

**Minutes**  
**Watertown Conservation Commission**  
**Lower Hearing Room**  
**Wednesday, November 4, 2015**  
**7:30 p.m.**

**Conservation Commission Members Present:** Marylouise Pallotta McDermott, Patrick Fairbairn, Leo G. Martin, Charles C. Bering, Maria Rose, Louis Taverna

**Commission Members Absent:** N/A

**Staff Present:** Christopher J. Hayward, Susan C. Jenness

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**1) Community Gardens group – Discussion on possible Community Garden at Arsenal Park-**

Pallotta McDermott opened the meeting and invited representatives from Watertown Community Garden (WCG) to discuss their needs and how they thought the Conservation Commission (CC) could help.

Rose Ferosa a member of the WCG, and Teresa Hammerle who is the Chairperson of the Board of Directors appeared on behalf of the WCG at Arsenal Park.

Hammerle explained that WCG is a 6 year old non-profit, 100% volunteer based program with an emphasis on Environmental Stewardship and Community Building. Their work extends beyond gardening and includes community events such as pot luck dinners, pickling, and seasonal extension work that allows for participants to enjoy gardening activities right up until December.

WCG has been organizing thriving community gardens in partnership with Watertown Housing Authority at Nichols Ave. and Mt. Auburn Cemetery on Grove St. over the last 6 years. WCG will experience a loss of plots on Nichols Ave. as their affiliation with Watertown Housing Authority is ending this season so that the Housing Authority can develop programming that emphasizes sustainable gardening on their own. WCG has also seen an increase in the number of applicants seeking plots for next season.

Representatives from WCG contacted Gideon Schreiber, Senior Planner for the town who recommended speaking with Peter Centola, Director of Parks and Recreation for

assistance seeking alternative gardening plots to mitigate the loss of plots at Nichols Ave. in conjunction with the current increase in applications being filed for those seeking a plots in WCG.

Hammerle considered Filoppello Park but recognized that was not probable. When she explored Cannalonga Park which is a DCR property, she learned that would not work. She considered a rarely used volley ball court that would be a hike for more senior gardeners and a Street Hockey Court she considered whereas there was a new Street Hockey Court that opened at the Stop and Shop. She began to speak with the Conservation Agent and then went ahead and put together some draft plans.

Pallotta McDermott inquired who takes care of the gardens now and asked what happens when there is a problem on site. Hammerle referred to the past rat problem at the plots on Nichols Ave. She explained that in that case the Health Department came out and along with a team of Community Gardeners and dug out the rats. Housing followed up by making changes to resolve the issue through adopting new practices.

The Agent Hayward met with Hammerle and Wentworth about two months ago and has been trying to find out more about the use of the Street Hockey Court and the frequency of permits being issued for all activities scheduled by the Department of Parks and Recreation. Hayward informed Centola that WCG was interested in using that site for gardening plots and was informed that the space was off limits. He found out through Centola that it is used frequently for more than hockey, although he did not know how many permits were issued per season when Hammerle inquired.

Hayward was told to offer the Volley Ball Court then began looking into getting water lines out to the Volley Ball Court location. The Agent spoke to Gerald Mee, Jay Pelletier and Bob DiRico of the Department of Public Works who agreed that it would be unwise and maybe impossible to draw water lines down to the courts due to the high lead content in the earth at that location.

The Agent discussed his recent conversation with Jeff Heidelberg, an employee of Boylston Properties, the new owner of the Arsenal Mall. He explained to Heidelberg that WCG is looking for new gardening space for the upcoming season. He was told that mall owners have some ideas about gaining additional access to the river making it more visible to the mall in the future and that Heidelberg would like to have a conversation with WCG about incorporating their needs into the future mall plans. The Agent considered this a positive development that could potentially solve the water and parking issues of other town locations. Further he stated it was a positive idea to have the mall

owners involved in the future plans for WCG. He also noted that CC has care and custody of Arsenal Park which was how they were brought into this process.

John Wacker, of JWA Landscapes, the lead architect of Arsenal Park was available at the meeting to help review potential spaces and identify potential problems and to brainstorm with the CC ways to overcome them. Wacker stated that he felt it was probable that the town would be successful at finding ways to run water lines just below ground at the sites thought not to be accessible by the DPW. He said that working with the mall should be thought of as a great plan B.

Hammerle outlined WCG's vision to create outdoor classroom space to teach the summer youths how to grow organic gardens with some basic cooking instructions as well. She emphasized the importance of making some plots wheelchair accessible by raising the height of some of the beds for those who needed them. She introduced several locations other than the volleyball courts that she hoped might present some possibility.

Rose volunteered to draft a letter to the DPW with some ideas on how to resolve the problems around sources of water for the Community Gardens.

Wacker stated that he thought they should work to resolve the issues around parking and water with the town. He urged WCG to be thinking bigger than the volley ball courts in order to find a way to house all the creative dreams about their future.

Pallotta McDermott volunteered to have members from the CC come down to look at sites with the WCG Representatives. Hammerle will be in touch with the Agent to set up the site visits.

## **2) Discussion on draft letter to support proposed CDM Smith concept plan of the completion of Filippello Park**

Pallotta McDermott stated her plan to initiate a discussion on the draft letter in support of CDM concept plan. She introduced Mr. John Wacker of JWA Landscapes to discuss the layout of the concept plan.

Pallotta read the draft letter that was being worked on and discussed by the CC at this meeting into the record.

### **Commission Member Comments**

Martin stated the he thought the plan was very nice.

Taverna said he liked the plan and the letter.

Bering stated he was not happy about the plans for using the park for snow dumping which he thought was unappetizing. He said he hoped that they could find another place to dump snow.

Fairbairn stated that the letter does not speak for him. He said he would like to see all the parking as near the Grove Street entrance as possible where he felt it made the most functional use of the space inside the park.

Wacker talked about the original design. This plot was initially a land fill. The problem here was how do you set up a linear park where there are various activities located inside the park and provide all of the parking down at one end. He also mentioned that the original plan did accommodate snow dumping. He informed CC that when Peter Centola set up a new committee, we went around and around and kept coming to the conclusion that the town needed a snow dumping site and that Phillipello Park made a good space for it.

Fairbairn replied that the draft letter was concerned with only the design of the former recycling area. He stated that the design process provided an opportunity for combining the snow dumping and parking functions, both of which require impermeable surfaces, in a common area immediately adjoining Grove St. The currently paved area used for snow dumping could be converted to the areas identified as the "The Green" in the draft concept plan, for multiple "passive" recreational activities. A dog park could also find a feasible location next to the Grove Street Parking lot. The current parking area should be designated for recreation, possibly for occasional parking on a reduced basis.

Wacker stated that he thought one of the most important focuses for us when developing this concept plan was to create an area that would be attractive to the elders of this town. He also felt it was important to offer shading and light, both features of the dog park as proposed in the draft concept plan.

Rose had a list of pros which started with there being plans for a formal green space at the beginning of the space. Economically speaking she thought it made sense to keep the parking the way that it is. She appreciated more green space coming down Grove St. and the additional walking paths. She closed her list of positives by remarking that it seemed apparent that the town has considered all users equally when creating the concept plan.

In her list of negatives, Rose mentioned the swale along the northern boundary with some

clogged catch basins. She would love to see less paved surface in the area of the basketball courts but she understood the competing needs of the users. She agreed that the shade and sunny areas, and a long run in the dog park space all made good sense with what Wacker comments were about the features of the dog park area.

### **Public Comments**

Annie Clark from Trees for Watertown stated that she did not want to see more parking in the Phillipello Park. She liked the layout of the concept plan very much and was happy about having a nice passive space for the residents to come and sit and enjoy nature. She thought that layout for parking was extremely functional.

Barbara Ruskin from 140 Spring St, a resident for 37 years spoke about the concept plan. She was upset about process and that the letter being discussed was not available to the public. She said she felt that the WCG people were treated to a more fair process and that there was not enough give and take and respect in this process for the dog park population. She recalled that there were 47 people at the first dog park meeting some of who did not even have dogs. According to Ruskin, the WCG planting process that had had not been followed in this instance. She said that the draft letter being discussed is assumed a consensus and was just waiting for a signature to go out.

Rose reminded Ruskin of the meeting two years ago when the CC took in all the comments of the public on this issue and that this is a result of that process and this letter is still a draft.

Martin stated that the CC is trying to do the best we can to satisfy all the users. This is an approach to help everyone get what they need.

Pallotta McDermott reminded Ruskin that we heard you when you asked for a dog park and we added that into the space for you.

Ruskin stated that a dog park is passive recreation and a year round use. It seemed to her that a dog park would be a good use of the space in the front of the park. She stated further that we are supposed to have two other dog parks now. One is owned by an apartment complex and it is not well used. She mentioned Howe Park, which she characterized as a cliff and made a plea for more flat space.

Centola responded to Ruskin by saying that the draft was letter which is being reviewed at this CC session and that all were invited to comment.

Centola added that on October 6, 2015 the town had a public meeting and there was some good dialogue and that was the opportunity for everyone to get involved in the dialogue.

He recalled that the town opened up our first dog park two years ago and that he was there for an hour that afternoon and everyone was having a nice time. There is plenty of flat space there and a slope but no cliff. This concept plan provides a linear park where you can see your dog wherever they go.

He further stated that some of the points in this letter made by Pallotta-McDermott were made in response to the concerns made by the dog park advocates on October 6. He also mentioned that Howe Park must be vacated at dark which was why he was there so close to 5 PM today.

Agent Comments-He advised the commission members to make additional comments and forward them to him over the next two weeks to add to this support letter.

Pallotta McDermott asked the public and commission members to send the Agent their responses to the letter so that those comments could be considered in revisions of this letter.

### **3) Minutes from September 2, 2015**

**Motion:** A motion was made by Martin to continue reviewing the minutes to the December Meeting-Fairbairn seconded the motion.

**Vote:** A Unanimous vote was reached to continue the review of the September minutes to the December meeting.

### **4) Minutes from October 7, 2015 Meeting-Not reviewed.**

**Motion:** A motion was made by Martin to continue reviewing the October minutes to the December Meeting-Fairbairn seconded the motion.

**Vote:** A Unanimous vote was reached to continue the review of the October minutes to the December meeting.

### **5) Pallotta McDermott asked Fairbairn to comment on his concerns about inviting people to sit on the Conservation Commission.**

Fairbairn explained that he had sent a letter to the Agent about the possibility of the members becoming proactive in the search for new candidates to sit on the CC.

The agent commented that members of the commission were allowed to go out into the community and encourage qualified candidates to come forward and apply to the Town Manager to become a member on the board.

**Meeting adjourned.**