

Middletown Open Space & Fields Committee

Minutes of Meeting

October 27, 2011

A meeting of the Open Space & Fields Committee took place on Thursday, October 27, 2011 at 5 p.m. at the Middletown Library, 700 West Main Road, Middletown. The meeting was called to order by Mason Hawes, Chairman.

Member Present: Anne Baptista, Cheryl Boergesson, Nicholas Coogan, John Pinto, Austin Pendergast, Ed Sisk and Ralph Thomas

Members Absent: Dick Barker and Christin Lambiase

Ex-officio Members:

Present: Robert Johnson, Conservation Commission

Absent: Bruce Long, Town Council Liaison (Excused); Dick Adams, Planning Board

Town Officials: None

Others Present: Barbara Gifford

Agenda

Old Business:

- Update on Park Steward Program. The Town Council has not yet acted on the proposal to establish such the program. As a result, action to develop the implementing protocols, e.g., the park steward**

checklist, park user questionnaire and workday checklist cannot be completed. Prospective stewards have been identified for Linden, Demery and Howland parks. One of the advantages of the program was illustrated when Barbara Gifford, the prospective Linden Park steward, advised the committee of the difficulty of accessing the park from the east and her concerns for the safety of children climbing fences to enter.

The following motion was moved, seconded and passed unanimously: "The Chairman should immediately contact the committee's Town Council Liaison and ask him to bring the Park Steward Program proposal to the Town Council for approval on an urgent basis."

- **Properties Updates.**

- o The committee noted that the Tree Commission was successful in planting, maintaining and pruning trees. Examples included planting 8 locust trees at Berkeley-Peckham Field and tree plantings at Oliphant Playground.

- o In order to better understand the status of needed park improvements, the committee thought it would be useful to receive quarterly property upgrade reports from the Public Works Department.

- o It was observed that the committee had no understanding of the needs and planned improvements of sports fields, e.g., Wyatt Road Soccer Complex. The committee needs to examine its role with regard to sports fields and have the association responsible for the fields, e.g., the Middletown Youth Soccer Club, periodically update

the committee on field conditions, needed improvements, etc. Perhaps protocols need to be developed for user groups to report periodically to the town. The purpose would not be for the committee to oversee the fields, but simply to develop an understanding of conditions and needs in its role as advisor to the Town Council on all matters relating to open space and fields.

New Business:

- **Community Garden on Library Grounds.** The committee was advised that the Town Council had approved, at the request of the Librarian and the Friends of the Library, the establishment of a community garden on the library grounds. The organization administering the garden is that that formerly operated the community garden at Sullivan School in Newport. That organization has established policies and procedures, and is transferring the siding for creating raised beds to the library grounds.

The committee was pleased to learn of the initiative and agreed that the library grounds had the necessary land, sunlight and soil conditions for a productive garden.

The Librarian is processing a grant request to assist with funding and is forming an advisory committee to oversee the garden. The committee may ask to have a representative on the committee.

- **Park Procedures and Protocol Workshop.** The committee was disappointed to learn that the Town Council had not yet acted on the committee's proposal to establish a Park Steward Program, but decided to move forward on the development of implementing

procedures and protocols so that if the Council did approve the program, those would be in place at the beginning of the 2012 season. Anne will distribute drafts of a park survey to be completed by the park steward and work day checklist to committee members for comment in advance of the November meeting.

- **Site Visits to Other Middletown Parks.** It was decided that Mason should continue to attempt to coordinate the time and date for a visit to Paradise Park with the Middletown Historical Society.

- **Access to Linden Park.** Although not on the agenda, Barbara Gifford, prospective park steward for Linden Park, advised the committee that she was concerned about the safety of children climbing a fence to enter the park from the east side since now that access was no longer available through the easement that had formerly existed between Willow Street and the park. The committee expressed its concern and requested that the Chairman contact the Town Administrator and ask him to determine whether the access way could be reopened, perhaps by purchasing the property covered by the former easement area from the owner.

- **Proposed Agenda Items for November 16 Meeting.**

- o **Update on Park Steward Program**

- o **Park Procedures and Protocol Workshop**

- o **Community Garden on Library Grounds**

- o **Site visit to other Middletown Parks**

- o **Properties Updates**

- o **Access to Linden Park**

- o **Proposed Agenda Items for January Meeting**

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 6:15 p.m. The next regularly scheduled meeting of the committee will be at 5 pm on Wednesday, November 16, 2011, in the Community Room of the Middletown Police Station.

**Ralph Thomas
Recording Secretary**