

Burlington Johnnycake Mountain Park Advisory Commission

Minutes

March 29, 2021

- **Call to order:**

Meeting was called to order at 7:04 pm.

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

- **Favorite Restaurant:**

Committee Members (CM) all shared information about their favorite restaurant. The goal with this activity is for the CM to get to know each other better. Craig is in charge of coming up with a topic for the next meeting.

- **Minutes of March 22, 2021 Meeting:**

Robert made a motion to accept the minutes from the March 22, 2021 meeting. Craig seconded it and all approved.

- **Lessons Learned:**

CM skipped over this.

- **Email to the Commission: (4:16)**

CM received an email with information about which people from the Johnnycake neighborhood that would like to speak during Public Comment tonight. Joan received a Power Point presentation from a resident and CM will address it next week. Ted forwarded an email to the Commission from a resident and CM decided to review it during Public Comment.

- **New Resident Survey: (6:05)**

There have been 619 responses to the survey as of today. Great! Tricia will mail the survey information letters to senior citizens by Wednesday and they'll receive them by Friday or Monday of next week. On the survey, it asks for an email address so that we don't get multiple surveys from the same person. A resident asked if a household has more than one email address can they submit the survey multiple times. Yes, multiple people in a household should fill it out if they have different email address. We want to get all the feedback we can. The survey has been distributed on Burlington Chatter and the Johnnycake Neighborhood FB page. Another suggestion was to send it to the Superintendent of Schools and ask the principals to include it on their websites. The survey will go to Harwinton and Burlington residents that way, but that was why CM created the survey question about Burlington residency. Other organizations for survey distribution are: Parks and Rec (800 families), BISA, BYLAX, BLT and the Lions' Club. CM will have done their due diligence by sending the survey out through all these organizations. Craig wanted comments about the introduction he wrote for the survey. CM

decided to use it as preface on websites like a header, but not as part of the survey. Craig will send it out to CM again.

- **Programming:**

No progress. CM need the results from the survey first.

- **Burlington Land Trust's Presentation about the JMP. (15:40)**

There were technical difficulties for Karen when she tried to start the presentation. Joan and Christie talked about their experience walking the property with Karen on Saturday, March 28th. They appreciated her wealth of knowledge.

- **Consultant RFQ (Request for Quote) (24:02)**

We have the Town's last RFP. Craig did a nice job on the draft for the new RFP. There are a number of items for the scope that need to be finalized. The last RFP included the master plan, as well as construction level drawings. We just talked about doing a plan and recommending a first phase. The RFQ allows consultants to start submitting their qualifications for the job and then we can interview them. It allows us to start the procurement process while we figure out the scope. The RFQ allows you to get to know the client and client gets to know you. We are able to select a design professional that is more suited for this task. We still need to do the RFP part. The BOS want to review the RFP and it may take them longer than one meeting. Mark always assumed that we would not be in charge of hiring a consultant and we're not. We are interviewing consultants and going through the selection process to make a recommendation. That puts a fair amount of the onus on us. The RFQ gets us the initial info to get to know folks that are out there. The BOS will have time to go through the RFP and review it while not expanding our time line. While we're working on the RFP and during the consultant interview process we may find out something that needs to be included in the RFQ. Mark and Craig will work on the RFQ and they will send a draft to CM. Is it important to include the referendum in the RFQ? It's easy to add it and summarize the background of the project. The implementation process from the old RFP involves community input and is important to include it in our RFP. Also the submission requirements from the old RFP are a good starting point for us.

- **Project Schedule (37:16)**

Mark did aggressive draft schedule. The plan is to get a consultant on board in June. Once the consultant is on board, it's a six week process. It's overly ambitious. Based upon the initial time line, the process will clearly take more time. We will move it to the beginning of September to make it right for the community. We meet the second and fourth Mondays, the day before the BOS meet. We need to get BOS approval on the RFP and consultant selection and master plan. It's a short duration project. WE can talk to Ted and let him know that there are a couple of pieces that the BOS will have to weigh in on and those will influence the timeline. WE may give them the issue and the BOS will take care of it. If we finish before the September timeline, all the better. It's good to build in buffers and to his our milestones.

- **Upcoming Meetings: (42:10)**

The Tour of the Park on April 10th and our regular meetings on April 12 and 18. These meetings will give the community the opportunity to add input. It's easy to reach out to sports groups. At our meetings in April, we can have a light agenda and go heavy on public comments. We want to hear specifically from interested groups because they have a specific agenda. Tricia put information on the website. If you're interested in speaking, please email us and let us know. Some people don't do public speaking. They can send the CM an email or letter. Liz and Joan are going to write up information for Burlington Chatter and the Johnnycake Neighborhood to let people know how to reach out to the Commission. We want to send one consistent message to all organizations.

We will table Karen's presentation until the next meeting.

Tour of the Park: Saturday, April 10th at 10:00 AM and 2:00 PM, if we need a second tour. Objective: Participants will visit several spots inside and outside of the Park. They will take learn about the views, history, flora, fauna and structures? The tour is 2.5 miles in length. It's on Johnnycake Mountain so there ups and downs. Participants will also walk over sharp trees that were cut last fall. Wear sturdy shoes. The group will bushwhack into the deep woods and cross brooks that have no bridges. What to do to prepare for the tour. Bring water and one or two hiking poles. Wear sturdy shoes and tick spray. With Covid we will keep the tour to 15 people. Wear a mask. Preregister on Johnnycake@burlingtonct.us. Heavy rain will cancel and we will postpone it to Sunday, the 11th at 10:00 AM. Please don't bring dogs. Tricia will put it in the chat and also on the meeting agenda for April 10th. It's very important for the CM to go to the 10:00 AM meeting, since it is an official one. Because it's a public meeting we cannot limit the number of participants. If we had two meetings, we'd have to divide up the CM. Everyone should preregister and then we'll decide what to do based upon the numbers.

- **Park Programming (58:34)**

Nothing to discuss yet. We're awaiting survey results.

- **Public Comment: (58:47)**

The BOS appointed CM to develop a Master Plan for JMP. With the Master Plan we are trying to get info from the community and community groups about what should be programmed at the park. There was a 2017 survey that went out and CM reviewed it. We sent out a new survey with similar questions because we wanted updated info. Then we'll start programming in May. At the same time we'll secure a landscape architecture firm to help us to develop the park. We really care about maintaining the character of the park and its topography. It's a very public process and will continue to be that way. By the time it's done we hope to have a Master Plan for the entire park and identify a 1st phase of the Park. The MP will address the most critical short term needs and other items that are easier to implement like a dog park, community gardens. This Committee will go until September and it will probably be next year before anything starts in the Park. There may be the demolition of the structures before that. CM are trying to be fair and reach out to everybody. You can listen to our previous meetings on the website.

The BOS received an email and forwarded it to CM. The comment was about one of the survey questions. The question was "Have you ever visited Johnnycake MP?" One answer was "Yes, I live near JMP." The individual thought that we were giving more weight to JMP people. Everybody in the Burlington community has an equal voice, but we need to listen to the people that live around the park.

Three minute limit for public comment and no discussion, except if a commissioner has a question.

Bruce Worzocko 15 Hilltop Lane:

Resident of Burlington for 29 years and resident on Johnnycake for nine years. There are a lot of people who are reluctant to speak in a public forum. Bruce has listened to the last four meetings and he's glad he has not spoken. Bruce has evolved in his thought processes. He still has concern for neighbors that live close to the park. JMP is unique. It probably has 50-60 houses within the site line of the park. The Commission has a huge responsibility to enhance property values. Their property values could also be adversely affected by the park. One of the reasons his view point evolved is after the walk on Saturday with Karen, Kristie and Joan. They have the community's best interest at heart and the park's best interest at heart. Alternative means of funding for the park are available: there is scrap metal that can come from the structures, wood can be harvested from the property and grants.

Joe Parente: Stagecoach Rd.

Planning and Zoning has a FB page. Whatever the JMP Commission would like to post, send it to him and he will help us to get the word out.

Michael Siek-47 Charolais Way: (1:09:26)

He moved to Burlington 3.5 years ago. He has seen properties that were overbuilt and people say I wish we had left it the way it was. The Johnnycake Farm is the highest farm in Hartford County. The farm owner developed this property unlike any other development. It has historical significance, flora, fauna, bird migration which all could be disturbed. Karen has a vast wealth of historical knowledge. We can create education for its historical significance. Very unique property. We can make it a historical attraction, almost like a little Sturbridge Village. It could have lessons and classes.

Jason Sharkey 17 Mt. Top Pass (1:12:19)

The park is in his backyard. He doesn't want a sports complex. He volunteers to coach soccer and baseball. He also loves the property view and he will look at the rest of his life. Make the sports field blend in and roads that curve. Put in discrete parking and a concession stand that looks like a farm. Give the barns a makeover. Make a playscape that looks like it's been there a long time. Limit fences around sports fields. Brookvale Park in Hamden is a little farm that has animals and fields. He was disappointed hear that events like Music Fest were moved and there used to be a Fishing Derby. He would love to see a half dozen events a year. Please make it a park.

Joe Prospere (1:16:06) Claire Hill Rd.

When you are done collecting survey results on Survey Monkey, send everyone a thank you email and track which emails don't come back. Check for accuracy and authenticity. Does the landscape architect have the know how to decide if the existing buildings are useable? We could put a façade on them, but do we want Parks and Rec to use a cow barn?

Linda and Tad Winterbottom 18 Field View Dr. (1:18:31)

Thanks to the volunteers. This is not an easy process to balance all the uses of the public space. They were the first presidents of LAX Association. They experienced frustration of having places to play. The CM need to be judicious where they would put the field or fields. Be careful with development. Once you develop it, it's gone. As a human race we overdevelop. We need to make the fields as unobtrusive as possible. People enjoy snowshoeing, cross country skiing, ice hockey, fishing in the Park. It's nice to see the picnic areas. It's a little piece of heaven and we don't want to lose it.

Laurie Chadwick 102 Whiting Lane (1:21:36) VERY DIFFICULT TO COMPREHEND.

Laurie suggested a community garden. Because of COVID people have learned the joy of being outside. Passive recreation is passive. It can be enjoyed by all generations. You can make things blend in and the types of roads. It can be a historic farm area. I would love to get involved working the farm with animals. Hiking trails.

Eric Dreher 13 Mountain Top Pass (1:25:32)

There are many opinions in regard to developing this land and everyone has a valid point. LAX lacks space to play on. A sports complex would affect the privacy of the neighborhood. Last week showed a table with info on field usage. The Town's chart shows how many people play and practice at Malerbo. The softball field gets used 19 times. It gets low use. May be it can be converted into two separate fields for lacrosse. We can consolidate fields for programs increasing in numbers. Many players are from Harwinton. How come they are not being asked to help out with LAX? Is there a way to split the cost to maintain the field?

Paul Starwarz 37 Wood Haven Dr. (1:29:11)

Wonderful job. As you determine what goes there, put one or two fields. They will not devalue the property, but enhance it. We did the survey before and determined what is needed and not in the community. It's a growing community. The Town offers things as to what people want or need. If you limit aspects of the community, it will affect overall growth. You're addressing LAX and it's not the only program in town. There were four items identified as needs: LAX and barn structure, a community center or a structure for rental. Smaller programs like baseball need a field. Some organizations won't play on our baseball field because it's not a regulation field. Also, softball.

Pat? 10 Wollman Farms Rd. (1:33:06)

We can walk up and enjoy the beautiful plot of land. It's spectacular and tremendous responsibility to make everyone happy and to preserve the beauty of it. The uniqueness of the

property and hate to have it tarnished. Let's maintain its integrity. He likes passive activities. WE should do more to elevate artists and cultural things. Its' a great campus, let's not ruin it.

Alison Powell 5 Warren Glen (1:35:06)

Alison attended the BOS meeting. Melanie Wilhelm from the Conservation Commission talked about a farm tax exemption and maintaining scenic assets at Johnnycake in order to offer protection for the farm. There are four acres on Library Lane and Town just bought another four. The eight acres of level land is undeveloped. The BOS are going to create another advisory commission to design a town center. Put an LAX field there. It'll be less expensive. Why will we disrupt JMP?

Mark closed the meeting with "We understand the importance of the task we have here. Phil Barlow gave us a presentation on park design. We have a lot of opportunity and please stay involved with the process."

- **Motion to adjourn at 8:44.**

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

- **Minutes respectfully submitted by,**

Karen Geitz

April 4, 2021