



TOWN OF NEWTOWN

Sandy Hook Permanent Memorial Commission
Newtown Municipal Center- Council Chambers
3 Primrose Street, Newtown Connecticut
Thursday, January 14, 2016 @ 7:30PM
Minutes

In Attendance: Joann Bacon, Joanne Brunetti, Steffan Burns, Brian Engel, Daniel Krauss, Agni Pavlidou Kyprianou, Kyle Lyddy (Chairman), Sarah Middleeer, Tricia Pinto and Donna VanWaalwijk
Staff: Lynn Kovack (recording clerk)

Called to order at 7:30PM

Public Participation:

Ann Astarita of 32 Lyrical Lane, Sandy Hook: Ann stated she is protesting High Meadow for the Memorial, as the property is legally protected open space. She feels it should be preserved in its natural habitat. High Meadow Open Space is arguably the highest rated, most used, most visible and most valuable Open Space owned by the Town of Newtown. It is a rare beautiful spot and so different from any other space here in Newtown. It is grassland and she asks the Commission to choose an alternate space for the Memorial.

Holly Kocet of 2 Karen Boulevard, Newtown: Holly agrees with Ann regarding the Open Space. She stated our fields and meadows are disappearing fast. She has concerns, as there is no design plan and was told the portion of Meadow used will be small. She says once the construction starts it will also destroy the area. Security will be a concern. Mischief will be an issue. It will draw curiosity and the Commission should consider dedicating one of our parks or a New Community Center instead.

Karlyn Sturmer of 22 Old Green Road, Newtown: Karlyn is a current member of the Conservation Commission however was not speaking on behalf of the Commission. She states the Conservation Commission has spent years of effort to conserve Open Space. She stated we don't have habitat the High Meadow has elsewhere in Newtown's other Open Space. She stated they also begun efforts to study the habitat in the High Meadow and the Memorial would be right in the Middle of the High Meadow. Kyle asked Karlyn if she felt both Commissions could work together to accomplish a common goal – enhancing the land of the meadow while creating a memorial. Karlyn said she had tried and the design showed an access road going over Old Farm Road, which is open space. She feels it would bring in invasive plants with parking spaces. If you could keep the road out it could be stunning and enhance wildlife. She stated you could use golf carts and put one bench at the bottom and one at the top so the Meadow stays uninterrupted. She also doesn't like the idea of lights.

Kyle stated that the list of land options became available through Town Officials. He also stated that as soon as the Commission began considering High Meadow, they went right to the Conservation Commission to provide an update and understand how we could collaborate. Kyle stated that more discussions need to happen between Town Officials to assure we are moving in the right direction with no legal barriers. Kyle also stated the importance of inclusion with the Conservation Commission – encouraging there be a liaison between both the Conservation Commission and the Permanent Memorial Commission.

Mary Wilson of 12 Whippoorwill Hill, Newtown: Mary stated she is a former Chairman of the Conservation Commission and has never seen anything like the High Meadow. She stated it is a real gem. She is now part of a group called "Protect your Pollinator." She stated the High Meadow is where pollinators are now and would like to make it even better. Anytime you fragment land it doesn't help the environment. She said we need to maintain the large Open Space parcel and keep it from being fragmented. She said you will start with one thing and then you need lights, then you need electric line and then you see it will become something unsuitable. She said she would love to see just the High Meadow itself dedicated to the Memorial and untouched.

Sarah stated the spot picked out for the core Memorial is at the edge of the High Meadow and adjacent to woodland, and not in the middle of the Meadow. She said the Commission tried not to propose a piece of property larger than necessary. She said the Road does not go through the Meadow. She also stated that Commission would mitigate any disruptions. If a tree were cut down a new tree would be planted and if any plants were disrupted new ones would be planted. Sarah also stated that the fields are hayed twice a year and that alone threatens eggs laid in the spring, caterpillars and ground nesting birds. What we are attempting is to preserve the fields too.

Brian asked Mary if she had any other suggested area for the Memorial. She stated an area up behind the Sandy Hook Firehouse but knew the Firehouse brought bad memories to many families. Donna stated that for a year and a half the Commission had looked at many areas and wanted the Memorial in a place that fit the criteria the Commission had created.

Kyle wanted to be certain those knew that the Commission would be making the recommendation for the High Meadow to the Board of Selectman and the ultimate decision would come from them. He also stated we are not trying to contradict the Conservation Commission's charge and want a liaison from the Conservation Commission to make it work and is awaiting communication from their Commission. Understanding there has been a transition of leadership with the Conservation Commission, he'd like to begin conversations as soon as possible, although have yet to hear back.

Joanne Brunetti stated that Pat Llodra had attended a meeting with the Commission at an earlier date and was made to understand that the Open Space was not an issue. Joanne also stated that the Commission has no idea what is going to be there, as we have no design for the Memorial at this time – which is why we need the assistance of the Conservation Commission and any other resources to help educate us on this space.

Kyle stated he had updated the Board of Selectman on December 21, 2015 and asked for a head nod that the land was appropriate, which he received to keep moving forward. Kyle stated he would go back to the Board of Selectman again to confirm legally the land can be made as a recommendation, but didn't want to stall the process from moving forward.

December 2015 Commission outreach update with: Police Commission, Park & Rec Commission and Fairfield Hills Authority

Kyle stated the Police Commission was receptive about the approach and Kyle asked if they had any concerns. Their only concern was security. Whether you would need cameras or use campus security. But they were very supportive and willing to help in any way they could.

Kyle has had many conversations with Parks and Rec to explain our thoughts. They are working with Stantec who are landscape engineers on a Memorial Site Assessment. Stantec has made a proposal to assist in this process and are a trusted partner of Park & Rec, who are currently using the firm for their Phase III trail upgrades. Kyle wanted to assure that whatever is being presented works with Park & Rec's plan and not against it (for example, parking, roadways, etc.).

They have been involved in all areas like curb cuts, lighting, site improvements, etc. The conversation needs to continue to understand what needs to be done. Park and Rec is fully on board and will work with us on efficiencies of plans. Kyle asked that the Commissioners review Stantec's Memorial Site Assessment document so it can be discussed at the next meeting.

Kyle approached Fairfield Hills Authority to explain our process and they are all for development on the campus. They were supportive about our plans as a Commission – although discussions were pre-mature without knowing the extent of the design. They had no concerns and we just wanted to provide them with an update on where we are at this point.

Discussion of Design Selection/ Consideration Process: Sub Committee Report and timeline associated with work

Steffan stated it is a work in progress and that an initial draft has been completed. He has a framework and when ready he will share more detail and lay it out to the Commission. It is open for discussion. He has been working with the project coordinator for DMR, Geralyn Hoeroff. She's contracted by the Town and is helping with different aspects of Town Projects including Sandy Hook School and the Community Center. Does coordinating with Town Departments and Contractors. She gave Steffan sample RFP's to look over and understand how previous project RFP's have been written. She would review a draft of ours to help us out if needed. The RFP will have a specific timeline when completed.

Steffan has used language from other projects, similar in nature in communities who have been through similar tragedies. It is hopeful to have a draft to share with the Commission by the next meeting.

Location Enhancement Discussion and Conservation Commission inclusion/ Discuss inclusion of other resources as needed

Despite some opposition, Kyle has also received emails that have been supportive of the location and project. There has been no opposition from the 26 families at this time surrounding the specific location. Continuing the discussion on the Conservation Commission's involvement, Kyle has reached out since November 2015 in an effort to understand a "wish list" from the Conservation Commission – understanding of course they would like a voice at the table. The Permanent Memorial Commission has made the recommendation that there be a liaison to our Commission to streamline conversations, but was also open to recommendations. Sarah spoke with Pat Llodra and Pat wants the Commission to work with the Conservation Commission on researching on how to maintain the High Meadow, and enhance the land. Something to be gained working with the Conservation Commission is to help remove invasive plants, etc.

Kyle also obtained the inventory list of contributions made after 12/14 in an effort to understand what assets are available to the Commission for use in the memorial (Sam's 26 benches, trees, landscape contributions, etc.). Not all elements on the list are relevant for us. It is unclear if we should include these elements in the RFP at this time, or make these relevant resources available to the designer as we consolidate and tighten up plans.

2016 Community Communication plan/ Q & A distribution

We want to make sure there is accurate information out there and what we have done to get where we are. The Community outreaches have been done, however want to assure there is no misconceptions about how we have been working, or what we're proposing. Everyone was aligned that accurate information has been distributed and to continue down the path we're going. Brian suggested that everyone look over the Commission's website and see if any updates should be made at this point. No updated Q&A will be distributed at this time as there has been sufficient, accurate information distributed through the Newtown Bee. Kyle will continue to act as the spokesperson for the Commission, however will defer to others should there be specific questions he can't answer.

Financial Account Update/ Next steps and 501C3 status

There is currently \$165,000 set aside for a memorial. Approximately 10 local groups have been reached out to, to understand if the donor intent of dollars collected after 12/14 fit the mission of our Commission. That outreach will continue. We will not be going door to door looking for money, nor will we be holding bake sales to accomplish this. The cost of the project is unknown at this time without knowing the design, however in benchmarking similar communities who have been through this work, costs have drastically exceeded \$165,000. The immediate next step is to connect with those groups who have already raised money to understand support.

The Commission will also look for efficiencies on infrastructure costs with other Commissions in Town (Park & Rec).

The following has been set-aside as contributions to the Commission:

Town Account: \$130,000
Glenn Atkinson Fund: \$10,000
Newtown Memorial Fund: \$25,000

One other group who has expressed interest in a Memorial in our Community is the Newtown Alumni Association. Kyle will be reaching back out to John Norwell to understand what support they may be able to offer.

Kyle will be reaching back out to Joy Maini of Cohen & Wolf to understand how best to proceed with the 501c3, which would live under the town's umbrella. The discussion of bi-laws and disbandment need to take place to assure that as we move forward with the completion of this project, that no one is "stuck" with the 501c3, and that dollars and responsibility turns back over to the town.

Miscellaneous/ Confirmation of Calendar Dates for 2016/2016 Sub Committee needs

The 2016 Calendar dates are all good with being every 2nd Thursday of the Month and will begin at 7:15PM and not 7:30PM

Meeting was adjourned at 9:30PM

Respectfully submitted by Lynn Kovack (recording clerk)

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL BY THE SANDY HOOK PERMANENT MEMORIAL COMMISSION