

**COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE
TOWN OF NEEDHAM, MASSACHUSETTS**

**Minutes of Public Hearing
March 13, 2013**

Present: Mark Gluesing – Chairman, Janet Bernardo – Vice Chairman, Carol Boulris, Gary Crossen, Reg Foster, Paul Siegenthaler, Mike Retzky, Sam Warner, Lita Young

Guests: Connie Barr, Needham School Committee
Mike Verdun, President, Needham Heights Association
Anne Gulati, Director of Financial Operations, School Department
Tony DelGaizo, Town Engineer
Patricia Barry, Director of Conservation
Lee Newman, Director of Planning and Community Development
Dan Gutekanst, Superintendent of Needham Public Schools
Greg Atkinson, President, Needham Baseball and Softball
Debbie Schmill, Needham Community Farm
Heather Borkowski, Needham Community Farm
Ed Olsen, Superintendent of Parks and Forestry

Town Staff: Patricia Carey – Staff Liaison
Nicole DiCicco – Recording Secretary

The meeting convened at 7:30PM in the Highland Meeting Room located in Town Hall.

Chairman's Updates: Mr. Gluesing reported that the representatives of various Town boards and committees will meet, again, next week to review the draft long-term planning document, reviewing potential projects and how they would fit into a funding plan. He also announced that the estimated amount of state contribution to the Needham CPA fund will be 26% of the local collections. This is within the range anticipated on the Town Meeting warrant, so no changes will be needed at the May Town Meeting. At the close of the fiscal year, additional funding will be determined, so that will need to be added to the fund at the fall Special Town Meeting. The CPC will meet on Wednesday, March 20th to review all proposals, and if enough information is available, will vote on their recommendations to Town Meeting.

Project Presentations: Questions from Public: Mr. Gluesing asked the liaison to each proposal to introduce the proponent who will give a project overview. He asked that all questions be directed to the Chairman who will then determine who should answer the questions.

FY2013-4, Community Housing Specialist: Ms. Bernardo introduced Planning and Community Development Director Lee Newman. Ms. Newman explained that the requested funding would be utilized to hire a part-time housing specialist. This person would serve as the Town's representative to the regional HOME Consortium,

and insure that Needham is able to access funds for needed projects. The specialist would oversee the Town's housing plan and work on projects that meet the goals of the plan. The specialist would also provide the technical support to oversee the 40B and scattered housing projects throughout the Town, to insure compliancy with legal requirements. There were no questions for Ms. Newman.

FY2013-6, Open Space and Recreation Plan: Mr. Crossen introduced Director of Conservation Patty Barry. Ms. Barry reported that it was time for the five-year update of the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan. The update will review the goals and objectives, and other sections that no longer reflect the community and work with boards and residents to revise the text and maps. The prior plan was accepted by the state, but has some finish tasks that need to be done, so this project will include putting it all in finished form. In order to be qualified for many types of state grants, an Open Space and Recreation Plan must be approved. There were no questions from the audience. Mr. Warner asked if it was known which company would do the update, but Ms. Barry said that it would need to go through the state procurement process in order to choose the consultant. Mr. Siegenthaler asked if there would be obstacles to completing the update, and Ms. Barry reported that staff changes had partially impacted the completion of the last report, and that she and Ms. Carey were committed to having it completed.

FY2013-7, Reservoir Trail Design; Ridge Hill Loop Design: Ms. Young introduced Director of Conservation Patty Barry. Ms. Barry explained that the design of both projects was being combined into one project, so that a quality consultant could be hired to work with the Town. The Reservoir trail would be designed as a walk-able ADA trail. As some areas of wetlands are involved, the design tasks would also include the permitting process. Access to fishing will be included in this project. At Ridge Hill, the northern portion of the Esker Trail ends at private property. The Conservation Commission seeks to create a loop, primarily constructed with volunteers, to bring people back onto the Town trail system. There were no initial questions from the audience. Mr. Warner asked why a new trail wasn't being created near the Hillside School, and Ms. Barry noted that through the discussions during the creation of the Trails Master Plan, the Reservoir was chosen as the priority location for the ADA trail. Debbie Schmill asked if a connection could be made from Ridge Hill to neighborhoods near Great Plain Avenue. Ms. Barry stated that the Town did not own the connecting land and that a trail would have to cross private and Army Corps of Engineers' property, so that it had more challenges to handle before something could be created.

FY2013-8, Newman Fields & Eastman Conservation Trails: Mr. Siegenthaler introduced Director of Conservation Patty Barry and Parks & Forestry Superintendent Ed Olsen. Mr. Olsen described the overall project that would design improvements to the athletic fields at the Newman School and renovate the trail system within the adjacent Eastman Conservation Area. He noted the fields were used by the school,

after school programs, Needham High and youth programs, but that because they retained water, they were frequently closed. Having them regularly available would take some burden off of other athletic fields. The Eastman Conservation area is used by the Needham Science Center and residents visiting the site. Ms. Barry also noted that it would connect to the Anna Volante conservation area and the newly acquired and renovated Carol/Brewster property with plantings that would be part of an educational program. The design is proposed to be done by one consultant, as the resolutions for issues on both sides are connected. Permitting will be included in the design phase. Greg Atkinson, President of Needham Baseball and Softball provided written support from his organization, and stated that having the fields readily available will assist several programs. There were no additional comments from the audience. Mr. Siegenthaler noted that the improved trail system would provide an alternate walking route for students. Mr. Retzky asked about maintenance of the trails. Ms. Carey stated that the trails are part of the Trail Steward program and primarily would be maintained by volunteers, with some support from Parks & Forestry. Mr. Olsen said that the field maintenance would be on a Tier Two level, the middle of three levels. Ms. Young asked about the cost of construction. Ms. Barry noted that the design would provide a better estimate, and that it was likely the projects would have construction bid separately, due to the different type of work needed.

FY2013-11, Mills Park Design: Mr. Foster introduced Parks and Forestry Superintendent Ed Olsen. Town Engineer Tony DelGaizo was also available to answer questions. Mr. Olsen described the site and the layout and noted that the projects within this proposal would be the final stage after several park improvements, including a new playground, rebuilt tennis courts, and new backstop and perimeter fencing. Mr. Olsen described the current issues with parking, and how the design funds will help plan improvements to alleviate problems, particularly on Hampton Avenue. He also discussed the issue with grubs, and how it has impacted the diamond at Mills, so the construction project would include new sod on the diamond. This summer, he will try one more attempt at an organic solution for the interim. President of Needham Baseball and Softball Greg Atkinson spoke in favor of the proposal and asked that the design be funded. There were no additional comments from the audience. Mr. Retzky asked if the neighbors were involved in discussions. Ms. Carey noted that several were concerned with current parking issues, so there was not an anticipation of any objections. During the design phase, abutters would be brought into the process. Mr. Warner asked about the organic grub treatment. Mr. Olsen is working with a local company that handles the organic maintenance program on the Heights Common. This firm also struggles with grubs, but has had some limited success with compost, so they will try that this summer. Mr. Foster asked about the restoration of the restrooms. Ms. Carey said that the current structure is not useable, so she is working with Public Facilities to review the possibility of modular building being installed. Mr. Retzky noted that there are regular issues with vandalism at public restrooms, so they aren't easy to operate.

FY2013-12, Community Farm Soil Quality Improvements: Mr. Retzky introduced Debbie Schmill and Heather Borkowski, representing Needham Community Farm. The farm is located at the Nike Site and is primarily an educational farm that provides produce to the Needham Community Council for distribution to Needham residents. The raised beds have been generating quality produce but the soil is highly compacted and not able to be farmed. The plan is to try and raise the beds with some non-invasive drainage. Ms. Bernardo asked Dan Gutekanst, Superintendent of Needham Public Schools if the School Committee supported the request, as the Nike Site is under their jurisdiction. The Superintendent stated the School Committee's support for this proposal. There were no questions from the audience. Mr. Siegenthaler asked why a larger area wasn't proposed for work, and Ms. Bernardo asked if the plan was still to use RTS loam and compost. Ms. Borkowski said that the plan fits within the requirements of the license to use the land, and they are trying to create a workable plan in a small area and within their limited budget to operate. Mr. Gluesing asked if the soil installation would be properly mixed and compacted. Ms. Borkowski stated that there would be compacted pathways, alleviating damage to the planting beds.

FY2013-9, Newman Pre-School Surfacing: Mr. Warner introduced Ms. Carey to speak on behalf of the proposal. Ms. Carey explained the different guidelines and regulations that are followed for playground construction. The surfacing of each playground must meet two different criteria: a surface that can cushion a fall from the height of the structure, and an ADA pathway to reach accessible sections of the structure. The engineered wood fiber surfacing used at most of Needham's playground fits the federal standards for both requirements, but the MA Architectural Access Board is placing new unwritten requirements on the surfacing, and have stated this new ruling at one playground in Shrewsbury and for the Preschool Playground located at Newman. There are various options to meet this new ruling, but due to the size and shape of the Preschool playground area, Ms. Carey has recommended a full poured-in-place rubber surface. Ms. Young asked if MAAB has responded to Ms. Carey's request for clarification. Ms. Carey noted that the MAAB Director was directed to contact Needham to help with solutions, but has not responded to that directive or to Ms. Carey's written request. The solution she has suggested, though, is one that meets the goal of the MAAB's new regulation. Ms. Foster asked Superintendent Gutekanst what would happen if Town Meeting chose not to fund the request. Superintendent Gutekanst noted there wasn't an alternate funding source, so it would likely lead to closing down the Preschool playground in order not to lose the Certificate of Occupancy for the Newman School. Ms. Bernardo asked how funding of future school playgrounds would be handled. The Superintendent said it is the intention of the School Committee to include funding with school construction projects.

Mr. Siegenthaler made a motion to close the Public Hearing portion of the meeting at 8:30PM. Mr. Warner seconded the motion and the Public Hearing was closed at 8:30PM.

Mr. Gluesing thanked everyone who had participated in the discussion of proposals. He reminded the CPC of the upcoming meeting schedule.

Upcoming Schedule:

- Meeting, Wednesday, March 20th, 8:00PM – Highland Room, Town Hall
- Meeting, Wednesday, April 10th, 7:30PM – Park & Recreation Office, PSAB

Adjournment: Ms. Bernardo made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:35PM. Mr. Crossen seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned at 8:35PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole DiCicco
Recording Secretary