

Burlington Johnnycake Mountain Park Advisory Commission

Minutes

March 22, 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 and Karen Geitz. Absent: Jerry Burns

- **First Car:**

Committee Members (CM) all shared information about their first car. The goal with this activity is for the CM to get to know each other better.

- **Minutes of March 15, 2021 Meeting:**

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

- **Lessons learned: (5:48)**

Tricia sent us an email with lessons learned from first design process. CM are doing lots of things that are in the right direction. For example, CM have a weekly meeting. It's important for CM to take every opportunity to be inclusive and get everyone's voice heard and the CM are doing that.

- **Public Outreach Efforts: (6:52)**

CM received two emails: one from Dwight Harris and another from Alison Powell. Dwight's email was related to the RFP. Dwight asked if CM would have the opportunity to hear presentations from other landscape architects. Mark did that presentation because not all CM have park design experience, it was purely educational. Mark didn't intend on having a group of landscape architects do presentations on park design. If Dwight has questions about the BSC group, he should direct them to the BOS.

It's valuable to get a copy of the old BSC RFP to compare what the CM are doing and not repeat any issues that were left out before. CM are the conduit for the RFP to the BOS.

The second email from Alison Powell is related to the resignation of Jerry Burns from the Commission. Alison wanted to know if Jerry is being replaced and that's a BOS question. Her other question is about the zoning concerns brought up by Dwight at the last meeting and the special permit for the project. Once the CM get through the planning stage and are doing the project, it has to go through a site plan process which is subject to a special permit. Then CM have to look at the zoning regulations and make sure the plan meets those.

- **New Resident Survey: (12:13)**

CM want to get it out ASAP. Tricia wanted to know if we want to have the public answer every question or just certain required ones. In the last survey, none of the questions were required. Some responses had an N/A, but people could skip over them. If you require respondents to answer all questions, survey monkey won't let them submit responses until everything is completed. It will bounce them back to the unanswered question. CM decided to only require one question: Are you a resident of Burlington? CM needs ability to distinguish between resident/nonresident if we plan to disregard certain surveys. Tricia will send out rough draft for feedback and edits. CM abandoned the mailer concept to the Town, but for senior citizens (315 of them), Tricia will send them a letter to inform them about the survey and how Parks and Rec can help them to complete it. The survey information will be posted on the Town website on the new alerts page, Parks and Rec, Everbridge, sports leagues, Lions' Club, P and Z FB page, Burlington Land Trust, Ted Shafer's FB page, Burlington Chatter. CM plan to send out the survey by March 26th and get responses by April 26th. Survey monkey will compile the results and CM will have to decide how to use them.

- **Field Use: (28:04)**

Tricia put this data in our shared file. BSC compiled this data and all numbers are valid from 2019 because of EEE virus and Covid. The numbers on the table just show what the sports use is, it doesn't include the school activities for field usage. A lot of the fields are in good shape. Yellow indicates moderate use with 125-200 events a year. More frequent maintenance and additional management practices may be required. There are four soccer fields at Malerbo that are in the yellow. The red fields have more than 200 events per year. Maintenance is reactionary and field performance is low. LAX plays on Malerbo C Soccer field. With two different forms of sport, there is more wear and tear on the field. At times, the field had to close. If we can alleviate LAX off Malerbo C, the field will be in better shape and more money won't have to go into the fields. If 93 LAX events were removed from Malerbo 2, it would still stay in the red and Nassahegan would go down to yellow without LAX. There was a question about Girls' LAX practice at JMP and it was not listed on the table. A comment was made about overuse and field conditions and that they increase injuries in children.

- **Mike Baden, LMHS LAX Coach: (45:00)**

Mike gave a brief history of LAX in Region 10. The progression of our high school LAX program is directly related to our youth or feeder program. He compared our program to Somers, which is very similar. Somers has 8 LAX fields for Youth LAX and Burlington has none. LAX gets partial use of one field in Burlington and limited access to a field in Harwinton. In season for LAX, they have limited secondary access to fields with sports that are out of season. Many kids play in the BYLA program and come to the HS to play. They don't cut kids from the program at the high school level. The Youth program is successful in spite of them not having a place to play during their own season. Region 10 is a small school district and LAX is not asking for full access to fields or to displace other sports. They need a place to practice and play without having to scramble during their own season. One season LAX was on the road because the field was shut down for the entire year due to over usage. The Burlington Youth LAX season is eight weeks long with some additional clinic weeks. Currently there are 160 kids participating in the LAX program. In the past, there were as many as 180-200.

- **Upcoming Meetings: (59:22)**

Tour of Johnnycake Mountain Park on April 10th at 10:00 am.

Meetings in April will be the second and fourth Mondays.

- **Next Steps: (1:00:39)**

CM should hear from other youth sports organizations besides LAX.

The Burlington Land Trust had a lot of ownership of the property and taking care of it. CM want to hear what their long term plans are for hiking and other passive recreation.

Other groups (photography, bird watching, etc.) besides sports organizations should be able to speak to the CM as well. These groups can speak during public comment or they can email the Commission requesting time on a meeting agenda to speak.

- **Next Meeting: (1:08:38)**

After much discussion, CM decided that JM Neighborhood Group can send the Commission an email requesting time on an upcoming meeting agenda to present a consensus of ideas from the neighborhood. Johnnycake people can also express their thoughts and ideas individually during Public Comment. CM will have to be consistent with the amount of time that they provide different groups to talk. CM want to do their due diligence and hear what everyone or every group has to say as they work on a plan for the Park.

- **Project Schedule: (1:26:45)**

It's not finalized yet.

- **Landscape Architect Procurement: (1:27:49)**

Craig finished the RFP draft. It's a working copy. He'd appreciate comments. We want to be sure to create a process that's more inclusive. Mark talked with Ted Schafer about procurement. In the past it was quality based and not lowest fee based. That's good. Tricia sent CM a copy of the RFP from the last design process.

- **Public Comment: (1:28:44)**

Dwight Harris:

It would have been faster and clearer for Mark to read his and Alison's emails rather than paraphrasing them. He thought that comments were going to be posted so that they could be read by the public. Did you get money approved by the BOS to spend on an architect? Would you do that before you send out an RFP or afterwards? Will the public get to review the RFP because that really establishes what your scope of work will be? It's appropriate for the public to comment. When you talk about Johnnycake and other groups to make comment, everyone has an opinion of what should be in the park. Give the groups more specific directions as to what they're looking for. More important thing is harmony in the area. There are 400 families in Johnnycake area. People want to know what you will incorporate in the park. Dwight asked Ted to look at other proposals and contracts for the RFP. Dwight still doesn't know if CM are going to turn over the entire design to a landscape architect or give him a list of what you want or give him some direction.

Mark responded: CM need to establish some way to hear from Johnnycake neighbors. Anyone can make public comment at any time. RFP is being coordinated with BOS. CM cannot hire anyone. CM never turned anything over to the consultant. Input from the community is part of the Commission's MS. CM are trying to do their due diligence and weren't sure about the best way to handle emails.

Alison Powell:

Residents want to know that the CM are committed to maintaining the identity of the farm. Will we rehab an existing structure or barn or tear it down and replace it? We need to address the fencing around the park. There is not a lot of conversation about those. What would be helpful is if the CM would come up with a starting plan: where would the LAX field be placed; what would the structure look like; how would you access it. CM need to take into account the rolling hills. Neighbors are not against sports fields, but they don't want a complex. Listen to the results of the survey. There are 1200 registered dog owners in town and they haven't spoken to the CM, but CM have listened to three speakers on LAX for 160 players. She wants people's voice to be heard. A representative or two that speaks to the CM doesn't speak for everyone. She appreciates the offer to have some speak. People want to keep the identity of the farm and not turn it into a Nassahegan.

Mark and Robert responded:

We are in the process and until we figure out a plan, it's kind of frustrating. Budgetary constraints will impact the plan. Our MS refers to the farm. With the presentation by Phil Barlow, we learned about incorporating programming into a piece of property but still trying to maintain its natural features. Robert added that the CM are trying to get lots of info and insight before we make a recommendation. CM are not even close to making a recommendation now.

Alison asked:

Why haven't you included Dwight in the process with his expertise on the property? Why is he not part of the tour you're doing? Karen doesn't know the property as well as Dwight. He can help with the design. Listen to what he has to say about the perspective of the design. It's also a fiscal responsibility to include him instead of hiring other people.

Mark:

We've been hearing him via email and at meetings.

Dwight:

I don't know if anyone has walked the perimeter of the property? Karen indicated that she was only going to show people part of the property. If she hasn't changed her modus operandi, you'll only see half of the property. There are deed restrictions you need to be aware of. He created hundreds of acres of open space that abuts the property. He designed several possibilities for the property with his engineer. Dwight doesn't understand why he's been deliberately excluded.

Mark said that he doesn't feel that Dwight has been deliberately excluded.

Dwight said that two CM said we don't want his opinion because he sold the property. Only the architect stood up. Would you rather go out for four hours on your own to find the perimeter of the project?

Mark said that Dwight was going too far. Robert added that Dwight has to let us go through the process without dominating the conversation. Mark finished with we will to continue to work

with you because you have good ideas. Dwight said that if the CM do the process and their job, you'll have harmony in the neighborhood.

- **Meeting adjourned at 8:53:**

Robert made the motion, Liz seconded it and all were in favor.

Minutes respectfully submitted by,
Karen Geitz
March 28, 2021