

## **Burlington Johnnycake Mountain Park Advisory Commission**

### **Minutes**

**March 1, 2021**

- **Call to order:**

Meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm.

Commissioners present: Tricia Twomey, Jerry Burns, Joan Mack, Mark Moriarty, Craig Battisto, Robert Dunn, Elizabeth Delano, Christie Dockman, and Karen Geitz

- **Minutes of February Meeting:**

Christie made a motion to accept the minutes from the February 22, 2021 meeting. Joan seconded it and all approved.

- **One Good Thing:**

Committee Members (CM) all shared one good thing that happened to them during the past week. The goal with this activity is for the CM to get to know each other better.

- **Mission Statement:**

CM sent their ideas for a mission statement to Robert, Mark and Joan. Joan and Robert created a Mission Statement and the CM reviewed it and made revisions. Here is the Mission Statement the CM devised:

*To create a feasible and visionary short and long term master plan for the purchased property that provides the multi-generational community of Burlington with opportunities for active and passive recreation.*

*Our recommendations will be based upon considerations from our community, will support documented community needs, will retain the unique, farm-like character and natural landscape of the property and will be sensitive to the potential impact to the surrounding neighborhoods.*

**We endorse the following values:**

*Open-mindedness*

*Team unity*

*Respect for one another*

*Commitment to a positive outcome*

CM decided to take the week to review the MS and discuss it again at the March 8<sup>th</sup> meeting.

- **Places and Parks to Draw Inspiration From:**

Mark described Winding Trails and how its design integrated active and passive recreation within a natural setting. CM may want to go and visit different places from which to draw ideas. Mark also mentioned Sessions Woods.

Robert said that the key is how to plan the parking. It can't be all in one place because of the visual effect. It has to be in smaller pockets for access to different areas of the park.

Karen sent a list of possible parks from which to take inspiration. She looked at different elements on the Master Plan and found parks in Hamden and Windsor that included animal farms, ponds, pavilions and different accesses.

Joan liked the idea of some of the CM going out to visit places. Her neighbor recommended that each CM should do a vision board for the park as to what should be on the property.

Liz thought that the CM should get the results from the survey and create a vision board based upon what the community wants.

Mark suggested that we have a landscape architect give the CM a crash course about landscape design. CM can visit places after the new survey is done.

Craig saw from the survey that the Music Festival was important to the community and looked for outdoor performance venues. He suggested Tanglewood for its open space feel. He also mentioned Westmore Park in West Hartford and Auer Farm in Bloomfield as examples of farm parks.

- **Past Resident Survey Review**

Robert had looked at the survey that residents completed in 2017 and made some observations. Almost 600 surveys were returned and statistically that's a good number. It was email based. The majority of people who completed the survey were in the 30-49 years old group with the second group being 30% who were 50 or older. Facility usage in town was pretty balanced with active recreation at 65% and passive recreation at 59%. Current usage is mostly passive except for soccer. As far as unmet/undeveloped needs the town has high participation in sports. Kids in town play multiple sports.

What the community would like to see at JMP is mostly passive recreation, but also lacrosse and soccer fields are necessary. 75% of Townspeople are willing to pay additional taxes.

Robert concluded that the community wanted passive recreation overwhelmingly at JMP. The survey seemed to represent what the community is, but it might be worthwhile to get an updated survey.

Joan looked at comments from past Board of Selectmen meeting minutes. Some people said that they have small children and are more interested in having passive recreation. They want their children to be able to run around in the open fields. People don't object to a sports field, just so long it blends in with the setting.

Karen noted that in 2017 the Park wasn't open to the public. It still had electric fences and animals. The park was opened for public access in the spring of 2020. In the 2017 survey one question was have you visited the park. CM should ask the question in the new survey to see what the results are.

Mark said that CM don't need to use the same survey. He thanked Robert and Joan for a good summary. Robert added that 44% of the respondents said they had been to JMP.

Robert wanted to know how long people had to respond. Tricia said it was one month, but BSC collected the data and she didn't know how fast the results came in. Robert noted that 90% of Burlington households have Internet so he felt better about doing the survey by email. Tricia also said it's easier to collect and scrutinize data via email. Joan asked if there was a cost to do the survey. It was included in the BSC price. Tricia said that survey monkey allows you to tabulate results and adjust the data. Mark wanted to know if BSC took specific uses from the data and put them in the plan. Tricia said yes. Mark added that this survey and the results will be used for park programs. Robert said we should do another survey and find out if people's perspective has changed. CM agreed that they want an update on the survey and what the community is feeling.

Christie said that the town voted in the 2016 referendum and the CM must uphold the language of the referendum because it was a public vote. Yes, let's find out if the public's opinion has changed on options for the park, but the design must be aligned with the referendum. Tricia noted that no particular fields were mentioned in the referendum. She and Ted Schafer did a presentation to the town based upon the needs for fields. A postcard with a map of fields at the park was sent to everyone. We need to acknowledge a field and the data shows it is lacrosse. CM asked if there was an explanatory text for the referendum. CM had questions about how to interpret it. Tricia felt that if the CM doesn't put in a field, the Town will need a new referendum and a full day vote. No fields is not an option. Jerry questioned the wording of the referendum. He gave an example that was clearer. .... For athletic fields and other municipal purposes. Robert concluded with we have to be true to the vote. We have to factor in the true needs of the town in addition to what people want. CM will have to propose a field and get the money for it.

- **Conceptual Design:**

Mark stated that the CM are not at the point where we can discuss this.

- **Programming and Goals:**

Mark noted that CM have been talking about this with the information about the survey.

- **Next steps:**

Mark said the next survey will be the most critical before we do programming and design.

Tricia said the next survey can be done by the Town. CM will need to go over the questions from the last survey. The new results will come back to Tricia. Tricia added that the CM will have to decide how they want the questions set up and what types of questions to use.

Mark said that it's important to have a landscape architect help the CM to do a design. The Commission should start to take steps to get a landscape architect and find out what the budget is from the BOS. CM need to plan the scope of the project and the different phases of it. Christie asked if the town is still paying BSC. Tricia answered that the Town stopped using BSC and that the Commission would have to ask the BOS what do we want to use for services.

Mark brought up the existing structures on the property and asked if they need to be preserved.

Christie asked if any structural studies had been done on the buildings. What is the safety of those buildings? What needs to be repaired or replaced?

Tricia said that Barns B and C have good structure. They had talked about taking down Barn A. The structural engineer had evaluated the buildings.

Craig noted that the Town will have to hire a professional so the CM will need to start the process by writing an RFP (Request for Proposal). CM will define the park program with survey results and give it to the landscape architect. The CM have to be proactive to hire a professional and can do it while CM set up the park programming.

Mark said that CM can make a parallel path for survey and design. Mark and Craig can work on the RFP and the scope of the plan.

Joan talked about Dwight Harris, the previous owner of the property. He has offered his services to the Commission. He knows the property well and has expertise. There might be a cost savings. Is there a vehicle to use Dwight on this design?

Liz saw this as a conflict of interest since Dwight sold the Town the land. The people we hire will walk the land. Craig thought that we should invite Dwight to work with the design and the landscape architect in a working session. Mark added that CM can have consultant set up the initial program and then have Dwight add his input. You never ignore someone's expertise, but it's all about the community. Craig added that we can engage a consultant and use Dwight to help us to know the property.

Christie said that Dwight has great institutional knowledge. We need to define where we need his help and opinion. We don't want the company to be swayed by one person. It's important for the company to take direction from the Commission.

- **Public Comment:**

Dwight Harris, Charolais Way.

Dwight noted that it's not a conflict of interest to have him help with the project because he's not making a profit. He'd like to see the CM take a crack at design on their own in order to move the process along faster and then have the landscape architect do it. When Dwight subdivided the land, he gave the Town a lot of data about test holes and perc tests and he doesn't know where it is now. He will wait to speak about the design until the plan is presented at Planning and Zoning. He said that the Commission might want to have a more open mind for the people who want to participate and be constructive. After hearing the two ladies talk, he doesn't even want to get involved. You really have a partner in me as a neighbor. My property

complements your property. If you have an agricultural aspect to it, I will keep it the same. If you don't care, I won't farm anymore. He thought that's what the Commission wanted. He has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars up there for the Town. He started the festival up there. He stated that if you are going to question my integrity, I don't want anything to do with the Commission. I'll deal with it in Planning and Zoning. I'm disappointed. This Commission is much better than what we had.

Robert acknowledged that Dwight has been very good to the Town and that this process can't drag out forever. It has to be put in the BOS' hands soon. We are trying to do our best.

Dwight said that conflicts attack his integrity. He noted that everybody agrees on certain things and that the CM can execute certain aspects of the plan. He suggested doing a small segment of the property. He offered his help to the Commission.

Richard Miller, Cricket Lane.

Chairman of Planning and Zoning. P and Z requires that you submit an overall subdivision plan with the feasibility of the entire parcel. After the Town does a lacrosse field and hiking trails, do the rest of the property as a feasibility so it doesn't block off other options for the future. He wants all CM to get a 3 by 4 topographical map to start to block in a lacrosse field and where it is feasible. He mentioned that the Conservation Commission and the BLT devised a list of items to include in the park and wondered if the CM had been sent the list. Richard was also concerned about parking lot placement. He doesn't want the lots to be hidden, but where they can be policed to avoid mischief.

He added that certain people have been very good for the Town. They are real asset and the CM may want to talk to them. The more input the CM gets, the better.

Alison Powell, 5 Warren Glen

She endorsed Dwight. He would like to create a legacy for the town to enjoy. She'd like to know how much the Town spent on BSC. The CM should look at a phase II, the recent plan the Town designed, and see what the Town can do with a multipurpose field for lacrosse, replace some of the buildings and continue the work that Karen and her group have done. It's a multiyear plan. As a taxpayer, she was not happy with what BSC did and the money the town spent on that plan. The CM are a great group of people.

Eric Mayes, 36 Mountain Briar.

He's on the Park and Rec Commission and is the President of the Burlington Junior Soccer Association. He is excited to listen in. Eric wanted to talk about current conflicts with the field schedule. Lacrosse and softball run out of practice nights at Malerbo. Lacrosse needs a field and a multipurpose practice field.

Paul Stawarz, 37 Wood Haven Dr.

Parks and Rec Chairperson. He has been with the project since its inception. The reason why the property was purchased was due to the identified need for fields. They are four items for priority: a lacrosse field, football field, 90' baseball diamond and a dedicated softball field. Sports organizations have pleaded for more fields and time for practice. From the survey, passive recreation rang out loud and clear at the top. But, keep in mind that lacrosse had 99 people participate in the survey. The program has 150 kids so that means that 60-70% voted on

survey. Paul wants the CM to keep in mind what minority or smaller groups of survey respondents needs as far as active recreation sports programs.

Paul would like to exclude all nonresidents (11%) from the survey. Also, one-third of the respondents were from the Johnnycake area and Paul would like the Commission to keep that in mind. The survey also showed that two-thirds of the respondents expressed that it's important to consider all ages and all activities there.

Robert said someone made a good recommendation that we create an email account for the Commission. Residents can pose questions to CM. This will allow more people to participate and give the CM time to prepare responses.

Tricia can set up the email with IT.

Mark agreed and said that we should use every aspect of social media to connect with people.

Paul Stawarz said it might be worthwhile to talk to sports organization heads to allow the CM to hear their ideas and concerns.

Mark agreed and said that CM want to do their due diligence to talk to them. He also wants to see the data on field use to figure out what's justifiable. Fields can be very costly. The Commission needs to consider everything.

**Motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:09.**

Joan made the motion, Karen seconded it and all voted in favor.

Minutes were respectfully submitted by,  
Karen Geitz  
March 7, 2021