

MINUTES OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES & PUBLIC PROPERTY COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD ON JUNE 15, 2017

Committee Members present: Committee Chairperson Thomas Sullivan, and Committee Members Joseph Bevilacqua and Colin LePage. Councilors Melinda Barrett and William Macek also attended.

Department Heads: Vin Ouellette – Human Services Director.

Attendees: Beverly Donovan, President and CEO, Greater Haverhill Chamber of Commerce, Melissa Seavey, Chamber of Commerce, Jenny Arndt, Creative Haverhill, Alice Mann, Team Haverhill, Joseph LeBlanc, Kevin Burke

- 1) **Doc. # 58-C** – Communication from Councillors Sullivan, Macek and Bevilacqua requesting to discuss an ongoing tree problem on City property abutting and impacting Holland's Flowers located at 577 South Main Street:

Councilor Sullivan began by noting that no one from Holland's Flowers was able to attend the meeting, but that they would be interested in knowing how the discussion went and if anything could be done to prevent further tree damage along this stretch of land. . There were no other persons in attendance for this item. Councilors reviewed the findings of City Engineer John Pettis and Parks Department Supervisor Neil Kelleher that the land in question is actually a paper street and currently each abutter to the road has an ownership interest in up to the middle of the road on each side. Councilor Bevilacqua suggested if the city were to discontinue the right of way the abutters of this paper street would have clear title to this land. Councilor Macek noted that we can remove public passage if there are no future developments planned in this area. Councilors agreed to allow Councilor Sullivan to further communicate with the Holland's to see if they would be interested in further exploring the discontinuation of the paper street which would afford each abutter clear title to their respective shares of this property.

- 2) **Doc. #58-S** – Communication from Councilor Bevilacqua regarding proposed uses on Rep. Dempsey Boardwalk:

Councilor Bevilacqua explained his thoughts on whether the existing festivals held downtown have an adverse economic impact on businesses, and whether or not it would be a good idea to move existing and future new events to the new Dempsey Boardwalk area. He noted this would give purpose and life to the Boardwalk area as well as afford views of the new Fiorentini Rail Trail and the Merrimack River. Councilor LePage pointed out that large events such as Kidsfest wouldn't fit in the Boardwalk space, but that smaller events might fit in the space. Councilor Barrett expressed similar concerns about what types of events would fit the Boardwalk space and be appropriate to the setting. Councilor Macek mentioned preserving the integrity of the Boardwalk if events were to be allowed to take place at that location.

Greater Haverhill Chamber of Commerce President Beverly Donovan spoke next and expressed Chamber support for using the Boardwalk for future events, but not necessarily the major festivals such as Kidsfest or the Downtown Stroll because of the size of those events. She did say the Boardwalk could certainly become a part of these larger events. She cited a Chamber survey of businesses and found that out of 25 businesses polled, 64% were happy with the downtown events, 24% were not happy, and 12% said they can tolerate them. She also pointed out that Chamber staff have been very accommodating to the businesses and residents concerns about these events.

Creative Haverhill Director Jenny Arndt spoke next about the importance of all the festivals held throughout downtown as they are all cultural assets to the community. She also pointed out how important it is to hold certain arts and cultural events in the Washington Street Historical District and Wingate Street areas.

Team Haverhill Director Alice Mann spoke about Team Haverhill's twelve year involvement helping to revitalize public places and spaces and events. She pointed out that certain events such as River Ruckus need large amounts of space in order to have concert venues as well as room for the antique cars. She pointed out that Team Haverhill has worked closely with all stakeholders to ensure all events sponsored by Team Haverhill are well coordinated and thought out by all before the events are held. She also expressed the importance of maximizing access and connectivity to many areas in the downtown. She asked the Councilors in attendance not to mess this up by requiring all downtown events to only one area of the downtown such as the Boardwalk.

Councilor Bevilacqua responded that he wasn't trying to do anything detrimental to any of the events held downtown. He is just trying to promote the Boardwalk, the Rail Trail and the Merrimack River.

Councilors agreed to recommend that the full Council send a letter to the Mayor requesting the appropriate departments review what, if any, specific rules and regulations apply to the use of the Boardwalk and whether formal applications would be drafted for potential applicants to use the space for public events in the future. Motion made by Councilor LePage, seconded by Councilor Bevilacqua and passed 3-0.

- 3) **Doc. #6-Q** – Communication from Councillor Macek requesting a discussion on the establishment of an Adult Fitness and Wellness Zone:

Councilor Macek remarked that an Adult Fitness Park was supposed to be part of the grant to make improvements at Riverside Park. Vin Ouellette explained that inclusion of the Adult Fitness Equipment was dependent upon the size of the grant from the state, and that because the City did not get as much funds as hoped, the Adult Fitness Park had to be cut from the plan.

Councilors recommended that a letter from the full Council be sent to the Mayor requesting that he seek grant opportunities if any in the future to establish an Adult Fitness Park. And at least keep it on a list of future park improvements. Motion made by Councilor LePage, seconded by Councilor Bevilacqua and passed 3-0.

- 4) **Doc. # 6-W** – Communication from Councillor Bevilacqua requesting to discuss Wood School Playground

Councilor Bevilacqua mentioned the ongoing concern about the condition of the Wood School Playground. Vin Ouellette reviewed improvements that have been made in recent years, including ballfield and basketball court improvements. He also questioned whether the existing chain link fence should be taken down and replaced with a wooden rail type fence. He explained this would be a big job to do and a costly expense to have the entire fence removed, citing not only the concerns over poison ivy and the cement posts that would have to be extracted from the site as well. He also cited the split in the neighborhood whether the fence should come down or stay. Councilors agreed to send a letter to the Mayor requesting consideration to have a new wooden rail fence replace the existing chain link fence, and to include funding in the upcoming capital budget to achieve this purpose. Motion made by Councilor Bevilacqua, seconded by Councilor LePage and passed 3-0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas J. Sullivan, Chairperson
Natural Resources and Public Property Committee

July 18, 2017