

**Dover Parks and Recreation Commission  
Caryl Park Abutters Meeting  
December 14, 2009**

**Minutes**

P&R Commissioners In Attendance: Peter Davies, Rich Oasis, Scott Seidman, Nancy Simms

P&R Employees In Attendance: David MacTavish, Jess Cooney

Others In Attendance: Bill Seymour (Gale Associates); Andy Waugh (Warrant Committee); Giles and Sue Mosher, Heidi Handler, Roger and Joan Panek, James Powers and Elizabeth Armstrong, and Kathleen Mitchell (Oakley Road, Park Avenue and Dedham Street Abutters to Caryl Park)

**The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm.**

Peter Davies introduced the five P&R Commissioners and Bill Seymour (Director of Civil Engineering projects for Gale Associates out of Weymouth, MA). He explained that P&R has hired Bill to help us with the design phase of this project. P&R wants Bill to have the benefit of hearing abutters concerns before he begins his work. It is important to P&R that this process be completely transparent.

Peter provided an overview of field use and demand in Dover:

- P&R has been looking at expanding Caryl Park for at least 5 years.
- There has been an explosion in demand for sports fields, primarily from the youth sports programs.
- Dover currently has four baseball fields and no softball fields; a softball field is critical to providing equal opportunity across genders.
- Chickering Field was developed in 1993 when Boys and Girls soccer was the only youth sport club.
- Boys youth lacrosse started 10 years ago with 20 boys. Now, 220 boys in grades 2 through 8. Limited field time has forced the club to turn away players.
- Girls sports have grown more than boys sports.
- Middle school field hockey (which is not funded through the middle school but through P&R) started 3 years ago. The fall of 2009 saw 25 6<sup>th</sup> graders, 35 7<sup>th</sup> graders and 20 8<sup>th</sup> graders.
- Girls lacrosse has exploded in the last 2 years under a new club president. Currently over 200 girls in grades 2 through 8 in the program.
- All youth sports clubs in town are in agreement that additional fields are needed: Boys Lacrosse, Girls Lacrosse, Boys Soccer, Girls Soccer, Baseball, Softball, Middle School Football and Middle School Field Hockey.
- Study phase of this project is fully funded by the youth sports clubs.

Bill Seymour spoke of his experience at Gale. His division specializes in the planning, design, permitting and construction of athletic facilities. The majority of his projects are on behalf of municipalities. Over the past 12 years, he has been the project manager on over 200 facilities, including those for Brown, Middlebury, Dartmouth, West Point, Springfield, WPI and the soccer complex in Lancaster, MA. Prior to Gale, he was employed by the Army Corps of Engineers.

Bill tries to come to each project with a blank slate. His first step is to do an environmental background check: vernal pools, wetlands, soil and ledge composition, local natural heritage (flora and fauna), flood plain issues. Next step is to map out the data – document and quantify present and future uses, identify “unresourced demands” which are uses going unmet because of facilities limitations, meet with abutters.

We will look at the number of scheduled field uses. We will look at maintenance issues and schedules. We will have a landscape architect evaluate this element. Grass fields need to be rested one growing period each year;

active growing periods are roughly 30 days in the fall and 30 days in the spring. If fields are not rested, they become overused, the grass doesn't grow and the fields become unsafe.

We will then calculate the number of fields by type of field that is needed. It is a rational process, based on factual data. The P&R Commission has stated that there is a need for more rectangular fields and for a softball field. They have also asked us to consider synthetic turf, a walking trail, parking needs, lighting, safety and vandalism issues. We do have a sense of the Commission's vision.

After developing a background understanding, we like to have user group meetings. Then using the base plan, we develop a number of alternative designs. We will bring the alternatives to P&R and then to the user groups and the general citizens. Building broad base consensus is important; you need project advocacy to go forward. We will narrow the alternatives down to 3 or 4 and then determine the best and highest use option considering input from all the interested parties: users, maintainers, protectors, abutters.

***A Question and Answer session followed:***

- What about Medfield State Hospital Land?
  - High School teams use those fields from 3:00 until 5:30 or 6:00. When it's not dark, youth sports can sometimes use the fields from 6:00 on; however from October on, it gets dark at 4:30.
  - Number of high school teams is growing with the addition of freshmen sports teams.
  - Wetland restrictions prohibit field expansion
  - Sharing of fields not a solution as fields controlled by high school and their demand is increasing.
- Are additional fields a want or a need?
  - P&R has been investigating field expansion options for a while. For several years, the youth sports clubs have been coming to us for more fields. We are at a point where we feel obligated to address their requests.
- Would new fields be leased to outside parties?
  - P&R policy has always been to not lease fields to private parties except in special cases.
- Are you considering a covered facility?
  - A bubble-like facility is currently not being considered.
- Are there covenant restrictions on lights at Caryl Park?
  - No, not at Caryl Park. There are lights restrictions at Chickering Fields.
- Are you looking at field use demand from Dover and Sherborn or just Dover? You can't really consider just Dover because the sports clubs are combined.
  - Yes, we have to look at demand from both towns. Laurel field in Sherborn is currently unsustainable because it has so many uses and is not well maintained. Sherborn is looking into converting part of that complex into turf fields, possibly through private partnership.
- What will be the environmental impact?
  - We are required by law to do an environmental assessment – wetland resources, vernal pools, likelihood of critical habitat, 100 year flood plain, flood storage.
- What about cutting down trees?
  - There is no legal requirement around cutting down trees in and of itself.
- If trees are taken down, can new trees be planted?
  - Yes. But keep in mind, we are not talking about clear cutting. We like to leave buffer zones of trees and other vegetation. Biodiversity is a good thing.
  - Caryl Park is 85 acres in total, and 12 of those acres are currently cleared. The park is also surrounded by 100's of acres of TTOR (The Trustees of the Reservation) land and 100's of acres more of Hale Reservation land.
  - We are required to keep a 100 foot buffer around the existing vernal pool. There are specific setbacks required along property lines. Part of the already-developed 12 acres includes walking trails and the compost pile used by P&R and the Highway Department.

- What are the vehicle patterns going to be?
  - We don't know yet. This will be part of our alternative development. We like to try to have roads going just one way, so there will be one roadway in and a separate roadway out. We like to separate roads from the playing fields by putting parking areas between the roads and the fields. It is a safety consideration.
  - Currently there are 50 to 90 spaces arrayed in the front and along the side of Caryl Field.
- You need to consider the traffic impact on Dedham Road, especially during rush hour. Currently there are times when it is absolutely grid lock. Can we zone the project so that the fields are all more closely together rather than spread out? Can we move the activity closer to the tennis courts and away from Park Avenue and Oakley Road?
  - We have already started to address the traffic and parking issues along Dedham Street. The league websites for both the soccer and the lacrosse clubs no longer list the Dedham Street parking lot as a parking option but direct visiting players to park at the Chickering School parking lot and walk down the hill to the Chickering play fields. The TTOR has removed from their website the Caryl Park parking lot as an access point to their Noanet Woodlands parcel. Over two years ago, we asked TTOR to remove their ranger hut from the Caryl Park location; they have agreed to do so and are working on identifying an alternative location.
  - A key traffic goal would be to have departing cars queue up on the property to get out.
- Why is P&R coming back with this idea when it was so roundly defeated at a recent town meeting? What is the price tag?
  - When P&R brought a similar project to town meeting in 2004, it was defeated by 12 votes.
  - We don't have a price tag yet.
- What is the time frame?
  - We hope the preliminary planning will be done by the end of January.
  - Today's economic environment may make it beneficial for the town to go forward sooner rather than later so as to secure a lower overall price tag.
- At a minimum, we would like the same amount of buffer that we currently have. Ideally, we would like to have the sports activities moved away from the abutters. We have horses and would like to be able to maintain access to Noanet Woodlands. We would like to maintain the rural character of the town. The horses need to have buffers from the cars. The Emerald necklace in this town needs to be maintained for the horses, walkers, runners.
- You need to consider the impact on our property values as well as the environment. What will be the traffic impact, the safety impact? What are the opportunity costs of developing these fields? What are the maintenance costs? What is the demographic reality of the future? At a minimum, you need to develop a plan that represents the interests of all the taxpayers.
- These fields may be needed now, but are they going to be needed in ten years' time? Are you being sensitive to the long range planning issues for our town?
- You need to think globally. Are active athletic fields really what the majority wants? What other recreation needs can be incorporated? Don't make it restrictive; you need to consider the dog walkers, toddlers. It needs to be a better solution for everyone.
- Girls' softball is definitely necessary; it's a Title 9 issue in Dover.
- There is a problem with dogs in Caryl Park. Kids have been bitten, and there is excrement everywhere, including the playing fields. Can we enforce the No Dogs rule? We need stronger leash laws.
  - Kids and dogs are not a good mix. The parking set up now is not working. Dog walkers park at Caryl Park and take their dogs across the fields into the wooded part of Caryl Park on their way to Noanet Woodlands. There are signs posted, but most dog walkers have their dogs off leash before they get to Noanet, many even while they are still on the playing fields.
  - The current parking lot is noncompliant with environmental standards. Storm water management laws require that 90% of solids be removed from parking lot runoff before it is released to ground water. In situations of dirt parking lots, solids such as gasoline, generally are not absorbed by the

parking lot surface and consequently leach into the ground water via runoff. All design alternatives will be required by law to put this situation in compliance.

- Why are you promoting synthetic turf?
  - I am not a synthetic turf person; I am an athletic facility designer. However, managed natural turf is not environmentally friendly if you consider the amount of water use, pesticides and fertilizers, and maintenance costs. In order to sustain a natural turf field, you need on average 600,000 gallons of water for irrigation. You also need to cut the grass at least once a week and then line the field. With synthetic field you save the labor costs associated with those tasks as well as the cost of the line paint, gasoline for the mower, and wear and tear on the mower. Ground tires are used for synthetic turf so these rubber products are recycled rather than sitting in a land fill.
  - The synthetic turf of today (NOT the synthetic turf of 10 years ago which was astro turf and was knitted nylon), is safer and more environmentally friendly. A sustainable natural turf field has to be crowned in order to shed water runoff. A synthetic turf field drains vertically and recharges into the ground water; they are pitched to just ½ percent.
- Didn't Wellesley have to pull their synthetic field project?
  - No. They are testing their water quality on a quarterly basis and actually have found that the water quality is better now than what it was before they put in the synthetic fields.
- What is the life span of a synthetic field?
  - The current technology has been around for ten years, so we can say with surety that the life span is at least ten years. Gale has done 80 to 90 projects using synthetic turf. UMass Lowell was the first one in the northeast. They replaced theirs after 10 years because the school wanted a different look. The materials were in great shape and could have been used for several more years. We think a synthetic turf field will last 14 years.
  - Replacing a synthetic field means just replacing the carpet; none of the base work needs to be touched. Carpet for a 90 square foot field is about \$800,000. By comparison, a natural turf field costs about \$350,000 to install plus \$20,000 to \$40,000 yearly to maintain, or between \$550,000 and \$750,000 over ten years. But, if the synthetic turf field lasts two additional years, the costs are all but equal. What you really need to consider, however, is the dollar cost per use on each of the fields. With synthetic turf, you have unlimited uses. On the natural turf, you have to limit the uses in order to keep the field safe.
- What happens to a synthetic turf field when it fails?
  - Synthetic turf fails not by overuse but from the sun. The polymers in the carpet become brittle and breakdown. The bad news is that right now, the old turf goes into a landfill. However, the synthetic turf industry is spending most of its research dollars on finding a more environmentally-friendly way of disposing of the old carpet.
- How integral is synthetic turf in this project design?
  - For this project, synthetic turf makes good sense. The current fields are overused and in the wet spring weather can't be used. When grass fields are used when they are wet, the roots breakdown and the sediment gets pounded down and compacted. This kills the field. A synthetic turf field can be used in all weather and would allow the other grass fields to get and stay healthy.
  - P&R takes one of the three fields off rotation each fall so that it can rest.
- How long has turf been around?
  - Astro turf was first used in 1965 and was the industry standard until 1997. It was a knitted nylon product. There were a lot of injuries with astro turf – abrasive injuries, staph infections, joint injuries. The current synthetic turf is nothing like the old astro turf. We aren't seeing any of these injuries on the new material.
- Please take a long term look at this project. Give thoughtful consideration to the generations 30 or 50 years out. We like the rural dirt trails, the dirt parking lot, the picturesque scene that is Dover. We don't want a huge sports complex. Make sure it is done in a tasteful manner.

- A sports complex with a bubble cover does not make sense here. It would be a horrible view scape. It is an effort to put them up, take them down, maintain them. The effort is not appropriate here.
- Lighting after 8:00pm would be absurd for this space. Currently there is no zoning rules on lighting, but let's have no lights.
- Actually lights are needed so that the fields can be used after 4:00pm in the late fall. Daylight savings time wipes out all sports activities half way through the season. It would be important for the vibrancy of the town to have lights.
  - There are advances being made on lights. The latest light systems control glare and bleed. One of the best is Musco's new product called Light-Structure Green. It is used at Brown University where analysis determined that the lights were less obtrusive post-development than they were pre-development.
- Why does this have to be here? The brunt of the town's sports activities is all right here at our neighborhood.
  - We have looked at lots of different sites.
- What is the projected demand 25 years from now? Do you have hard statistics? Population numbers? The national trend is a decline in birth rates.
  - We will look into this. The purpose of today's meeting is to hear your concerns.
- All the town committees say their projects need to be done now. I was on the school committee for 9 years. Repeatedly Warrant asked us to cut academic programs. So we cut academic programs but P&R is pushing for this project?
- If parking on Dedham Street is being considered. I don't want to see a Walmart-like scene out my bedroom window. If we landscape with new trees, where does that money come from?
- With respect to softball fields, there are softball fields in Sherborn at Laurel Field. They may not be convenient for Dover residents but they are there. Do we really need more here?
  - Laurel can be very wet; sometimes it can't be used at all. There are two softball fields at Laurel, but the second field is too small for the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade teams. This age group has to use the middle school field which is tough logistically.
  - Neighboring towns are years ahead of us with respect to turf fields and lights. They have found it to be favorable for their towns. We are late in the game in terms of adding fields. If we delay longer, we will fall further behind our neighbors.
- Maybe the way to look at it is that we are ahead of the game in maintaining the rural nature of our town. Artificial turf, lights, big parking is contrary to that ideal.
  - We are committed to transparency on this project. Bill is finally the right guy and is making the difference this time around. His firm knows how to do tasteful projects.
  - We did the Redtail Golf Course out in Harvard/Ayer/Shirley. Biodiversity and habitat enhancements were integral to the design. It turned out beautifully and in keeping with the rural character of the area.
- How about noise pollution?
  - Our designs will incorporate measures to mitigate abutter interference.
- It's really the parents who are the noise polluters, not the kids.
- What are the next steps? Can we have more advance notice of meetings?
  - The next meeting will be in early February when Bill presents his design options. We will give notice further in advance.

**Respectfully Submitted,**  
**Nancy Simms, P&R Commission**