this is great, but it will not cure the problem, it is time to light all the fields.

**XII. Unfinished Business**

**XIII. New Business**

**XIV. Public Comments**

**XVI. Meeting adjourned 8:20 p.m.**



# Binney Park Restoration Project

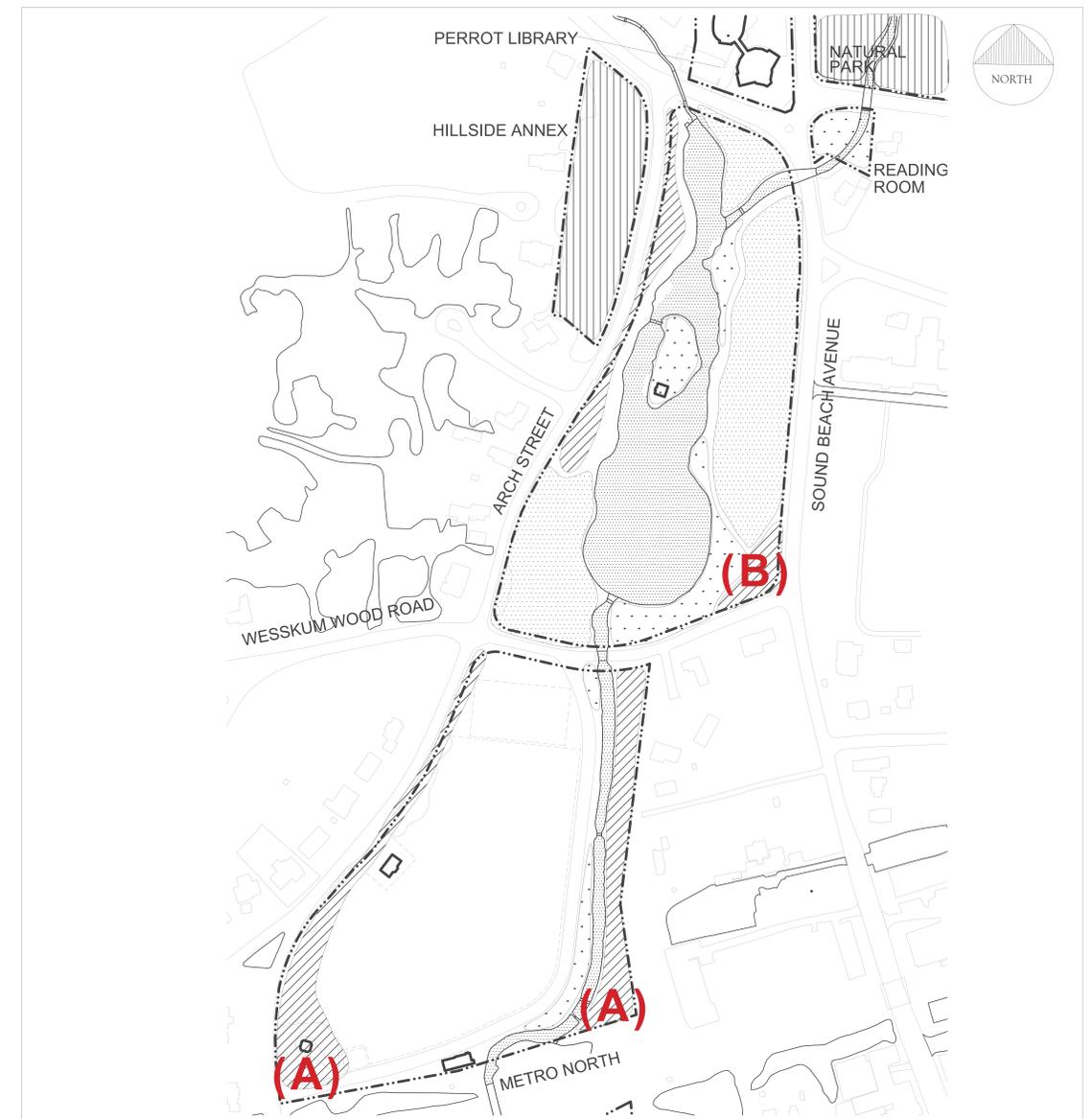
- **Binney Park Master Plan Completed – October 2016**
- **Plan Implementation (Tentative Schedule)**

## South End - Across from playing fields (A)

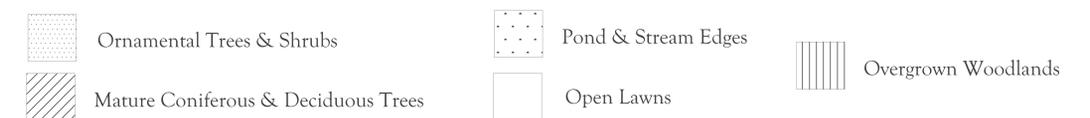
*Fall 2016: Tree maintenance (Removal / Pruning)*  
*Spring 2017: New tree and shrub plantings*  
*Extension of walking path into a loop*  
*Upgrade playground & small rest area*

## Formal Park - Limited work due to dredging project (B)

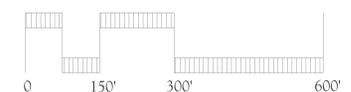
*Fall 2016: Tree maintenance (Removal / Pruning)*  
*Spring 2017: New tree and shrub plantings*  
*Summer 2017: Dredging permits & budget requests in process.*  
*(Tentative)*  
*TBD: Landscaping in the areas surrounding the pond will occur after dredging is completed.*



Landscape Assessment  
PLANT COMMUNITIES



BINNEY PARK  
HISTORIC LANDSCAPE REPORT  
Martha Lyon Landscape Architecture, LLC



**\* Additional information will be posted as work progresses.**