

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

### **Minutes**

**March 8, 2021**

- **Call to order:**

Meeting was called to order at 7:10 pm.

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

- **Minutes of March 1, 2021 Meeting:**

Joan made a motion to accept the minutes from the March 1, 2021 meeting. Liz 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.

- **Farm Visit on Saturday, March 6, 2021:** (recording starts at 4:22)

Robert and Mark went to the farm and invited other Commission Members to attend. A quorum of CM showed up. Mark admitted it was a blunder on his part that the tour should have been noticed as a formal meeting.

Robert noted that CM are all very passionate about this issue. He said that it's very important to have a sense of team and camaraderie with this group. Robert noted that at the Saturday meeting he responded to someone in a way that was too direct. He realizes that CM are trying to do our best and that he has to watch himself and how he communicates. He wants to be sure that everyone feels really good about what he/she is doing.

Mark noted that CM want the same thing. It seems that we're talking a lot about athletic fields, but they are the most complicated to place. Once the CM figure out where to put the field(s), we can program for passive recreation.

- **Mission Statement:** (Recording starts at 7:30)

The Commission is going to tweak the Mission Statement. Mark appreciated the thought everyone has given to this. This is the March 1<sup>st</sup> version of the Mission Statement:

*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*

Liz sent in comments and her perception of the very last part of the MS where it says the CM will “be sensitive to the potential impact to the surrounding neighborhoods.” Liz said that it may be saying that the CM will be slanted toward that area. We haven’t said anything about being sensitive to the fact that we need a field, hiking trails, nice gardens, and a picnic area. Liz stated it’s important that we’re sensitive to the neighborhood. All of us are thinking that no matter what. To say that brings us down a path. Why aren’t we being sensitive to other issues?

Mark asked Liz to read what she came up with.

This is Liz’ version:

*Our recommendations shall be based upon considerations from our community and documented community needs. Where possible retain the unique, farm-like character and natural landscape of the property.*

Liz went on to describe another change she made: *Based upon considerations for our community and documented community needs, attention to retaining the unique farm-like character and natural landscape of the property where possible will be considered.*

Liz wanted to keep the “unique farm-like character of the property.

Joan said that a number of people said that CM need to be sensitive to the neighbors because it’s in their backyard. Some people want it expressly stated in the MS. Joan noted that even if we all agree on it. Joan added that she would like it to stay and change some verbiage about the neighborhood. It’s important to be careful and cautious. The whole idea is to create a positive outcome for the entire community.

Liz asked about stating this in the MS that we’re not going to be able to please everyone. If we state that are we going down the rabbit hole? Someone could say that in your MS you said that you were going to consider the neighborhood and you didn’t. Liz explained that she was playing the devil’s advocate and that we’re doing the right thing.

Mark reminded CM that the statement is for us. If the CM feel that they’re considerate of the neighborhood, the neighborhood may not feel the same way. It’s the CM’s statement and we have to answer to ourselves. It may also have a little bit different meaning to each CM.

Craig and Karen said to leave in the statement about the neighborhood.

Mark added that retaining the farm-like character of the property doesn't mean that we cannot touch or change that property. It doesn't mean that we can't put in a playscape, a dog park or disk golf even though they are not something you'd see at a farm.

Karen suggested using the phrase "will strive" to retain the unique farm-like character.

Robert added that we need guidelines, but to not handcuff ourselves. It can be done in a way to make the neighborhood feel comfortable. It will be a group decision. The CM will decide what we recommend and the BOS will decide.

Liz appreciated everyone listening to her view.

Karen offered a change: take out the word "sensitive" and add in will be "aware" of the potential impact to the neighborhood.

Tricia thought this version allows us to be more open to things.

Joan agreed and said that it gives CM latitude and longitude so you can move within the MS. It captured the essence of what we want to achieve.

Robert made the motion to adopt the MS as drafted. Craig seconded it and all approved.

**Final Mission Statement:**

*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 **strive** to retain the unique, farm-like character and natural landscape of the property and will **be aware of** 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*

- **Past Resident Survey Review (Recording starts at 19:25):**

Mark went through the old survey and noted that 67% of those who answered had kids under 18. The old survey contains lots of information. The CM can use this information to plan programming for the park.

Craig noted there are repeating themes. For example, a pool. There are layers of thought we can glean from the survey.

- **New Resident Survey (21:07):**

Robert thanked CM for their feedback.

Tricia stated that the survey started with Question 2, not 1. Robert said that CM were going over feedback and the questions and how important it is to get this survey out ASAP.

Question 3 about the respondents being a resident or nonresident showed that 11 people or 11% of the respondents were nonresidents. Robert wondered if they were Burlington residents who moved out of town.

Tricia said the people from out of town received the link for the survey. She added that we can alleviate the responses from the people that are not from Burlington.

Q4- How many people live in your household? Suggestion was to clean up the responses because they were 1-2 and 2-5 people. There was an overlap.

Q6 How would you like to be informed about recreational events and opportunities within the Town of Burlington?

CM asked if we need this question. Joan said that it is not relevant. Tricia stated that the results to this question are nice for her department, but we don't need it on the survey. At the time (of the first survey) it was a fresh topic because it was about a new piece of land.

**Q7** How often do you or a member of your household use Burlington active recreation facilities? (Athletic fields, courts and playground areas are considered active recreation.)  
There was a comment. CM don't need to do anything with this question.

Q9 Which recreational activities do you or a member of your household participate in within the Town of Burlington? Check all that apply.

One comment overwhelmingly made was to add mountain biking. Do we want to include dog walking? We can add them as a description. It gives people more choices. In the past survey, it gave you the ability to write in options.

Q10 What recreational opportunities do you feel are currently unmet, or undeveloped within the Town of Burlington? Check all that apply. **(27:50)**

Robert discussed the concert venue or Music Fest option. Concert venue can mean many different things. It's appropriate for people to have options. Do you want it one time a year or more than once? We need to know what people are thinking.

Joan agreed and said that CM wouldn't know what they wanted. She suggested "Would you attend the Annual JM Fest if it was held on that property? Yes or No. What other types of events would you like to see? Mark described what they do at Winding Trails. They have an acoustic music series. Robert suggested questions: do you support an outdoor music venue? What frequency of events? What size crowds are you comfortable with? People may or may not want that every week. Tricia stated that the size question may be difficult due to COVID. We can describe it as a large outdoor concert venue. Mark said that you can break it down to weekly and/or small concerts. Robert said that he will redraft it and send it out for feedback.

Q11 Do you or a member of your household participate in any of the following organized sports programs? Check all that apply. CM wanted to remove Town from all adult sports and add youth basketball.

Q12 How often do you or members of your household use the following types of facilities?

Robert said that we've asked people what you want. What do you like to do? Now we're asking how much do you use the facilities? Is that going to weigh in to what we do or what they say they want? Craig added that we have to prioritize which function is going to be the most valuable to the community. Do we use one thing once a year that's probably less valuable than something used 20 times a year? Robert said to leave it in there. Leave Mountain biking vs rails to trails biking. Robert stated that we'll add one more line to include mountain biking.

Q13 Please rank each Town recreation objective below in order of importance.  
The feedback theme is do we need this at this point. It's related to other facilities.

Q14 Please rank each Town recreation facility below in order of your perception of facility conditions.

Mark said this information is very important. When we're planning the park, it has to be something we can maintain. We can narrow the question down to town owned fields. We could put the answers towards specific parks.

Karen asked what is the purpose of Q13 is in regards to what we're doing. Robert said it could be an expectation, ongoing costs. Tricia said if people feel we're doing a poor job maintaining the current parks, how can we maintain another? Liz asked do we want to keep what's pertinent to JMP specifically. Karen said that we can make the survey shorter for people to look at. Joan added that it's distracting to look at other facilities. She thinks that Q14 is unrelated to what we're doing. Tricia stated that it's nice data, but if we want to hone in on JMP, you can get rid of it. Mark felt it's important to have something about maintenance on Malerbo or Nassahegan. Can you maintain what you build? Mark said the results of the survey are to help CM determine programming at the park. Decided to throw out 13 and 14. Craig offered that we can address maintenance when we get the design.

Q15 Have you ever been to Johnnycake Mountain Farm?

Karen's sample question: have you been to JMP since it opened in the fall of 2020? How frequently do you visit the park? Give options. What activities do you do at the park? What activities would you like to do? Christie asked if people knew the park was open. Karen said people use it for pick-up games, dog walking. But, if you're not from the area, you don't see it. Mark noted that 26% of the survey respondents haven't been there. Decided to leave the question. Change the word Farm to Park.

Q16 What recreational facilities would you like to see developed at JMP? Check all that apply. Add in a few more items. Want to see a clarification on community farming and community gardens. Community farming can be small animal farm and community gardens are plots for vegetable gardens.

Q17 How important do you think it will be that JMP is designed for all age groups, abilities and activities?

Do we need this question because we address it in our Mission Statement?

Q18 Are you concerned about the use of pesticides or herbicides for the maintenance of turf grass on park fields?

There is an even split between concerned and not concerned on the past survey. Take the question out.

Q19 Do you feel that the Town of Burlington is currently investing enough resources into parks, open spaces and athletic fields?

Is this question relevant to JMP? Take it out.

Q20 Are you willing to pay additional taxes for additional recreational facilities in town? If so, how much? Imperative to have a barometer on this with dollar amounts. Since we don't have a budget, it's how difficult to figure out how much we need. Dollar amounts let us know how much people are willing to pay. Would you be willing to pay additional taxes for meaningful improvement on JMP? Yes or No. Also discussed the idea of recreational facilities. Recreational refers to what you enjoy doing when you're not working. Give the definition of recreational in the question. Should do it location specific.

Back to Q15. Have you been to JMP in the past year? Since the park opened in the fall of 2020, have you visited the park? There were activities like the Spooktacular even though the park wasn't wide open. Approximately how frequently do you visit the Park?

CM look at other comments. Need to have a community center up there. How would you add it to the survey? How do we put it in the programming if it's not in the survey? How important is it that we have some sort of community structure up at JMP? You can define it. Yes or no. There's not a lot of meeting space in town, especially indoor space. Can add it to Q10 as an indoor community center. Open air picnic pavilion. Can be added to Q16 as well.

Very important to get this survey out ASAP. Tricia said that the first survey was out for six weeks. The survey link was distributed at the Town meetings, Park and Rec, school system, youth sports and neighborhoods. Have to put it out on social media. We can find out if we can send it out to the Eversource list, but not everyone signed up for it. How do we know if we're hitting older people? Older residents may not have email. We may need to send out a postcard. Younger people may not be able to afford Wi-Fi. Can make request for postcard and mailing to BOS. If people need help to fill out the survey, P and R/Senior Center can help them to fill in the survey. Postcard can also have an educational component about the park design and how to fill it out if they don't have access to a computer. We need to send the postcard to everyone. What is the cost? CM decided that Robert would make changes on the survey, send it to CM for feedback and next week we would make a motion on it.

CM discussed having a social media page. Joan talked about JM neighbors have a page and Burlington Chatter. Social media gives people updates. Tricia said that P and R is setting up a page for better communication. Christie advised CM not to get sucked into social media, not to engage in conversations. P and R opened an Instagram page and they're looking at Facebook. P and R won't answer direct questions, but will send them info on how to get to a meeting. Maybe CM can use the P and R Facebook page? Mark thought that was the best way to go and CM agreed.

- **Tour of the Farm (1:34):**

Will be useful when we get into programming. Last weekend's visit was useful and important to have property in front of us for programming.

Craig said that in the spirit of team building, we meet at the site and have Karen give us a tour. Nice to meet each other physically. Don't need to wait. Beneficial to see it sooner than later. Mark suggested putting a date on the calendar. Tricia suggested we coordinate it off line and look at their calendar. Be a formal meeting with agenda and minutes.

- **Park Programming and Goals (1:37):**

Mark said with the next survey results we can do this. Tricia put field assessment data from 2018 in our shared folder. The data is still relevant. Dealt with EEE virus and COVID in previous years. Lacrosse will present its data at March 22 meeting.

Phil Barlow from True Design teaches Landscape Architecture at UCONN and will give CM a brief presentation on March 15<sup>th</sup> about art design. Mark will also discuss landscape architecture procurement with BOS.

Craig stated the importance of knowing what the conceptual budget is. If we don't talk about money, we may have great ideas, but not enough money allocated to carry them out. The Master Plan will have phases and the first phase project can get something built. Budget plays a huge role in the programming. Mark will do his best to get clarification on the budget which will really speak to phases, especially the first phase.

Craig wanted to know what lessons we learned from the first design process. Can Tricia give us some ideas from last time at the next meeting?

- **Public Comment (1:44)**

Bill Parente, 50 Stagecoach Rd.

You have a budget in a reserve account. Mark-\$740,000. You need to find out what funds are available to you now. Postcard mailing to the whole town costs between \$900-1100.

Joe Prospere, Claire Hill Rd. Slides

Joe made comments about the survey:

Q12 Lacrosse/field hockey. One doesn't currently exist. Thus results may be unrepresentative of use in Burlington unless you add this data to soccer. Joe works in big data during the day.

Q21 Has anyone done a crosstab for future spending tied to age ranges? Seniors may not have as much of a disposable income. May not be able to pay for maintenance.

Q How often do you or a member of your household use active recreation facilities outside of Burlington? You may want to differentiate it outside a sport or for personal use.

Q16 Becomes 16a What are your top three amenities that you would like to see at the park now?  
Dog Park

Small outdoor Music Venue (10-75 people, etc.)

Q16B What are your top five features that you would like to have in the park within the next five to seven years?

Postcard info. Joe said that Bill was correct with his cost figure. Multiple online services available. Send them a file with the postcard the way you want it and the mailing list. The company will print it and mail it. 500 cards double-sided cost is \$160.

Lastly your statement about being sensitive/aware of the Johnnycake Mt. neighborhoods. No matter how you put that, it comes across as class discrimination. Because I don't earn enough to live in your neighborhood, I don't matter as much. He works in diversity and inclusion through his business. Since he lives on Claire Hill Rd., lower income housing. Since I can't afford a house in Johnnycake then I'm less important than the people who live in the neighborhood. Urge you to scratch that. My comments about Johnnycake are less important because I live far away. Mark said the intent is to talk about JM because the park is in that neighborhood, but it could be any neighborhood where the park is located. Jos said how would you delineate the neighborhood? They have considerable wealth in comparison to him.

JP Parente

Gave CM a warning about the survey. Get a second set of eyes on the survey. Somebody may pick it apart. He's on Planning and Zoning. P and Z has a Facebook page that's open to the community. P and Z gives no replies to comments. Please come to the meeting. We link to our meeting notice, simple, easy and no trouble. Robert wanted to know if he saw any bombshells in the survey. JP doesn't see a problem, but someone may pick it apart to see validity. JP suggested that the CM keep questions to a reasonable amount. 15-20.

Richard Miller

Noted that he's not making comments as Chairman of Planning and Zoning, they are his own opinions and suggestions.

For the Farm Tour CM should send out a procedural notice and invite the public.

Survey results. Hope that CM incorporate aesthetic possibilities: wildflower field, variety of trees, educational plaques, curved roads and some of Olmstead's ideas. Buildings on the property are suboptimal aesthetically. The flat land for buildings may be used as fields. What are the dimensions of the fields we need? BOS approved \$300-500 for design architect. Take the map and have landscape architect put fields on the map. Consider ideas from out of towners and may get good ideas.

Jennifer Sirko, South Rd.

March 5<sup>th</sup> on Burlington Chatter, there were 140 comments about JMP. People wanted to know if anyone knew what the Commission is planning. Good place for the Commission to start and see what the public wants. People won't be as vocal at this meeting. More willing to write a comment on Facebook, but not willing to talk at a meeting. CM should try to get more people to participate.

Jennifer Thompson, 7 Cranberry Lane

She is president of BYLA. Pleasantly pleased to hear LAX mentioned. HS LAX coach will talk to CM in two weeks. It's important to find useable field space. Used for eight weeks by LAX and then whoever else want to use it, can. No place to store their equipment. BYLA is a feeder program for the HS. In Burlington Chatter, there was concern about traffic, but one game is never going to create traffic. Can't hold a tournament there with just one field.

Paul Stawarz

Nice job on the survey. CM should look at Needs Assessment to find out what organizations need and when. I'm for LAX going up there. NA needs to be looked at in conjunction with the survey results. Organizational heads should meet with CM to explain their needs and uses. Because of COVID, everything is skewed. Soccer is up significantly. Interests have changed because of COVID. Trying to rebuild the interest in sports. 11% of the survey respondents were out of towners and he wants their responses to be eliminated.

- **Meeting adjourned at 9:22.**

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

Minutes respectfully submitted by  
Karen Geitz  
March 14, 2021