



Skeet Shooting Audible At Potential 12/14 Memorial Site

September 10, 2016



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UPDATE (Friday, September 9, 2016): During a Sandy Hook Permanent Memorial Commission meeting Thursday, September 8, two days after this site walk, commissioners voted to look elsewhere for a permanent memorial location. The parcel off of Nunnawauk Road is no longer a consideration, according to [a statement on Friday, September 9, from Chairman Kyle Lyddy](#).

Walking through “a beautiful setting,” in a grassy field spotted with yellow golden rod and yarrow, Sandy Hook Permanent Memorial Commission members Steffan Burns, Donna Van Waalwijk, and Alan Martin stopped on a rise, listening for gunshots. The three stood near a wooded buffer surrounding the 28-acre parcel of state land at the junction of Nunnawauk Road and Wasserman Way — a potential location for a permanent memorial honoring the 26 lives lost on 12/14. The location also borders Potatuck Fish and Game Club land.

After listening momentarily, Mr Burns confirmed that yes, he could hear gunshots from a skeet shooting area at the Potatuck Club on the adjoining property along Wasserman Way.

Although the shots were “nothing louder than traffic,” said Mr Burns, they were audible. The three commission members had walked the site Tuesday evening after a brief visit to the game club, which provided them with an idea of where the skeet shooting area was in relation to the possible memorial site. The locations are roughly 3,000 feet apart.

Ms Van Waalwijk said, “We’ll ask the whole group” to consider this news. Taking a last look at the landscape, she said, “You could see the sunset from here.”

Additional group members present Tuesday included Chairman Kyle Lyddy. “The next step is to talk about this experience,” he said, at the commission meeting Thursday, September 8.

Are plans “negated because of the sound” of gunshots? he asked. “There are other spots,” he said. Members briefly talked about different possibilities for a permanent memorial.

Following the meeting, Mr Lyddy added, “Tonight was about grounding ourselves on the location we are considering and fully grasping the pros and cons to the state-owned land.”

He intends to evaluate the visit “to determine how what we learned will effect our decisions moving forward.”

Mr Lyddy also wishes to speak with members before moving ahead with soil testing on the site. The Board of Selectman has already approved funding for the tests, considering that an incinerator was also located in the vicinity of the 28 acres.

Mr Martin had asked Land Use Director George Benson, who also joined the group Tuesday, what had been disposed of in the incinerator.

“A lot of it was tin cans from food,” Mr Benson said. The land had once been farm fields surrounding the Fairfield Hills State Hospital with its many residents and staff. Mr Benson also dispelled suggestions that anything other than trash and tin cans had gone into the incinerator.

Potatuck Club Property Manager Bruce Clark took time on Tuesday to speak with memorial commission members at the club, before they drove to the potential memorial site. Mr Clark then test fired from the skeet range, so members could listen for the shots.

Mr Lyddy had said, “Our location is right next door. This is informational. If we have to look for another site, we will.”

He was also appreciative of Mr Clark’s efforts, as well as the Potatuck Club “for accommodating our group and being open with how the land is used so we do not go down a path and in turn have to back track later on in the process. Today was very informative.”

A private organization of about 50 members, many of them fishermen, the Potatuck Fish and Game Club is a hunting club and bird preserve on 413 acres. In keeping with state hunting season, members hunt pheasant and deer, but skeet shooting takes place year-round. Mr Clark had clarified that shooting does not necessarily take place every day.