

MEETING MINUTES

Parks & Recreation Commission Regular Meeting

Thursday, December 16, 2020 at 8 PM (via ZOOM)

In Attendance:

Commission: Joanne Baecher-DiSalvo (Chair), Gene Calamari, Anjali Chen, John Dailey, Mike Jacobs, Patrick McKenzie, Angela Reeve. All Commissioners present -- a quorum is in order.
Parks & Recreation Department: Aaron Podhurst (Superintendent)

1. Call to Order

2. Public Comment

None

3. Old Business

-November commission meeting minutes approved

-Hillside Woods - update

Patrick McKenzie reported that the work of resident volunteers is ongoing and Haven Colgate has been leading the show... keeping folks socially distanced. Privet pulls up around the meadow and now the work is continuing down by vernal pond. The Steering Committee folks took a walk around the 4 acre demo site last month. Sean (Parks Foreman) took out some norway maples in prep for the demo site fencing (stumps marked in yellow). The money from the County still has not come through. Looking at fencing and planting costs and Aaron is working on an RFP for 900' of fencing for the enclosure and the internal temporary fencing around the demo plot. The Pollinator Pathway folks, Haven and Patrick will do another walk later this week to discuss plantings. Eric Ghalib is to be commended for his efforts. Eric is a Hastings High School student who organized a fundraiser selling his homemade cakes and directed those profits to support the Hillside Woods efforts. Eric also donates a significant amount of time participating in the privet pulls.

Aaron spoke to Haven about an upcoming winter session for nature walks / birding sessions -- we will target February for those programs to pick up again.

Aaron reports that the Village Manager has inquired again with the County to see if there is any movement on that grant money.

- Sugar Pond Shed - update

Joanne and Anjali met with a few of the residents who have been working on the proposed upgrades. They understand that Hillside Woods is a big project and it does not really make sense to move to erect something now in light of the overall restorations.

Which leaves the question of what to do with the existing building which is in disrepair. Joanne feels like it is an eyesore.... And if we are not going to repair it, then what should be done with

the structure.. We do not need to decide the fate of the building tonight, but Joanne feels strongly that the issue of what to do with the shed does need to be addressed. John seconds the sentiment to tear it down -- no point in leaving that there - it is inviting trouble. Anjali agrees.

The Commission feels like the fate of the shed should be separated into two parts:

- 1- Do we move to demolish the shed? And then
- 2- What could be done with that space.

John thinks it makes sense to start fresh in that location.

Anjali asked Aaron if there has been a cost estimate to destroy and remove the structure? Aaron indicated there has not been a cost analysis, and noted that the former Parks Forman (Rich Stroebel) had received a quote from a contractor for about \$20k+ to repair the structure.

Aaron notes there is a history with the shed -- a well utilized warming shed back in the day of ice skating on Sugar Pond, and in more recent years the shed was used for storing equipment for the Rec's nature program. The current conditions prohibits use of the shed in any form.

Aaron stated that the Parks Department would not be able to remove the current structure, it is too big of a job. We would either need the help of the DPW department or contract the job out. Joanne asked Aaron to get an estimate of what it would cost to demolish it and remove the debris.

The new resident group that expressed interest in improving that site did discuss the option of marking that site for the historical significance for any residents that might have emotional attachments to that historical structure (Sugar Pond Shed).

Gene thinks that the foundation might be ok, and noted that demolition will cost thousands. John feels that it may make sense to preserve the structure only if there is a defined reason for us to fix it. Joanne felt that a "storage shed" doesn't seem to make sense located by a nature pond. Mike agrees, that any structure that would be there should be something for community usage and not a storage shed. Joanne thinks the pond is a special part of the woods, and we also need to pay attention to the health of Sugar Pond.

Aaron shared that the last health assessment of the pond was done in the 1980s. Dredging is reshaping the bottom and taking out any sediment, debris, pollutants. Aaron does not have a cost estimate; it would require permitting for DEC etc. If we are in need of dredging, it could be pretty extensive and costly. Barometric survey of the pond was done last year by a graduate student (in terms of the health of the water).

John noted that if he remembers correctly, it's fundamentally dammed up at the end... the pond site was created by the damming up by the southwestern side of the pond. He seems to recall an environmental review (by Fred Hubbard, years ago), because it is not a natural pond. Sugar

Pond gets a lot of silt runoff from Hillside Woods. The pond depends on the health of the woods to some degree to survive. As long as the drain is kept clear, we can sustain the pond. After the issues above the pond have been addressed (ie the health of Hillside Woods), then you can look at maintaining health of the pond.

Aaron mentioned that the drain at the southwestern end of the pond is cleaned out and monitored regularly.

Anjali suggested that we let pond experts know that we are in the process of rehabilitating the woods, and ask what we should be considering about the pond in the context of the overall Hillside Woods Restoration project

Next Steps:

- Aaron will get cost estimates for demolition and removal of the shed
- Joanne will schedule Sugar Pond Shed on a future Commission Meeting where we can further discuss the fate of the shed.

4. NEW BUSINESS

New/Upcoming Programs -

There is still reduced programming (due to COVID)

Senior Shopping - is regarded as an essential service, so that is being offered to our residents.

Letters to Santa - box outside the JHCC

Thunder Ridge - discounted ski and snowboard lessons

Lacrosse Clinics (in conjunction with Gargoyle) - we are observing all COVID related safety guidelines

Aaron recognizes that the Parks & Rec staff has done a tremendous job with decorations (VFW Plaza, Hastings House windows, former Sterling Bank storefront, the JHCC, downtown trees, the karate studio windows, etc. Huge Shout Out to the Parks & Rec staff!

Winter Nature Walk / Birding Walk program - targeted to resume in February

-Superintendent Report -

Survey has been completed for **Vest Pocket Park** -- just waiting for the engineer to turn around his drawings, then we can put that project out for bid. Will most likely be a spring repair project.

Quarry Park - starting to shut down work for the winter. In regards to the rose bushes being planted along the far end of the park (and Anjali previously noting that rose bushes are not deer resistant) -- the reason the Quarry Committee selected rose bushes was that rose bushes

(thorns) would serve as a deterrent (thorns) to people climbing the cliff. They will also be looking at some kind of fencing to protect from the deer. John has been walking by Quarry Park regularly and shared that the site is looking incredible.

Aaron - looking for an early summer completion. It is taking shape, very nice to see. The Village Manager is overseeing the Quarry Park directly.

Anjali, Aaron, the Village Manager, the Mayor Nikki and Chris Lemonlino (Quarry Park Study Committee) all met (at Anjali's request). Very good meeting. \$2M overall project cost. No Village money is being used. The project is being funded with grant money. The consent decree with River Keeper made up the bulk of the money.

Mike has a question on fencing. He seems to recall that the original park design did not include fencing.

Anjali - it is true the original design did not have a fence. Based on what we learned from Hillside Woods, the Mayor was pretty insistent that the fence "add on" be included over the last year and a half -- so funding was added for the fence. The fence will protect the park from the deer and is considered very important. The Mayor and Village Manager are working very hard to ensure we get funding for the fence.

Joanne - it was my understanding that no village funds were going to be used for this park.
Anjali - it is my understanding that the fence is in the overall project budget.

Mike - has no objection to fencing, but is curious to know where we will get the funding for fencing.

Aaron - groups are working on signage. (history of the park, rules of parks ie no dogs)

Parks pickup truck -- that was ordered in March 2019 has been received -- once the paperwork is complete, it will be sent out for its hybrid conversion (delivery had been delayed due to COVID related shutdowns).

Parks availability - As a department, we've tried to keep all the parks open as long as we can. With this week's storm, we've closed off the infields of ball fields and have removed the tennis poles and nets. A couple weeks ago we received some emails requesting if we could keep parks facilities open even longer, but with this week's storm, it made sense to close these facilities up for the season.

Questions?

Joanne shared that the Mayor has asked her to submit an "Accomplishments" listing for the Parks & Recreation Department. Joanne referred the Commission to Aaron's email for the draft

list. Joanne thinks we can add some things to the list "Parks & Recreation Departments Accomplishments for 2020":

- repair to ceiling in the harmon community center
- Zinsser fields? (Aaron thinks that was 2019)
- Tree work at Uniontown and Zinsser - Aaron will verify if this was done in 2020
- Refurbished wood chips at Reynolds playground (ADD this to the list)
- Quarry Park - list that as "improvements underway"
- Vest Pocket Park - indicate that "plans for improvement are underway"
- Pickup Truck -(ADD this to the list)
- Sod work at Uniontown (collaborative effort with HLL - Aaron will check on date, perhaps that was 2019)
- Spray Pool - repair/upgrade - should be included on this Accomplishments List
- COVID response - time intensive and important and demanding on staff & resource, so this should be listed as an accomplishment

-Parks & Rec Priorities list

Defining criteria used when assigning priority to a project/need

Parks and Recreation Mission Statement:

The Recreation Commission is to promote Parks and Recreation programs in the Village of Hastings-on-Hudson by serving in an advisory capacity to the Superintendent of Parks and Recreation and the Village Board. The commission shall act as a liaison between the community and the Village Board on program, areas, facilities, public relations and other matters pertaining to parks and recreation. The commission reviews recreation programs and events, assesses the upkeep and usage of parks and fields, and advises the Board of Trustees on policy issues.

The Commission discussed criteria we apply to projects that are on our Priorities list.

Demographics -

What is the current statistical make-up of our community?

What is the target audience the park/facility/program will serve?

Are the needs of that demographic being met?

For example...

18.5% of our population is over the age of 65 yrs

25% of the population is between the ages of 0-18yrs.

A bocce court (for example) could serve our senior population

Cost -

Operating? Capital?

What are the maintenance costs?

Where is the funding coming from? (Village, capital/bond, private, partnership, etc)

How much money is feasibly to be spent in the next year? What we have in our budget makes us sharpen our focus. (will there be options for grant money? Alternative funding?). It has to look like a “feasible package” else it’s not going to happen.

New? Or Maintaining/Enhancing a current facility/park?

We need to weigh “new things” against things we already have and our responsibility to maintain those parks/facilities. The maintenance of our existing resources are important less we run into greater costs down the road. “Big dreams” may need to be put off until we get a “pot of gold.”

Accessibility -

Is there parking? Can people get to the things that we are working with? Not only is it open to all, but is it accessible to all? (ie... Quarry Park - where do they park?) Are things in the right location to maximize the usage?

Realism -

Things that will cost under \$100K and will be used to maintain the existing resource that we have are more realistically going to be the things we consider. (“low hanging fruit”)

Maintenance -

What is realistic? Stuff that doesn’t involve bonds, grants, etc.

Maintenance costs include staff, material, equipment, etc for the long term sustainability

Example -- Hillside Woods (a passive park).... Maintenance costs might be easy to overlook and then years down the road we are hit with a huge \$350k for Hillside Woods rehabilitation

Impact on services, programming, community -

Does the project align with the Parks & Rec mission?

Does the project enhance the department facilities?

Does it provide a significant benefit in relationship to its cost?

Is it functional in multiple seasons?

Urgency -

This becomes good criteria for some of these things. Some issues can become a safety issue, and therefore will weigh a higher urgency. Urgency often ties in with maintenance.

Examples -

Tree maintenance

Vest Pocket Park - was not even on our list of Priorities, but park was closed due to safety issues. That seemed to escalate the need to put this repair into our capital request.

Feasibility -

Joanne shared the thought that if we as a Commission are going to ask for something (of the Board of Trustees), we need to present it in a way that is well thought out and be able to promote it. We need to convince the Village that the project is important and “doable.” Also, how much money is feasibly to be spent in the next year. What you have in your budget makes you sharpen your focus. (will there be options for grant money, alternative funding, etc). It has to look like a feasible package, else it’s not going to happen.

Gene asked how do we weigh a project like a skate park against, say, MacEachron Park? Aaron noted we are applying for a \$50k design grant, to evaluate the rip rap. Most of this would be done in stages. As we move through, we would hope to apply for additional grants.

Updates to “Anticipated Future Capital Needs” list (v.4.xlsx) that was circulated before tonight’s meeting:

- JHCC ceiling & LED lighting DONE
- Zinsser Softball Field - DONE (ie... no longer a “high” priority as most of work has been completed)
- Rowley Bridge Trail
- Replace Existing Vehicle

Next Steps:

Anjali offered to create a google doc where Commissioners can continue to identify/define criteria and that will serve as a resource that we can enhance and refine as needed.

Joanne will add “Priorities” to the January Commission Meeting Agenda.

Aaron will update the “Anticipated Future Capital Needs” list (referenced above and distributed prior to tonight’s meeting) and will circulate that updated document to Commission before the January meeting.

5.Meeting adjourned.

Next meeting:

January 14, 2021 (Thursday, 8pm)

December Meeting Minutes adopted Jan 13, 2021 (the new date for the January meeting)
Prepared and submitted by A. Reeve