

Thompson Road Athletic Complex Recreation & Parks Subcommittee Minutes 07/8/2014
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MINUTES

THOMPSON ROAD ATHLETIC COMPLEX
RECREATION & PARKS SUBCOMMITTEE
AVON ROOM TOWN HALL
JULY 8, 2014

I. CALL TO ORDER & SELECTION OF A CHAIRPERSON

The meeting was called to order at 7:38AM by Assistant Town Manager Steve Bartha in the Avon Room, Town Hall Bldg. 1. Committee members present: Peter Ponziani and Todd Donovan. Member absent: David Jadovich. In attendance were staff members Public Works Director Bruce Williams and Recreation and Park Director Glenn Marston, and Manager of Landscape Architecture and Project Manager Luke McCoy of BSC Group. Mr. Bartha made the introductions. By way of background, he noted that the Town Council had, in January, suggested putting together a group to select an architect to explore the best use for the Thompson Brook property in developing an athletic complex. He referred to the committee's charge as to focus on this property and bring their recommendations back to the Council by the fall to see whether they want to proceed or not.

VOTE: Mr. Ponziani volunteered to chair the committee. Mr. Donovan seconded. Mr. Jadovich was absent for the vote.

II. MINUTES OF PRECEDING MEETING – N/A

Mr. Bartha offered that the information included with the agenda is available in his office as reference for those in the audience or others.

III COMMUNICATIONS FROM AUDIENCE

Ms. Nicole Herbst of 110 Thompson Road read from a letter she addressed to the Recreation and Park Subcommittee. She noted that she grew up in Avon and plans to stay here. She loves the nature here with the wild animals and landscapes. She continued that she's feels her quiet life is being threatened by the stadium. Ms. Herbst added that she is trusting that everyone on the committee will come up with a win/win solution for the parents and the residents on the street so they are not drastically impacted by the lights and noise and can still enjoy their homes. She fears that the parent group that is proposing the stadium will steamroll over the fifteen families that live there. She does not want to be forgotten or ignored and moving would not be an option.

Mr. Bartha explained that the purpose of the meeting was to kick off the project and that Mr. McCoy will talk about the goals that have been set for his firm in the Statement of Need, review its content by identifying the amenities that ought to be included in the conceptual design, provide a time-line, and explain this process as well. Mr. McCoy will hopefully return, by the end of July, with a preliminary conceptual plan of the meeting's discussion for review.

Mr. David Magrini of 31 Brookridge Drive spoke saying that he represented the parent's group in support of the project and agreed with Ms. Herbst in her desire to have a responsible facility that does not overly impact any one person. He has raised his children in Avon and wants to stay here as well. He continued that the time is overdue to upgrade the town's facilities. He reminded that this particular piece of property was purchased back in 2002 with this future development in mind. Mr. Magrini continued that it was about community, a place to gather and not just about sports. He said we all live here and will continue to raise our kids here.

Mr. Ponziani concurred that he'd been through a similar project earlier where lights were of concern and fortunately it worked out well for all because of these types of discussions.

Mr. Jim Burns of 104 Thompson Road expressed his concerns over fixing the roads that would be impacted. He said both Old Farms and Thompson Roads need some work done. He'd like to see the property remain a field and not become a stadium. Mr. Burns added that you need to think very carefully because the proposed entrance to the parking lot will be opposite his driveway, creating difficulty exiting his driveway, which he has experienced in the past. He continued that if you're going to think about any of this that you better think a lot harder.

Ms. Kathleen Davenport of 92 Somerset Drive asked for clarification of the field purchase by the Town remembering it as being one that would either be open space or recreational field. She doesn't remember any mention of a stadium or an athletic complex of any sort. Mr. Marston noted that the included minutes reflected references, going back prior to purchase by both the Town and BOE, to a desire to use the space for athletic fields. He added that there wasn't then a particular plan for it as to what it would look like. Mr. Bartha noted that the 2003 minutes were not specific with regards to an athletic complex, but did mention athletic fields and that the 2006 Recreation Master Plan identified synthetic turf and grandstands as a desirable use. He continued that the Statement of Need was based on the approved master plan of 2006/2007 and that it was also based on the topics discussed as part of the original purchase. Ms. Herbst and Ms. Davenport stated that they were not aware of this history.

IV. COMMUNICATION FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS

V. ARCHITECT UPDATE

VI. NEW BUSINESS a. Review Project Statement of Needs, b. Review Town Council Minutes: 1/9/14 and 2/6/14, c. Time Line/Next Steps in the Process Discussion

Mr. Bartha deferred to Mr. McCoy to explain the process. Mr. McCoy said BSC is a site engineering firm with 150 employees total, with everything from site surveying, civil engineering, landscape architecture, environmental permitting and planning, wetlands and coastal mitigation and a GIS department through four offices in the New England area. His focus is primarily athletic facilities and school work. Recent work includes the renovation of Muzzy Field in Bristol and the conversion to synthetic turf at Tolland and Southington high schools to name a few. Mr. McCoy continued that his role on this project would be to listen to feedback in order to hear what they want and don't want to see in it and help it make it a win/win, and then take back that information to create new conceptual drawings for what the complex would look like. This will be discussed and presented to the Town Council, whereby a decision will be made as whether to move forward on the project. Mr. McCoy would like to leave the meeting with a laundry list of what the complex's wish list would look like to see if it can fit or no, it can't all fit. He continued that he'd like to work through the planning process this summer and beginning of the school year with the concepts and public meetings, then narrow down the master plan with the budget prior to the winter, and if approved be ready in time for the budget season. Mr. Bartha clarified that public meetings will occur once the conceptual design has been established so that interested parties have drawings to respond and react to. He added that the Town Council will want to see the best proposal from the Committee reflecting feedback from all stakeholders and that a referendum will not occur until they decide. The budget for the project has not been worked out yet in terms of grants, fundraising or whether this will be a part of the capital budget. Mr. Bartha clarified that funding sources need to be identified, but not necessarily in hand at the time of referendum, using the Library project as a perfect example. Mr. Magrini relayed that his interest in the schedule had to do with the fact that he wanted to raise funds or pursue grants for the project in order to make it more tax neutral. Mr. Marston reminded that none of this had gone through the regulatory process yet, not knowing what it'd look like, so there'd still be plenty of opportunities for people to be heard.

Mr. McCoy began the discussion for the conceptual design with the multi sports synthetic field at the top of the list of wants. He continued that the field would be sized for high school soccer. Mr. Marston clarified that it would not be specifically for the high school but for soccer in general. Mr. McCoy noted that a high school soccer field would accommodate all of the other sports. Mr. Donovan

reminded Mr. Magrini to include other organizations such as soccer and lacrosse with these discussions and emphasizing that a lot of grants are available in youth sports as well. Mr. Marston clarified that the use was for the Town and not for others outside of town as Ms. Herbst feared that the facility's use could spiral out of control with perhaps concerts or something else.

Mr. McCoy continued the discussion with field lighting. Ms. Davenport asked how tall the light poles would be. Mr. McCoy said it would vary depending on the size of the field, estimating between 75' and 90'. He said he couldn't be definitive until he had a design and there could be other factors influencing the height such as slope. Mr. Marston added that the purpose of the taller pole was to direct the light down leading to less bleed. Mr. McCoy added that the new technology can actually control the lighting from a smart phone or laptop computer. He noted that LED lighting should become more competitive pricewise over the next two years as well, adding that they last longer and use less power.

Next, Mr. McCoy discussed the field surround, specifically addressing the RFP alternate of a track. Mr. Marston was skeptical that the inclusion of a track would make the footprint significantly larger and impact the rest of the project, such as adding an extra field or parking space. Mr. Bartha asked the Committee if it was their wish, in the absence of a baseball field, to create a single multi-use field or perhaps creatively use that space for practice fields, or simply leave it alone. Mr. Marston suggested including a natural surface practice area which he's found are hard to come by in town. Mr. Donovan offered that it was up to Mr. McCoy to create the ultimate design using the space. Mr. Magrini noted that the steering committee was looking at lighting for all of the facilities for fundraising goals. Mr. Magrini also added that he had estimates to re-turf the two field surfaces at the High School (approx. \$1.5 - \$2 million). Mr. Donovan reminded that we need to include all of the groups in order for this to go anywhere and that we want to create a facility that will be admired and we'll be proud of.

Parking was the next item for discussion. Mr. Marston noted that parking was based on a presence of a full sized baseball field plus multi-purpose field. Mr. Williams reminded that Mr. McCoy will need to know which groups will be using what parts of the facility in order to design for adequate parking. Mr. Marston said football dictates parking with upwards of 300 - 400 people in attendance. Mr. Donovan offered that overflow-parking at Thompson Brook is a huge asset. Mr. McCoy noted that Planning typically puts conditions on approvals such as time that lighting can be on. Ms. Herbst reminded the Committee that trash left behind attracts bears.

Mr. McCoy continued the discussion with grandstands, asking for proposed size or capacity. Mr. Donovan said that currently the high school home seating is tight. Mr. McCoy discussed the existing building on the property as needing renovating. Mr. Williams said you'd have to include sufficient storage space for the new facility while maintaining the existing storage space for municipal purposes. Mr. Donovan said there had been discussion of moving the locker rooms under the stands to maximize space.

Mr. McCoy discussed the inclusion of a playscape with a concourse so people could come to gather. Mr. Bartha liked the idea especially its proximity to the rail trail. Mr. McCoy added that the space can be used for booster sales or concession stands. Ms. Herbst asked if public sanitary facilities would be included. Mr. McCoy said it'd be better to provide bathrooms for team use separate from the public facilities to avoid players waiting in line, which could impair their ability to get back to the field of play.

Mr. McCoy spoke of the wish to tie into the rail trail or even nature trails for some who just wanted to walk the property. Mr. Magrini offered that there may be grant money available because of the property's proximity to the rail trail. Ms. Davenport asked if people would be accessing the trails at night because they close at dusk and would there be police there. Mr. Marston said the trails really didn't see a lot of problems. Mr. Bartha clarified that there would not be police assigned specifically to patrol the trail at night events. Mr. McCoy noted that there appeared to be sufficient nearby access to water and sewer for the property. Ms. Herbst reminded to be cautious as there is a gas line near the property as well.

Mr. McCoy reminded that he will present a series of options with a base plan at first, noting pros and cons from a design standpoint. These options will be discussed at the next meeting which will be held at Town Hall, Bldg. 1, July 29th at 7:30AM. Mr. Bartha would like to get the word out to the abutters of the property and will be collecting e-mails.

VII. OTHER BUSINESS

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

VOTE: Mr. Ponziani motioned and Mr. Donovan seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:55AM.

Peter Ponziani, Chairman

Susan Gatcomb, Clerk