

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

### **Minutes**

**March 15, 2021**

- **Call to order:**

Meeting was called to order at 7:01 pm.

Commissioners present: Tricia Twomey, Joan Mack, Mark Moriarty, Craig Battisto, Robert Dunn, Elizabeth Delano, Christie Dockman (7:35 arrival) and Karen Geitz. Jerry Burns resigned.

- **Favorite Place within 100 miles:**

Committee Members (CM) all shared information about a favorite place within 100 miles. The goal with this activity is for the CM to get to know each other better.

- **Minutes of March 8, 2021 Meeting:**

Robert made a motion to accept the minutes from the March 8, 2021 meeting. Joan seconded it and all approved.

- **Motion to add Mission Statement to Agenda:**

Commission Members' Final Mission Statement was sent to Town Attorney and he suggested some changes. Motion made by Joan. Liz seconded it and all voted in favor.

- **Phil Barlow's Presentation on Fredrick Olmsted and Landscape Architecture (Started at 5:29 in the recording.)**

**Biography of Fredrick Olmstead (6:06)**

Raised by his father who used to take Fredrick into the CT countryside for carriage rides. These rides had profound effect on how he designed parks. Bushnell, Olmsted's neighbor and pastor, had a profound effect on Olmsted. Bushnell thought nature was good for man. (8:42) List of jobs that Olmsted held. In 1850 Olmsted went to Liverpool and visited Birkenhead Park, the first public park in the world with a very naturalistic design.

Why did we need public parks in the US? Dense/unhealthy cities, diversion for residents, public health concerns (cholera) and prestige for the cities.

Why a park according to Olmsted's point of view? It encouraged democracy where every man and woman could visit and improved people's behavior and mental health.

Olmsted became superintendent of Central Park. Vaux and Olmsted won a competition with a design for Central Park. Central Park was a wasteland and called Seneca Village. Their design was for an informal park.

What makes a park Olmstedian? (16:33)

The Seven S's of Olmstedian Design:

Scenery: Olmsted created spaces with plants. He was interested in how plants came together in very distinct individual spaces.

Suitability: He valued the unique spirit of a place. For example, there were rock outcroppings in Central Park. Olmsted made a hindrance into the backbone of his design. He always respected topography.

Sanitation: Olmsted thought it involved draining water from land, providing clean air and water and creating an open space within the city where man could be exposed to nature. Landscape could cure mind and body.

Subordination: Olmsted believed in creating places within one cohesive design. All of the components contribute to the overall design.

Separation: Olmsted liked different areas and designs. He incorporated great use of transitional spaces from one area of the park to the other.

Spaciousness: He always wanted to make a space look bigger than it was. In a meadow he never let you see the beginning or ending of an area. You didn't know what was around the corner. He'd have closed in spaces and then it opened up into a bright meadow.

Service. He'd always serve the goals of the projects. He accommodated lots of recreational activities in multiuse spaces. All parks have a pond or water feature. He would never have a single use space.

He believed in using serpentine walks/drives, water feature, massive amount of plants and meadow.

Four parks Olmsted designed in CT (26:30)

How have these parks been adapted over time?

Walnut Hill Park, New Britain

There is tons of recreation, walking, each part is subordinate to the whole. All are multiuse spaces. Concert areas. Tricks of the trade: be careful not to create deep cuts or big fills. Ball fields have no outfield fences, no benches. People can still walk across the fields. The playground is tucked away into an alcove of a park.

Beardsley Park in Bridgeport. They kept it true to the original design and fields are multiuse spaces.

Johnnycake Mountain Park has many features: open views, landscape, water bodies and lots of vegetation.

Mark: There's a way to properly lay out what the community wants. There are ways to incorporate multiuse fields, keep beautiful landscape and how they all link together. Walnut Hill Park accommodates so many passive uses. There are so many fields without fences that you barely notice they are there.

Joan wanted to know the square footage of those parks in comparison to JMP. JMP is 58 acres and Walnut Hill is 80.

Craig: As a commission we're trying to move the process. What is best thing we could give you to design a park? If through our survey, if a field came up, how specific would you need us to be? What level of detail would be important for you?

Phil: It's important to come with a program and what community needs are. The wish list is the most important thing.

Craig: Is there any other criteria we can give you? Budget? Time line?

Phil: A budget is certainly helpful. A ball park budget and if you envision it done in phases. Is the project a one shot effort or something developed over period of time?

Mark: We've developed the programming wish list. Then we have a budget. We'll create a Master Plan with a first phase. What kind of features do we want? Fencing? Benches? Playscapes?

Robert: Structures. There are some barns on the property. Do you create a new structure? A multiuse or purpose one? Do they become a focal point?

Phil refers to subordination. It doesn't want to be a focal point it wants to be a part of the park.

Mark: We have special piece of property in JMP. Need to think about it holistically. 100 years from now people can talk about the design.

Thanks to Phil.

### **Tour of the Park: (42:23)**

Joan: What is the objective of the Park tour?

Karen: One objective is to see how the topography is. Take everyone up on Dwight's conserved area above the park to see how it looks from above and where things could be placed. Go to the top of the ledges and look to the east and see great expanses of field and north into Colebrook. It's important to talk about the topography of the land and the plants.

Craig: It's group activity for group perspective. If we all toured it and see it through her eyes, it would be a shared experience we could all build upon.

Mark: When we went out there in a small organized meeting, we saw the same thing at the same time. It's a very helpful exercise since Karen has spent so much time out there and knows so many of the special areas.

April 10<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 am seven Commission Members can make it.

Karen would be willing to take other people out at other times.

Joan can't be there on the 10<sup>th</sup>. Karen will set up an appointment with Joan.

Craig said if we can't go together, it's not as powerful. We should all go again recently. Like to get Karen's perspective.

Mark set April 10<sup>th</sup> as a formal meeting. An agenda will be posted 24 hours ahead of time.

### **Mission Statement: (49:22)**

Tricia sent our Mission Statement to the Town Attorney to get it approved since there was a public comment about discrimination with the neighborhoods. The TA came back with a few changes. The first paragraph was fine.

*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.*

TA made changes in the second paragraph.

*Our recommendations will be based upon considerations **and input** from our **entire** 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*

It's okay that we include the impact it will have on the neighborhood because you would do that for any land acquisition in town. We should be keeping an open mind to everybody's feedback at the same time.

Joan: Is it standard that Mission Statements are approved by the Town Attorney?

Tricia: Good question. Some are, some aren't. It's up to the BOS.

Mark: The changes don't do anything to our intent. They are positive changes, but minimal.

Robert made a motion to accept the updated MS, Joan seconded it and all approved.

### **Public Outreach Efforts: (52:55)**

Mark: Commission email has been set up. Right now Mark and Robert receive the emails. M and R discussed how the CM felt with them being the judge of which emails to send out. General information, no, but bigger comment should be shared with the entire group. If there are lots of emails, it's not necessary to discuss every one.

Robert: If the emails are just commentary, we can just make it part of our website so that people can review them. If there is a specific question, Mark and Robert can review it and decide to respond in public comment in Monday meeting. Trying to streamline it, but be transparent.

Craig: Would like to see comment, but he'd rely on M and R to weed them out. Purpose of email is to encourage public discourse and get comment. Not necessary to react to everything.

Mark: Some emails may want to be published for all to see.

Joan: Post emails and it's a way for people to comment with CM. She's interested in seeing all input/feedback.

Robert: Can we post email on our website?

Tricia: The website is [johnnycake@burlington.ct.us](mailto:johnnycake@burlington.ct.us) All emails are going to Tricia first and then she can forward it to everybody. IT set it up that Tricia is in charge of the email since it's a town email. She will save the emails as a PDF, put them in a shared folder on the town website.

Mark: Do we want all emails displayed on the website? The community should be aware that the emails will be shared publicly.

Tricia: She needs clarification on what we should be doing with public correspondence. Do we need to read them aloud or put them on line?

Mark: If we give a specific response to each one, it will take up a lot of time.

Robert: If it's a comment, no. If it's a question, in the spirit of transparency we should answer it in a Monday meeting.

Mark: Don't need to formally decide it, don't want to get bogged down.

Christie: Let people know that it will be posted publically.

Joan: We can manage it differently if it becomes overwhelming.

Mark: On the Town's webpage, we need to say that the public will be able to see the emails.

### **New Resident Survey: (1:06)**

Robert reviewed comments on survey. Christie had comments on the questions about outdoor concert venue and the numbers. How frequently would you like to see an event and how big of a crowd would you like? He didn't have time to include Karen's comments, got them too late. She added an introduction to the survey. Here's why we're asking you for your feedback. Q10 How often do you use multiuse trails, clarify it with Rails to Trails path. End the survey with a thank you and let people know how to get in touch with Commission.

Robert will make the changes.

Tricia will create the survey and hopes to have it done in two weeks. She'll let us know if she needs help.

Mark: We need a little text at the beginning of the survey. Where we are at and what we are trying to do, a history of the property.

Joan: What distribution lists are going to get emails?

Tricia: Everbridge, Town Website, Parks and Rec, Schools, Youth Sports, Burlington Land Trust, Facebook and any other organization willing to put it up. The information will direct people to the link to find the survey and complete it on line.

### **Project Schedule: (1:17)**

Mark: Next week we'll try to draft a general project schedule to present to the BOS, but we need formal acceptance of the schedule and on extending our deadline that was originally set.

Landscape Architect Consultant Procurement. Craig will write the scope and send it to Mark and Joan for feedback. Mark is looking for two things: the schematic design of the Master Plan with our program after we get the survey results and the first phase of the project with a budget.

**Park Program and Goals:** No discussion tonight.

Mark said that between meetings, we are doing a very good job. We've made tremendous progress and that a lot of people are watching this process. We are an Advisory Commission to the BOS. We will give them a recommendation to the Master Plan and project. We want to give them something that's realistic and accepted by the community so that the BOS can turn it into a project. We have to consider the community's input. There is a lot of angst by the JM

neighborhood. Please be patient because we're not there yet. In our MS we talked about team unity and treating each other respectfully. The CM are committed to a positive outcome. I would hope with Public Comment that the volunteers on this Commission will treat each other respectfully and in PC too.

Christie: We'll hear from the LAX coach at next week's meeting. It's important to be fair and transparent to all sports teams. We want to give all teams an equal opportunity-five minutes or so to tell us what they need for their program. We don't want to make a LAX decision without giving others some opportunity to weigh in.

Mark: In the next agenda meeting, we will meet with Jennifer Thompson, president of the LAX organization. Then Tricia is going to going through her field use information and info from HS coaches. We want to make sure to meet with all groups, but just cannot do it at the next meeting.

**Public Comment: (1:21)**

Dwight Harris:

I'm glad that you're talking about the concern for neighborhood. Good that Town Attorney suggested that it be included in your MS. I know that there are some people here at Johnnycake want to know to what extent you might consider their thoughts, opinions and views. Personally I got the opinion that a couple of members don't want thoughts from me. I am a resident, tax payer and abutter. You haven't discussed the complete process to getting something done. You will include not only a presentation to the BOS, but also a presentation to the public. There will be an 8-24 hearing before you spend any money, it's not binding, but it's a recommendation by the P and Z Commission. But most important when considering the neighborhood and I verified this with the Zoning Officer, you're going to have to get a special permit. That's an opportunity for the public to speak up from the entire town. If a permit is granted and some people feel they've been slighted or you made the wrong decision, it's relatively easy to file an appeal. That would hold up the entire process and cost the town money and wind up in Superior Court. It may be upheld or not. Usually no one wins from them. The best effort you can do is include everyone to avoid any kind of litigation. Thank you.

Mark: We do fully intend to reach out to all groups. The specific permit. My understanding is once we pass this project to the BOS and it becomes a formal project with site plan approval, that's when it would come into play. But our schematic Master Plan would include a zoning review of regulation if it is in conformance with Town Standards. It wouldn't be at a proper time when we're going to build it. At that point, it wouldn't require a special permit. That's my understanding from the Selectmen.

Joe Propsere:

Thanks for having Phil Barlow talk. In your MS, you talk about short term and long term design. How does that work with a recommendation that a landscape architect would put together?

Mark: We are going to complete our program for the park. We are going to find out from the community what things to incorporate in the park. We have to see what we can realistically accommodate within the constraints of the park and what we can accommodate within a certain budget.

Joe: If we can't have sports fields due to money, does it mean we go back to Town Referendum?

Mark: We'll try to make the first phase project use money that's already set aside. An irrigated LAX field costs \$600,000. That initial pot of money, it'll be a tough decision to make to see what we can accommodate, but we're not there yet.

Eris Dreher, 13 Mountain Top Pass:

Lives in the white house adjacent to the park. They purchased the lot for the view in the backyard, beautiful, peaceful and serene. It's a shame to take a piece of property like that and tamper it with sports fields. What the Land Trust has been doing over the past year, this is what this area is intended for. People use walking trails, picnic area, do yoga, ice skating and hockey on the pond. If this were in your backyard, you wouldn't want it ruined by shouting parents and whistles blowing. Between Harwinton and Burlington there are many resources available for athletic fields. We have to compromise and there are others who feel differently than I do. My request: please be mindful of families who live close in the Johnnycake area. If you build fields and parking lots, keep them limited and discrete. Keep the property open and preserve it to maintain its character and natural beauty.

Mark: We're being mindful of the residents.

Paul Stawarz:

Please be sure that each person only submits one survey. Tricia said that we will check and that last time it was checked through the emails.

Craig asked Tricia to send us a list of the lessons learned from the previous design process.

**Meeting adjourned at 8:35:**

Craig made the motion to adjourn, Liz seconded it and all approved.

Minutes respectfully submitted by

Karen Geitz