

Board of Trustees
Suffolk County Department of Parks
Recreation and Conservation
Minutes of April 20, 2006 at Deepwells Farm, St. James

BOARD MEMBERS

PRESENT:

Ray	Chairman, Member at Large
Corwin	
Aurelio Colina	Vice Chairman, Town of Southampton
Richard F. White, Jr.	Trustee, Town of East Hampton
John Fritz	Trustee, Town of Babylon
Jeanine Dillon	Member of the Board
Miles Borden	Trustee, Town of Smithtown
Gregory Dawson	Trustee, Town of Islip
Gary Olsen	Trustee, Town of Brookhaven
Terrence Pearsall	Member of the Board
Alexander McKay	Trustee, Town of Huntington
Gil Cardillo	Trustee, Tow of Riverhead

ABSENT:

Vacant	Trustee, Town of Southold
Vacant	Trustee, Town of Shelter Island

PARKS DEPARTMENT:

Ronald F. Foley	Commissioner
Tracey Belone	Deputy Commissioner
Colleen Hofmeister	Contracts Manager
Tom Hroncich	Marketing Specialist
Nick Gibbons	Sr. Environmental Analyst
Richard Martin	Director of Historic Services
Mary Simonsen	Secretary to the Commissioner

GUESTS:

Jennifer Kohn	Assisstant County Attorney
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Janet Longo	Assistant Director of Planning
Thomas Isles	Director of Planning
Lauretta Fischer	Princ. Env. Analyst, Planning Dept.
Greg Moran	Legislator Nowick's Office
Kara Hahn	Presiding Officer Lindsay's Office
Wayne Horsley	Suffolk County Legislator
Tim Gage	Longwood Youth Soccer
Gloria Rocchio	Ward Melville Heritage Org.
Charles Pieroth	Ward Melville Heritage Org.
Tom Kramer	Cramer Consulting Group / Ward Melville Heritage Org.
Charlotte Biblow	Farrell & Fritz, PC on behalf of Ward Melville Heritage Org.

PUBLIC COMMENT PORTION:

Longwood Youth Soccer, Tim Gage - Mr. Gage stated that his organization has presented a proposal to Commissioner Foley to utilize Field D at Cathedral Pines for soccer fields. They have over 1,000 youth and children enrolled and they do not want to have to turn away children from their programs due to lack of adequate space.

He said sports involvement for children and teens develops character, sportsmanship and the ability to work with peers. Students involved in structured sports are better students. Thirteen of the seventeen students on the team Mr. Gage coaches have a 3.5 or higher academic average. Their involvement extends from the time they are young to the time they reach high school graduation.

Commissioner Foley referred to the Minutes from November 17, 2005, where this topic had been discussed among the Trustees. They indicate a proposal to develop a complex of soccer fields in the northernmost open field in Cathedral Pines with perimeter parking around it. A discussion had then ensued among the Trustees regarding the importance of preserving any unused space in that park versus allowing it to be developed into soccer fields. Based on that discussion, he went back to Mr. Gage and members of Longwood Soccer and informed them of the direction of the Trustees' conversation. He invited them to make a presentation to the Board because, in fairness to Mr. Gage, these issues should be discussed with him. The Trustees' concern is preserving the quiet and solitude of the park. The introduction of periodic heavy traffic in an internal road system would not accommodate that concern. There was also the issue of whether the Pine Barrens Commission has regulatory authority of development like this in Cathedral Pines because it is in the core of the Pine Barrens.

Chairman Corwin also discussed at that time the degree of exclusivity that this particular use might have on parkland. It could possibly exclude picnics or other events that physically couldn't take place as a result of infrastructure improvements that might be implemented.

Trustee Fritz also noted that at another previous meeting, the president of the Suffolk County Committee for Camping said his group is opposed to this proposal as it will severely impact the camping community at Cathedral Pines, limiting the number of campsites if soccer fields were put in. He said there is a limited amount of camping available in county parks, but there are soccer fields everywhere. He would oppose using a camping area for a soccer field.

Mr. Gage said the field itself is probably not used 360 days of the year. The Commissioner said that is true of organized events. It is quite often used informally, as campers and other park visitors choose to.

Mr. Gage said a number of years ago his group was approached to use the field because there was a concern that the park was underutilized, they did not approach Cathedral Pines. Everything was in place and nearly approved right before this past election, but then everything seemed to come to a halt.

Commissioner Foley said that is not entirely accurate, this was never brought before the Trustees. We also didn't recognize the controls the Pine Barrens Commission would have over it. We had encouraged further discussion on this but hadn't taken it to any of the regulatory entities that we ultimately would have had to.

Chairman Corwin asked Mr. Gage to describe the improvements his organization would implement.

Mr. Gage said they would turn the dirt road into hard-packed stone; they would put in a well to irrigate the field, and they would do their own cutting and maintenance. They have brought someone in to lay out the fields and only five trees would be cut down. LIPA would tap into an existing pole for electricity. They have set up a budget and would be willing to enter into a ten-year lease. They would seed, mow and irrigate to take care of the property and keep as much of the natural beauty as possible.

Their season would run from April to June, and then September until the first week in November. They are willing to work around regularly-scheduled events such as the Breast Cancer Walk and the Camping Jamboree.

Trustee Borden asked if they have worked with local school districts. It is disturbing to him to see so many unused school fields when there is a large need for field space. Mr. Gage said they have been working very closely with Longwood High School and the schools districts who give them permits, and some of their kids are training at various schools. The school districts have been very cooperative.

Trustee Borden said he does see the advantages of the programs offered by Longwood Soccer, but feels the proximity of soccer fields to campers and the noise involved in soccer games would take away from the semi-wilderness nature that campers are looking for at Cathedral Pines.

Vice Chairman Colina said he agrees with his fellow Trustees, and that all of the Trustees had the same reaction. He isn't convinced that they have really pursued the school districts, the towns and private property that may be leased for this purpose. It also raises the serious issue of alienation of parkland, as such; he is opposed to the proposal.

Trustee McKay said historically such use of parkland was not provided by the county, but by the towns. In a few towns there are joint county/town acquisition programs specifically set up to create sports fields and complexes. There's one in Huntington and the Wedge property further

east. He asked if they had pursued the town and county jointly through the recreational bond issue, to acquire property for this use. They should exhaust all other alternatives before using county parkland. Mr. Gage said Town Supervisor Brian Foley had come to see their operation and will be meeting with him again, as well as with the Town Parks Commissioner.

Chairman Corwin respectfully requested they close this discussion in the interest of time. We are not opposed to soccer fields, but it is a question of placement and all of the issues outlined in the discussion. He would like to see that Longwood Soccer has exhausted all other alternative locations.

Forsythe Meadow - Tom Cramer of Cramer Consulting Group said his company was the environmental planning consultants on this project. The project itself was for the expansion of the Stony Brook Post Office and the creation of the postal center behind the existing shopping center. The project has a long history, which included several lawsuits. After the project was constructed, the courts ruled that the town should have required an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). They did prepare extensive environmental documentation prior to the approval by the town. The courts directed the town to issue a positive declaration at which time they prepared an EIS for something that was already completed. That document was accepted by the town, it was circulated, and there was a public hearing held on it where comments were made regarding the EIS.

They then prepared a Final EIS (FEIS) that addresses the various public hearing comments and other letters that were submitted as part of the SEQRA review process. One of the letters addressed was the letter from the Parks Board of Trustees. The FEIS has been submitted to the Town of Brookhaven; however the town has not accepted the document as complete. The staff would like to include comments on what their inspectors found. In his opinion it is more a political situation than an environmental one.

Trustee McKay asked if the disruption took place between the wall and the fifty-foot buffer, not in the buffer itself. Mr. Cramer said yes and that the buffer is 50 feet only in a few places, in most areas it was between 60-70 feet. And the design of the cultural center has the foundation of the building engineered to fit into the hillside. So minimal disturbance took place immediately adjacent to the cultural center.

B Mr. Cramer showed recent pictures of the new wall and re-vegetated slope. When they did the final grading they immediately hydro-seeded the graded slope to stabilize it quickly. They then planted vegetation that was approved by the Town of Brookhaven. Since that time it has vegetated and stabilized itself and there is no erosion.

Mr. Cramer said at the June 2005 Trustees meeting there were also statements made that the trees in the nature preserve were eroding and falling down. Chairman Corwin said one of the observations made at the time was the potential for undermining some of the vegetation on the edge of the county property line. Mr. Cramer said during the public comment period of that Trustees meeting, there were specific comments made that the nature preserve was essentially falling down the slope and that there were no buffers done. In four years, no trees have fallen because of the grading.

The potential access points to the site include one that comes out on Hollow Road which is not effective due to the slopes. A second, also on Hollow Road, is an approved access point presently being utilized in part by Smoke Run Farm, a horse farm and riding academy that wraps around the preserve. They do however use parts of an open field of the nature preserve for riding; possibly back from when it was owned by Ward Melville.

Mr. Cramer said there were also statements that the location is pristine and there are no invasive

species. However, it is not a pristine, natural site; there are invasive species all through the site. The FEIS shows a list of the invasive species found in the county preserve itself. Most of these were seeded in from joining properties. The FEIS also reports a study done in 1998 showing that the site was disturbed in the past. These were well established long before anything was done when the Ward Melville Heritage Association became involved in 2001.

Trustee Olsen asked if anything considered invasive was planted during construction that is now on the site. Mr. Cramer said no, and has recently gone out to the site to confirm that. He had photos of what the property looked like in 1930; most of the county preserve was cleared at that time for a lumber mill. There was also a great deal of agriculture there. Current aerial photos show a slight differentiation in vegetation and the woods have mostly grown in.

The final issue was the fence. Construction began on the fence, which was a black-chain link fence that was to run along the property line of the county preserve. This was done by Klein and Eversoll in fulfillment of an obligation of the sale of the property to the county. At the time their project was going on, there were hearings on it and there was a stop-work order issued, and it has remained in that state. The posts are in and the chain link is up in part of it. There were comments that it was WMHO installing the fence which is not true. It was being done by the previous owner as part of the contract.

Gloria Rocchio said when they (WMHO) were in negotiations with Klein and Eversoll, they were approached by the county to purchase the land and they had to agree to the sale. During that process they met with the Parks Commissioner at that time and others, and they came up with a diagram of what type of fence and where the fence would be. The method of how the fence would be installed was agreed on, which was with the bobcat machine. But when installation began there were a few people who resented it and the Commissioner ceased the work. It has not been worked on since then, WMHO has not touched it, and that's why it is in its current state.

Mr. Cramer walked the property immediately after this happened, there were no trees cut down and in a few spots the fence even went around them to leave them in place. There was no excavation done except that to put in the holes for the posts. There were also comments made about trees falling down. The FEIS addresses that, there were approximately six trees that had fallen across the fence due to root rotting, and others that were obviously dead for years.

Gloria Rocchio said in summary they were here today because of what one of their Trustees saw on the Parks Trustee website as erroneous information being presented. And based on that misinformation, the letter was written to the Town of Brookhaven.

Trustee McKay, who was Chairman at the time the letter was written, said it was written based on the information we had at the time; there was no intent to misrepresent WMHO. He is not thoroughly convinced that we are misrepresenting anything other than who is responsible for mitigation. There are invasive species, a disturbed boundary, a lighting problem, and the need for restoring and completing the existing fence. The question now is who is responsible now to correct the situation. He asked them to clarify where they stand with the town.

Charlotte Biblow said the FEIS was submitted in December, they are waiting for its approval. They have had contact with the town attorney and the town planning department and have not been told one way or the other when they are going to approve it or how they are going to do it. Mr. Cramer said from what he understands the town is looking to hire an outside consultant to review the document.

As far as the lighting goes, the lights that are there now will be modified to dark sky standards,

as stated in the FEIS. As for weep holes in the wall, those are necessary to release pressure so the water doesn't build up behind the wall, which could cause failure.

Trustee Olsen said he had walked the lower part of the property the previous day and he saw no serious erosion coming down. Based on the elevation change he doesn't think the lighting will be a problem, especially if it is remediated. He said he would be willing to go to the top of the site, possibly with Nick Gibbons and asked how high up the park is from the parking lot. Mr. Cramer said the park is at 76 feet and the parking lot is at 38 ft.

Since the construction was never finished, WMHO offered to work with Parks to complete the fence for the county as well as be responsible for its maintenance.

Chairman Corwin respectfully ended the discussion at this time and opened the floor to the Legislative representatives in attendance if they had anything they wished to discuss.

Legislator Kennedy said he has been to Deepwells Farm and the St. James General Store several times and said the Parks Trustees are doing an excellent job as stewards of these properties. Having the opportunity to attend the meetings, it is good to see the issues and concerns that are vetted. To hear the discussions about public trust and alienation of parklands is an issue that resonates at many levels. One of the issues of alienation in his district of Smithtown is the use of an armory located in parkland, which brings up what the responsibilities are in regards to park properties. From a personal perspective, he said Commissioner Foley does an outstanding job, is very responsive to requests from his office and his staff does a superb job. He at one time worked at the County Executive's office as liaison to CEQ, so he knows the important role that Parks Trustees play with CEQ and determinations associated with park and historic properties.

Legislator Horsley wished to echo Legislator Kennedy's comments and added he worked for State Parks for nineteen (19) years, some of which were with Commissioner Foley. He understands Parks' mission and appreciates what they do.

Greg Moran from Legislator Nowick's office also said he agrees with the Legislator's comments and Legislator Nowick appreciates the efforts of the Trustees, and as Parks Committee Chair, is very interested in what they do as well.

CORRECTIONS TO THE MINUTES OF MARCH 16, 2006:

There were no corrections to the March 16, 2006 Minutes. Motion made by Trustee Fritz, seconded by Trustee White. Voted in favor of unanimously by a vote of 11-0-0.

PLANNING AND REAL ESTATE:

Janet Longo said they are now called the Department of Environment and Energy, Division of Real Property Acquisition and Management. They are going to be closing on the Schmidt property on Monday; it is located adjacent to the Arthur Kunz County Park in Smithtown. It is 5.5 acres.

Lauretta Fischer presented the following acquisitions:

Mud Creek Watershed - The property is located in East Patchogue in the Town of Brookhaven at the eastern branch of the headwaters of Mud Creek. It consists of 12 lots for a total of 2.7 acres owned by three different owners, Richards, Howard and Jerome Norton. It would be acquired under the Multifaceted Land Preservation Program – Open Space Preservation Program. It includes some wetlands in the southern portion and is mostly upland in the headwaters. This would add to recent acquisitions in this area.

Trustee Olsen motioned to approve the acquisition. It was seconded by Vice Chairman Colina and passed unanimously by a vote of 11-0-0.

Orowoc Creek - The parcel is located in the Town of Islip along the Orowoc Creek, north of Sunrise Highway and consists of 0.7 of an acre in an important stream corridor. We are trying to amass holdings along this stream corridor for protection of the streambed and its wetlands. They are state mapped wetlands, which are located mostly on the eastern side of the property. It falls under the old 12-5-E Drinking Water Protection Program. This will also protect the estuary of the Great South Bay.

Trustee Dawson motioned to approve the acquisition. It was seconded by Trustee McKay and passed unanimously by a vote of 11-0-0.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT:

Trap and Skeet is very close to having a signed contract. We have found a very capable operator. Yesterday Commissioner Foley made an informational presentation to the Pine Barrens Commission since this issue had been on their agenda from opponents many times, and updated them on what we plan to do. The plan is to reopen the facility with little or no change to the footprint or usage of the range, other than to eliminate or reorient shooting stations to minimize noise.

Capital Budget - Last year we and we received \$4.6 million. This year the recommendation to the Legislature is \$8 million. The Commissioner has not had a chance to review everything that is funded or not funded, but the overall recommendation is good for the Parks Department. It is a good recommendation that increases historic- preservation funding in future years.

The **golf courses** have been very busy; we haven't had the rainouts we've had in the previous years. They are in good condition; the grass is starting to grow.

The **ticket checker program at Indian Island**, a fiscal oversight program, is up and running to ensure fees are being properly charged and recorded.

The **all-access playground at Lake Ronkonkoma** should be under construction in the next few weeks and the completion date is late June. The firm is JA Enterprises in Bohemia.

Raynor Beach is nearly complete; there is only a punch list of items that need to be finished on the playgrounds, as well as the plumbing in the restrooms. It is opened periodically for youth leagues that have licenses for use of that property. It is then locked up and not in use until all of the safety amenities have been finished.

Regarding the **Bradstock** event that takes place in West Sayville, we have met with the principals and laid out three major issues that have to be resolved before they can hold that event again: One, whoever runs it has to be a legitimate 501 C3 organization. Second, we have insisted that the service of alcohol be under much greater control than it has been in the past. And third, we are working on a way to differentiate between an entrance fee and a donation because what they have been doing in the past is not only in violation of the permit they were issued, but may by some definition constitute park alienation.

Schmidt Property: We are putting an occupant in the house there without going through all the procedures. We will correct the procedural issues at a later time because it is a very nice house; we don't want to lose it to vandalism and the property needs the protection of an onsite presence at all times. We have a Park Police Officer who will be moving in shortly.

Bill Sickles is the recipient of a national lifetime award from the National Association of County Park and Recreation Officials. He is invited to go to Chicago in August to receive the award. The Trustees may want to add some recognition, perhaps at the next meeting as Mr. Sickles is not in attendance today.

Smith Point Pier - There is no new news. The Commissioner will contact Mr. Michael Vischelli at U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to find out the status.

Smith Point Outer Beach - It looks like it will be closed until May 1st. It's a mixed bag; there are some good spots, some bad spots and a lot of piping plover activity, so we have to balance those things out. One indication of the fluidity of the situation is Nick's crew put up the piping plover fencing with four-foot high poles and within a week you could only see the top foot of them. It is very good news that so much sand is coming in. We had DPW build a new dune where a piece of Burma Road had washed out; we had that done quickly and under budget.

The Concerned Citizens of Montauk - The Commissioner said they would like us to do an Environmental Impact Statement on any new campsites created behind the dune because they were not in the Master Plan. That is exactly what we want to happen, we'd rather have them air their troubles with any proposal and resolve them before work has begun or is completed, rather than having to go back afterwards.

OLD BUSINESS/NEW BUSINESS:

Oak Beach County Park - Trustee Fritz said the plans contain the construction of a new fishing pier, which was delayed. Trustee Fritz has asked town officials if the current pier can be used for fishing but has received the same answers he received last year: that the pier is too high above the water, the currents are too strong, etc. People fish from bridges where the currents are much stronger and the bridges higher. Trustee Fritz said however, that they will rent kayaks and canoes in that area. The Town official said that people doing these activities don't want to get hit in the head with a sinker. Trustee Fritz feels the arguments against fishing on the existing pier are frivolous and says the answers he has been given are insulting. Legislator Horlsey submitted a resolution for \$250,000 for a fishing pier. Commissioner Foley said he would make an inquiry into the situation.

The GATR Site - Trustee White said today he submitted the requested paperwork regarding the GATR Site to Commissioner Foley. One of those items is an unsolicited letter from a Councilwoman on the East End Town Board. There is a perception that progress is being bogged down for reasons we do not understand, and since it is a safety issue and he doesn't know how long it will be before it may become a press issue. The Commissioner said hopefully this information satisfies an inquiry from the County Attorney that they needed an answer to before they could progress with the contract. Trustee White feels that there is no new information in the documents...

Third House - The contracts are in place and contractors will begin its historic restoration in the next week or so. It is predicted to be an eight-month project.

Indian Island Golf Course - Vice Chairman Colina said staff at Indian Island have completely cut and stripped away the underbrush and shrubbery along the entire length of the fairway near the 11th hole. It had provided a natural, beautiful screen, now you see a boatyard, storage, and peoples' backyards. This is repeated in several places on the course. Who oversees this work? The Commissioner said the Supervisor at the golf course, and ultimately, Will Maxwell (Park Superintendent) does, but he is not there at all times. We'll take a look at it and report back.

DATE AND LOCATION OF THE NEXT MEETING:

The next Board of Trustees meeting will be held on May 18th at Indian Island or Cedar Beach at 1:00 pm.

The motion to adjourn was made by Vice Chairman Colina and seconded by Trustee Olsen.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Mary Simonsen.