

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
SUFFOLK COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS,  
RECREATION AND CONSERVATION  
MINUTES OF OCTOBER 18, 2012  
INDIAN ISLAND GOLF COURSE  
RIVERHEAD, NEW YORK**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT**

Miles Borden	Chairman, Town of Smithtown
Gilbert Cardillo	Trustee, Town of Riverhead
Kathleen Gooding, Ph.D.	Trustee, Town of Shelter Island
Dawn Hopkins	Vice Chair, Trustee, Town of Brookhaven
Alexander McKay	Trustee, Town of Huntington
Terrence Pearsall	Member of the Board
William B. Sickles	Trustee, Town of Southampton
Richard F. White, Jr.	Trustee, Town of East Hampton

**ABSENT**

Debra Kolyer	Member of the Board
VACANT	Trustee, Town of Babylon
VACANT	Trustee, Town of Islip
VACANT	Trustee, Town of Southold
VACANT	Member at Large

**PARKS DEPARTMENT**

Greg Dawson	Commissioner
Nick Gibbons	Principal Environmental Analyst
Colleen Hofmeister	Principal Contracts Examiner
Terry Maccarrone	Coordinator of Community Based Programs
Barbara Rittman	Senior Clerk Typist

**GUESTS**

Tom Young	County Attorney's Office
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**PUBLIC PORTION**

There were not any members of the public present.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 20, 2012**

**A motion to accept the minutes without any corrections was made by Trustee White and seconded by Trustee McKay. The minutes were unanimously approved by a vote of 8-0-0.**

**COMMISSIONER'S REPORT**

Commissioner Dawson reported that Resolution 1902 was passed to allow our Park Police to receive two ATVs which will be of great assistance with the Pine Barrens Task Force Committee. Lt. Mike Sheppard asked permission to run an ATV Task Force on Sundays in October and will work with Police Departments in the area to confiscate unlawful ATVs.

Legislator Schneiderman's Resolution 1906 allowing for \$60,000 to be used for planning and construction at the Third House was passed and Terry Maccarrone confirmed that the funds should be available.

The Montauk Observatory group went before CEQ on Wednesday and presented their plan for the GATR site. FRES is now involved with the Communications Tower issues at the GATR site.

Commissioner Dawson asked Colleen Hofmeister to give an update on all current RFPs. She reported that the RFP for the restaurant facility at Timber Point was completed with Lessing's being awarded the contract and we are currently negotiating a wide scale \$1 million renovation of the facility. The County approves of the idea conceptually but is also reviewing the feasibility of Lessing's taking over the current Pro Shop for catering purposes and building a new Pro Shop/Cart Barn for the golf pro, whose contract is coming up for renewal soon.

The RFP for West Sayville was completed and the contract has been awarded to Lessings. We are presently reviewing a capital improvement proposal to install pavers behind the deck area at the "19<sup>th</sup> Hole" concession where outdoor wedding ceremonies take place.

The Montauk Stable RFP received four proposals. The county has been very happy with the current licensee who took over for the final year of Rusty Leaver's contract. The new Licensee has done very well operating the facility and financially brought in \$450,000 in revenue over the last year. Trustee White is serving on this committee and will be in attendance for the oral presentations next week.

Colleen has been working on a draft for the RFEI (Request for Expressions of Interest) for an historic structure adaptive re-use concept that Legislator Horsley drafted and had a resolution approved for. The Elwood Schoolhouse and Black Duck Lodge would be appropriate contenders for this purpose and the county will be seeking individuals to come in and renovate these facilities to use either as residential property or to use in a business setting. Trustee Sickles inquired if it would have to be accessible to the public and Colleen confirmed that it would. How accessible it has to be will depend on what they want to use it for.

Legislator Browning has requested an RFEI by way of a resolution for improvements at the Smith Point marina property which is being considered.

Colleen reported that she is also currently working on the implementation of thirty member item grants.

Board Member Pearsall inquired about the Sears Bellows stables request for renovation or possible change to a nature center by a local resident who attended the Public Portion of September's Board meeting. In 2010, the interested resident sent a letter to the Parks Commissioner indicating that they wanted to renovate the stable or possibly turn it into a nature center, but the letter also stated that they did not want to get involved with the technicalities of an RFP because of all the paperwork and requirements. Previously, the County had implemented two RFPs for Sears Bellows stables, which had resulted in no viable proposals. It was determined that both Sears Bellows and Southaven stables require a great deal of capital improvements to be viable. During the Public Portion of the September Board meeting, Commissioner Dawson suggested to the interested parties that they send another letter expressing their interests. To date, nothing has been received.

At Chairman Borden's request, Commissioner Dawson then asked Nick Gibbons to make a presentation on his scope of responsibilities within Suffolk County. Nick's first summer in the Parks Department was in 1997. Prior to that, in 1996 he worked for Parks through the Nature Conservancy. During that time, he met Bill Sickles who helped to bring about his start in the Parks Department in 1997. From 1997 on, for approximately ten years Nick worked independently.

Under Commissioner Ron Foley, a grant program was instituted which was called the Environmental Stewardship Unit. For this unit, the department received ten field personnel and four office personnel to work along with Nick, as well as fifteen seasonal employees. Over the years, the department dwindled down to currently three field personnel and three office staff. His division's role and responsibilities are to determine whether or not a project is regulated by a variety of environmental regulations. The county is subject to county, state and federal laws. Dredging projects along the beaches can take up to a year to acquire the necessary permits before work can begin. These projects are usually a combined effort between the Department of Public Works, the Parks Department and the County Executive's Office.

Nick stated that he reviews policies when they are asked of the department and makes recommendations to the Superintendents about how to implement those policies to conform to the laws and/or make suggestions on being better stewards of the land that we own. We own approximately 46,000 acres of property and the vast majority of those acres are passive park properties. West Hills, Blydenburgh and Cedar Point Parks are all approximately 600 to 1,000 acres and we have eight to ten original parks that date from the late 1960s to early 1970s. We have property in all of the ten towns and they range from a few hundred square feet to many acres. Nick spends much of his time at the passive parks and also handles issues and complaints that arise from neighbors living next to the parcels. When a complaint is made, Nick's unit figures out who owns the parcel. If the parcel is county-owned, they research how we came to own it because how we acquired it has a lot to do with what we can or cannot do on the property. When we acquire new properties, Nick works on developing a conceptual plan for recreational uses and then must find the funds to create a master plan. He and others develop a scope of work and decide what is most appropriate to do with the property and what would be allowed or not allowed. For example, at North Fork the southern half of the land is used for active recreation and the northern half is used for passive recreation. The amount of money available for each type of recreation is a major consideration and there is much that goes into the acquisitions.

Any action that the Parks Department takes has to go through the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) which is managed locally by the CEQ (Council on Environmental Quality). The CEQ is a county board of volunteers who oversee compliance with acts or state law. Nick brings all the information to the CEQ to get their approval or disapproval and he works with them to modify some projects that don't comply. A recent example of that was the campground at Meschutt which was not acceptable to the CEQ. They had some recommendations which were brought back to the department for review and modification. Trustee McKay inquired about who makes the final determination on the recommendations. Nick explained that the CEQ is advisory to the Legislature and the Legislature very rarely decides going against the CEQ's recommendations. We will be bringing the Montauk Observatory plans to the CEQ, we brought the GATR site and the Fritz Memorial Pier plans to the CEQ and just about every project or campground improvement goes to the CEQ first for review and approval.

Nick continued with a description of the piping plover program. The department hires twelve to fifteen people every season, running from April through August. The birds start arriving in March so the department goes out at the end of February to begin preparing for the upcoming season to make sure we are up with the federal guidelines. We have permission to hire outside of the county for this so that we get the appropriate personnel for an eastern and western crew covering sixteen sites. Because of the piping plover program, the department is allowed to continue its beach buggy access at these sites. We sell approximately eleven thousand beach buggy permits, which are a significant source of revenue for the department. The piping plover program wouldn't be nearly as popular if we didn't have a beach to drive on and our program ensures that we have the most beach access possible while still being in compliance with the federal guidelines.

Nick often serves as a liaison with the stewardship partners and tenants such as the Audubon Chapters, the Long Island Greenbelt Trail Conference, Ducks Unlimited, Long Island Beach Buggy Association, the Pine Barrens Commission, mountain biking groups and other groups that have specific recreational interests. He coordinates with the Superintendents of these parks and the Commissioner for any policy determinations.

We own properties jointly with almost all of the ten towns. From a county financial standpoint, it has the ability to leverage its acquisition dollars to go further and purchase more properties when the towns contribute. From an operations standpoint, it is often a problem. Each town has a different expectation of what the county's involvement is. Many times, the towns view is to share on the cost and then they expect to take over and control all or much of the management. Nick works with the towns to come up with mutually agreeable management plans and policy decisions for what can and cannot be done with the properties, including making sure they are open to all county residents and not just the individual town residents where the properties are located. Trustee Borden inquired about the Huntington town soccer fields and softball fields near the VA Hospital. The town went forward with an active recreation development so Nick had some say in how it was developed because they had to utilize some additional spaces that weren't originally contemplated. Nick and Colleen both work with the towns to come up with site plans that everyone agrees with. The town secures the funds to get the property developed and the county oversees that it is utilized according to the plans.

Nick serves as the Coordinator for the Sporting Advisory Council. John Fritz was the Chairman for many years and Bill Sickles was the liaison for the department prior to his retirement. There are currently eight members who meet quarterly to make recommendations to the department for additional active recreational facilities. They are a coordinating organization whose focus is mainly fishing access, beach access, paddling, hiking and hunting interests. Nick is also responsible for the hunting programs in the department, including a three month archery season which begins October 1<sup>st</sup> and a January shotgun season. It is a four month season and currently includes about twenty parks. Trustee Borden commented that last year the largest buck ever taken was in Suffolk County, and Nick added that it was most likely in the Town of Southold.

Nick stated that he has made it a point to identify and document each parcel that the county has. The 46,000 acres manifest themselves in thousands of individual parcels and with each one the county keeps additional paperwork such as the deed and how and why we came to acquire the property. Trustee McKay asked if there is a data base of county properties and Nick stated that there is an official master map but they don't distinguish between property development rights, owned land and acquisitions that the county owns outright. Farm land is combined in with the park land. The county owns 10,000 acres of farm development rights. The county had property that became parks property before the Parks Department was created. The first two parks were Vanderbilt (1950) and Smith Point (1952), predating the Parks Department by eighteen years. Suffolk County Parks owns more property than at least twelve states and has more county park land than any county in the United States.

## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Trustee Borden thanked Nick for his presentation. Commissioner Dawson stated that Nick has shared much of his knowledge about our County Parks and parcels with him and it is a great help in his transition.

Commissioner Dawson commented that Bruce Elias, manager of the restaurant at Indian Island Golf Course, did a very nice job with the club house and stone work on the outside of the building at Indian Island.

Chairman Borden inquired about the status of our proposed budget. Board Member Pearsall reported that he doesn't think that there will be many changes made to it.

## **ROUND TABLE**

Trustee Sickles stated that he met a former trustee from Southold, Mike Domino, who wanted to be remembered to the Board. Bill commented that he is very sorry to hear that Tom Malanga will be leaving the Parks Department and wondered where that will leave the Parks Foundation. He also commented that Nick Gibbons is one of the Parks Department's shining stars, he is a great asset and we are very lucky to have him as

an employee. Nick has absorbed many responsibilities over the years and his job description has grown immensely as employees have left and have not been replaced.

Trustee Cardillo commended the nice renovation job done at Indian Island.

Trustee Hopkins stated that she was very appreciative of Nick's presentation.

Trustee McKay reported that there is an upcoming meeting on the Fuchs property in Huntington to discuss the designs for the trails and signs, and he hopes that Nick will be able to attend the meeting.

The next Board of Trustees meeting is scheduled for November 15, 2012 at Timber Point Golf Course, Great River, New York.

**A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Trustee White and seconded by Trustee McKay. The motion was unanimously approved by a vote of 8-0-0.**