

WEYMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL
Public Parks and Recreation Committee
Town Hall Council Chambers
February 19, 2019, Tuesday

Present: Jane Hackett, Chairman
Michael Molisse, Vice Chairman
Kenneth DiFazio, Councilor
Arthur Mathews, Councilor

Not Present: Ed Harrington, Councilor

Also Present: Richard Swanson, Town Auditor
Joseph Callanan, Town Solicitor
Andrew Marron, Town of Braintree
Jim Lockhead, WBRDC

Recording Secretary: Mary Barker

18 127-Establishment of Recreational Dog Park

Chair Hackett called the meeting to order at 6:38 PM to provide an update on activities that took place since the committee met last. She attended a public meeting with the proponents. The proposed plan was narrowed to two locations - the site adjacent to the pavilion in the previous plan has been eliminated. There is a cleared area just past the wooded area and another off and up on the Braintree side. The proponents and PMP agreed to restrict discussion to these locations. The Solicitor has reviewed the MOU and suggested a measure amendment restricting consideration to only these two locations.

Update on the MOU and MOA: The Solicitor is working with Braintree. Weymouth will not be signatory to the MOA, which will be between PMP and Braintree. (At 6:46 PM, during this discussion, Solicitor Callanan arrived and was called to the table.) He reported that because the measure's scope has changed, the measure language should be amended.

Councilor Mathews asked Mr. Lockhead if the commission's vote was based on a definitive site. Mr. Lockhead responded that he didn't recall, but at the public hearing, the proponents were intending to lock down a location. He said it's good news it will not be located near the children's activities site, but he would be more comfortable with a specific site identified.

Solicitor Callanan noted that the measure is basically a blessing from the town- an affirmation of the plan before a specific site is identified. This moves the discussion further than it was originally designed. Councilor Mathews reiterated that he wants to see a definitive site. If it means another week or two while it's hammered out in order to vote, he'd agree to that.

Councilor DiFazio asked Mr. Lockhead to recap for the committee what progress was made to date. Mr. Lockhead responded that they met once with the Braintree Mayor's Office and zeroed in on these sites and a potential MOA. Site D, located near Liberty Street, emerged at that point and the committee backed off the ones closest to the pavilion and Weymouth side. The district commission would not take any vote prior to permission being granted by both Town Councils and a site is agreed on. For a MOU, it's prudent to have a site selected, and an MOA between the commission and Braintree, and Weymouth.

Councilor DiFazio asked how many members are on the commission. Mr. Lockhead responded that the commission is comprised of 7 members; 6 seats are currently filled (3 Weymouth and 3 Braintree). He has been on the commission since 2000. He is comfortable voting with the current commission, but they do not have enough information without naming the site.

Councilor Mathews asked which site would be less destructive to the existing activities in the park. Mr. Lockhead responded that he is not interested in either, but site D would be the commission's choice. Site B is active space in the existing field. Site D is upland - there currently is no access to that land with access points all woods and swamp. Site B would not be of any interest to the commission. Site D is a potential option.

Councilor Mathews asked if there are two acres within the 60 acres to site a dog park? Councilor DiFazio asked if it is too far from the public way? Mr. Lockhead responded that he is unsure. The presentation showed an access point mapped out, but he isn't qualified to speak on that specific site. Chair Hackett asked Mr. Marron if there is sufficient parking for site D. He responded that there is parking- there is a gravel roadway but site B would incorporate parking. Site B has existing water but site D would require access to be run. Future work is planned in the area that includes water and sewer lines.

Vice Chair Molisse thanked the presenters. He reported he has received 17 phone calls and 22 emails, and none are favorable for the dog park. He is a lifelong resident and Pond Meadow is the site of many senior activities. He does not believe the park is the appropriate place for a dog park.

A motion was made by Vice Chair Molisse to forward measure 18 127 to the full Town Council with a recommendation for unfavorable action and was seconded by Councilor DiFazio. Chair Hackett reported that if the Town Council acts unfavorably, it will not preclude the proponents from submitting a new measure with a new or narrowed location.

A substitute motion was made by Councilor Mathews to forward measure 18 127 to the full Town Council with a recommendation for favorable action for a dog park located within site D of Pond Meadow Park and was seconded by Chair Hackett. Councilor Molisse advised he would not support a dog park in Pond Meadow-regardless of the location.

Substitute motion failed on vote of 2-2 (Councilors DiFazio and Molisse voted nay).

Councilor Mathews reported that he would only support the measure if it were for site D, which wasn't discussed at the public hearing. Chair Hackett noted the measure put Weymouth in a peculiar situation; they are essentially voting on a park in Braintree with an MOA in which Weymouth would not be a party. The proponents could still come up with a site that has legitimate potential. Are they comfortable going forward with two sites or should they vote it down? The committee has done its due diligence on the measure.

Original motion passed on vote of 3-1 (Councilor Molisse voted nay).

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:15 PM, there being no further business, a Motion was made by Councilor Mathews to Adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Councilor Molisse. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

Respectfully submitted by Mary Barker, Recording Secretary.

Approved by Jane Hackett as Chair of the Public Parks and Recreation Committee
Voted unanimously on 4 March 2019