

Zoning Board of Appeals
July 26, 2012 Regular Meeting

Location Meeting Room #1
Town Hall
7A Spofford Road
Boxford, MA 01921

Present William R. Cargill, Jr., Chair
Paula Lia Fitzsimmons, Vice-Chair
Robert W. Conroy, Clerk
Paula Meagher, Secretary
Pat Canonica, Planning Board Liaison

6:44 p.m. William Cargill called the meeting to order

7:40 p.m. **Case #908 Christian C. Huntress, RLA of Huntress Associates, Inc. for property owner**
Town of Boxford
Hayne's Land off Middleton Road

Special Permit to develop a new town recreation area composed of three (3) athletic fields with parking known as Haynes Land from Article V, §196-18 Official or Open Space District and Article VI, §196-30 Site Plans.

Members Sitting William R. Cargill, Jr., Chair
Paula Lia Fitzsimmons, Vice Chair
Robert W. Conroy, Clerk

Applicant Present William Brown, Joseph Callahan, Howard Emmons and Martin Jessel (Haynes Land Committee)
Christian Huntress, RLA MA of Huntress Associates, Inc.

Correspondence Drafted by Marsha Erkson dated 7/30/12

This case was continued from the June 28, 2012 hearing. Prior to beginning the continuance the Chair realized there are several clients that are part of the project that are his clients, although he stated he had no financial interest in the project, wanted to disclose in case anyone objects to him sitting on the case or the appearance of a conflict. Paula Fitzsimmons explained that the Advisory Committee are representatives of the town and their project, not their own individual projects; therefore, it is not sufficient reason to recuse yourself. Paula Fitzsimmons also stated that she is a former member of BAA (Boxford Athletic Association), which has a strong interest in the fields. If the BAA were before this Board she stated she would recuse only because of an appearance of conflict, but does not feel there is an actual conflict. Robert Conroy had no problem and felt there is no potential conflict and there were no issues.

Mr. Brown reviewed the process of what their committee has accomplished from 2008 to date with a power point presentation. He wanted to show all the issues that they've been dealing with over the course of the project. He explained that the process has taken so long because they lost 1-1½ years because of the housing

issues on the land. Initially they tried to couple the projects together meaning the housing and the fields and the housing was contentious; therefore, they are now on the piece that relates to Conservation and Recreation. There was a breakdown on the history given which began at annual town meeting in 2007 to acquire the land (253-20). The land was purchased for that along with the potential of housing. He listed all the project meetings to date (over 70) with the Haynes Land Committee and the Master Planning process. There were numerous Conservation meetings and several public forum meetings. When they began the Natural Heritage process they discovered an overlay district where there is a potential for blanding turtles. They trapped for a couple of months and there were none to be found. They could trap again for another year or two, but at a cost of over \$100,000 or go to Natural Heritage to negotiate for land delineation and protection of habitat and work with them for recreational use. Through the process they had to give up land to develop. In 2010 they received Natural Heritage Approval. At May 2010 town meeting 75 acres was designated for Conservation and Recreational land and for re-zoning from R/A to Open Space District. In 2010 a RFP (Request for Proposal) was put out for design and now going through permitting process. Below is a list of what the program is for site uses.

BAA program:

- 2 multipurpose fields for football, field hockey, lacrosse, soccer, etc.
- Babe Ruth baseball field
- Softball field ----- **requested but could not
- Tennis, basketball & volleyball courts- play area ----- **accommodate
- Walking paths
- Parking for 150-200 cars

Housing program:

- 20 units of attached housing
- 1 garage for each unit
- Minimum of 12 acres for BOH requirements
- Well and leach field areas

Conservation program:

- Trails and trail connections
- Little Red Schoolhouse

They are currently in the process with the Conservation Commission and according to town counsel opinion can work within the twenty-five (25') foot no build zone. Various maps were shown for potential alternatives for development of the property.

The following is a breakdown of how the property will be divided:

<u>Total land</u>	<u>75.5 acres</u>	
Undeveloped	52.75 acres	70%
Recreational	15.78 acres	21%
Housing	6.97 acres	9%

Chris Huntress (Landscape Architect) spoke about the three (3) athletic fields; the dimensions and why they are located where they are and the parking requirements for them. The project includes a significant extension of the existing trail plan and connections to horse trails, hiking trails, educational trails and boardwalks to make multi-generational.

The field dimensions will accommodate the specific requirements for necessary regulatory requirements for each sport. The peak demands over the foreseeable future for youth enrollment are for soccer and lacrosse. The two larger multi-use fields are 360'x210' and will be able to accommodate all the sports and their various youth groups for their regulations. The other field is a Babe Ruth baseball field and the regulation for such is 320' from home plate. You could also use it for another youth soccer or lacrosse field.

There was a traffic study performed in January 2012 by DJK Associates which will provide for 179 spaces, which will be in three separate spots by the fields. Primary access will be at Middleton Road with a secondary fire/emergency driveway located opposite the first field and intersect with Samuel Bixby Way; which will be gated. Saturdays in the fall were determined as peak use for traffic generation. Recommendations were based on patterns around town that it was one player per car and 50% drop off and pick up. It was determined that there were 155 spaces needed and there would be 24 left for hiking and trail use. Although there seems to be ample parking, under peak condition these spaces will be in demand.

The Chair wanted to hear more about the close proximity of the fields and how much clout Natural Heritage has over the Town of Boxford. Joe Callahan explained that Natural Heritage supersedes everything. They have mapped the site and issued a permit and Conservation would not allow a second crossing; and it has forced all development to the north of the parcel. They made all cases they should've made, never saw or trapped turtles, unfortunately neighbors and abutters have sited them in the vicinity.

Chris Huntress said the setback from the field to a guardrail is forty (40') feet with a four (4') foot separation to a five (5') foot sidewalk and there will be three trees every fifty (50') feet. From the nearest abutter there will be approximately a total of one hundred (100') feet from their lot line. There will be white pine along the edge with some ornamental trees and there is a stone wall on the property line that will remain in place. Parks are open in town from dawn to dusk. Sports activities end at dusk and there are three lights that are proposed for security at night. The Conservation restriction also clearly states there is no night time activity in perpetuity. The fields will be closed in the winter; therefore there is no vehicular access. There will be only snowshoeing and cross country skiing allowed.

Bill Brown explained about state regulations that have to be met regarding water leaving and entering the site. They are taking measures to alleviate watershed to neighbors and the water will come across into Jerry's Run. There will be only one wetland crossing for a bridge with a thirty-two (32') foot span which will be wide enough for two way traffic and is for twenty-four (24) cars and a six (6') foot pedestrian walkway. The second egress will be gated and only used if necessary. The fields will not be used in the winter; therefore, no parking and no plowing. They have spoken with the Fire Chief in regards to the second access and will speak again with him in regards to gravel versus paved.

Sam LaGrassa – 19 Samuel Bixby Way asked about the noise level considering it's only 200 feet away from a home. It could decrease the property values. There are million plus dollar homes there and typically you wouldn't pay that much money for a home to be an abutter to a parking lot and fields that are that close.

Chris Huntress explained that there will be noise and the intent is the trees that will be planted should suffice for buffering for the neighbors. Howie Emmons explained that peak sports activities are mainly from April through June and will only be from 4pm to dusk on weekdays and 8am -1:30pm on Saturdays. There will be nothing on Sunday mornings but there will be lacrosse from 12-6pm. There is limited use in summer months. Late August starts up again with soccer and football through October. Various people spoke and Paula Fitzsimmons said that it really is an individual opinion on what each person would think whether that type of

noise is a nuisance or a resource and you have to realize that when you purchase a piece of property that abuts undeveloped land that you never know what will go there, but that something may in the future.

David Conti – 12 Georgetown Road said that they specifically asked their realtor in 2000 when he purchased his home about it and was told that it's a tree farm and they took the word of that person saying that it would never be developed.

Steve Davis - In working with a rail trail project people ask the same questions about property values. He has gone to other towns that have them and they have asked abutters and the houses that directly abut actually appreciate it there more than the houses on the other side of the street. It is an individual opinion on whether you want to live there.

Pat Canonica – The access roads will be paved and personally he thinks it would be more pleasing with hard gravel. It would be quieter and more natural if it was not paved. It will have poor drainage if paved. It would cut down on maintenance and slow down traffic for safety.

Chris Huntress said that he would speak with the Committee to see if they would reconsider the paving aspect and get back to the Board. Bill Brown explained that this is the Selectmen's project and they have reviewed all the plans; therefore, if people have suggestions regarding some changes we should gather together and bring forward for comment. Joe Callahan said that they have looked at the history of maintenance on existing fields and their parking and have found that some such as Boy Scout Park with an impervious/gravel areas and that typically in the past we have not taken care of them. Sometimes there are mothers taking three kids, two need to get in a stroller- there are puddles. They are not safe or accommodating at all. This was the compelling reason for asphalt.

Paula Fitzsimmons asked if there was a possibility of planting more trees along the left side of the Right of Way. Bill Cargill said that he'd like to see if they could protect the neighbors a little more. Chris Huntress said they will be getting more input from Conservation and Planning and then going back to the Committee for reconsideration on some of the issues addressed. He said they are currently getting an independent third party cost estimate on site prep work.

Motion Paula Fitzsimmons – continue to next meeting August 23, 2012

Second Robert Conroy

Unanimous vote

Motion Paula Fitzsimmons – adjourn 8:19 p.m.

Second Robert Conroy

Unanimous vote

Respectfully submitted,

Paula Meagher

APPROVED AS AMENDED 4/25/13

