

Fred Wolfe Park Ad Hoc Committee
Meeting Room Town Hall
March 23, 2023 – 5:00 p.m.

Minutes

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ATTENDANCE

Present: John Carangelo, Jeanine Capecelatro, Kaury Kucera, PJ Shanley & Ann Denny, Recording Secretary

1. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

John Carangelo called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Introductions

Committee members present introduced themselves.

3. Public Participation

Bill McNeil from the Amity Girls Youth Lacrosse Association, Eric Bowerman from Amity Youth Lacrosse, and Tom Pisano from Orange Soccer Association were invited by the committee to discuss the current field use and future wishes for their programs.

Bill McNeil reviewed how the fields were put in and spoke regarding the current parking situation. Their biggest wish is for more parking for when they have jamborees, and maybe telephone poles or curbing would help with parking and slowing people down. Bathrooms would be something they would like, but refreshment stands can be good and bad because they are hard to get volunteers. The program currently has 160 girls ranging from pre-k to 8th grade. He finds the current shed sufficient because the goals are too big to fit in a storage facility and equipment is not left on site. He prefers grass over a synthetic field and a scoreboard would be nice but it will change the feel of the game and make it more competitive, this is a learning program. Park & Rec mows the field and lacrosse pays for seeding and fertilizing.

Eric Bowerman stated the boys use the fields 2 days a week and the other days they play at the Pease Road park in Woodbridge. They have 135 boys from the BOW area and the enrollment has increased in the past 5 years. He would like a storage facility for the goals because that would help make them last longer if they were protected from the weather. More parking would be a help as well as a separate entrance if possible, and better signage to help locate the lacrosse fields. Backstop netting would help contain balls and keep people safe,

the posts would be permanent structures and the netting would be removed offseason. He agrees that snack stands are hard to man, maybe high school students could volunteer for service hours. As far as the field conditions they are level just not maintained there is a ton of clover. He prefers grass over synthetic fields. The boys program doesn't share expenses, Bill McNeil does all field maintenance and they would like more time on the fields. Currently there are 2 fields 5 would be great, 10 fields would be needed to host tournaments. Walkways would help the elderly but 2 parking lots would be ideal.

Tom Pisano from Orange Soccer Association says the MLT fields can't handle the increase in kids, he has 300 plus in the program on 4 fields. Bill McNeil tries to plan with Bill Hoffman for the use of fields. Parking is a problem he has 125 cars that need to change over every hour for 4 hours. Soccer pays \$5,000 a year for portable lights for practices. More protection is needed from the weather, there is currently 1 pavilion that Orange Soccer paid \$5,000 for. He would like entrances and exits to the park addressed and the traffic study done. There are lots of issues with the turf he would like artificial turf and lights. He would like to learn what other towns do. There are currently 4 fields he would like to see 4 additional fields and 125 additional parking spaces. Tournaments can be any size, but he is not interested in hosting tournaments and he does not think that is fair to the residents of Hollow Road because initially only 3 fields were planned. He does not want to see bleachers.

Liz DeLuca, 276 Hemlock Drive has been a resident since 1978 and was a member of the Park & Rec Commission when Fred Wolfe Park was purchased and was a past chair of the commission. When the Master Plan was developed the town could only afford phase 1. The park always had a portion that was farmed but the rest was a mess and the soccer fields were the first area addressed. She can hear some noise from the park, but it is not bad and she has concerns about where future access to the park will be. The expansion of Fred Wolfe Park was not a priority at the time the study was done, and the Capital Planning Committee has never designated funds. The population of Orange has been stable and she asked how feasible it is to expand the park. She would like to see people work together because it is sad to see letters to the editor that state Corn v. Kids because the town is proud of its agricultural roots.

Eleni Haskos, 469 Oakview Drive feels it is very important to consider the environmental side of expanding the park. She would like to see an area for kids to explore. She sees red tailed hawks and doesn't want to see their habitat disturbed.

Jim Zeoli, First Selectman gave an update on the playground. It is coming along and the parking area was roughed out today and a berm has been built for the planting of shrubs and evergreens for a screening. He asked that the committee keep in mind that the expansion of fields will increase the water bills, equipment needs and labor expenses to maintain them. Pickleball, tennis and basketball courts are also a need because when camp is in session at High Plains those courts can't be used. He was also approached by a foundation that was interested in the cornfields for educational purposes. He knows towns like Haddam and Trumbull have programs like that which are good for the environment and community educational purposes.

4. **Announcements**

Chairman Carangelo made the following announcements:

- a. A letter was written to the Board of Selectmen to obtain approval to retain a consultant for the traffic and safety study.
- b. He has met with all the companies on the vetted list, currently 3 companies BL Companies, Stantec, and Loureiro have each indicated they can handle the traffic and safety study internally as well as future plans for the park. One quote has been received and shared with the committee but will not be publicly shared until all quotes are received.

5. **Minutes**

On a motion made by PJ Shanley, seconded by Jeanine Capecelatro the minutes of the February 16, 2023 meeting of the Fred Wolfe Park Ad Hoc Committee were unanimously approved.

6. **New Business**

Chairman Carangelo will share the quotes as they come in with the committee but not with the public until they are all in. Jeanine Capecelatro asked if they had to present to the Board of Selectmen and Chairman Carangelo stated no that this board will present their findings to the Board of Selectmen. Kaury Kucera has an issue with defensibility to the public, she feels it is important to document how we vetted the companies and how we concluded who was picked so that the decision can be defended if there is negative press. Discussion ensued among the committee, and it was felt that these are public meetings, and they would be making the decision as a committee and that this should not be a problem.

Jeanine Capecelatro brought up the question of logistics in the park and was wondering if there could be different addresses in the park to help people find the lacrosse, soccer fields, and playground. She also asked if different entrances could be used for the different fields to help the traffic flow in the park. There was also a question on where the sidewalks would be near the playground. She will follow up with the first selectman.

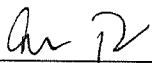
7. **Continued discussions**

PJ Shanley reminded everyone that these items under number 7 on the agenda will be there for continued discussions and that there will always be other suggestions listed so that people can feel free to bring new suggestions to the board if they think of something they would like to see in the park.

8. **Adjournment**

PJ Shanley made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:45 p.m., Jeanine Capecelatro seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,



Ann Denny, Recording Secretary