

March 14, 2011

The Waterfront Commission held a regular meeting on this date at the Town Dock meeting room. Members present were Sandy Grimes, Chairman; Ethan Grimes, Secretary/Treasurer; Stephanie Hayes-Houlihan and Randy Minor. First Selectman Ed Haberek and many Town residents were present.

Mike Grimshaw; Bill Robinson and Arthur Medeiros were absent.

Chairman Grimes called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Mr. Minor made a motion to switch the agenda and address the Old Business item of the Dog Park first. Mr. E. Grimes seconded and voting was unanimous.

Dog Park issues – To begin Mr. Minor gave a brief history of the recreational area with low impact activity considered a 'dog park'. He stated that they would discuss complaints and hear opinions of those present. At this time, Michael Cary of Suisman, Shapiro stated that he represents the complainants that live on Front Street and abut the park. He added that he did not come prepared to speak. He addressed possible zoning issues and that the placement of the park seems to have just happened. He is aware there are more residents that use the park than live near it and the clients are willing to work together. He mentioned Dog parks in Norwich and Groton adding that these are not near residences.

A former member of the Stonington Borough P&Z and a former WPCA Commissioner stated that the property is zoned commercial and has been used as an "open space" area since the WPCA built on the property and has a long history as a dog park. Mr. Carey replied that zoning laws he believes would be prohibited if researched.

At this time, many residents spoke in support of the location as a dog park primarily for a sense of community that is safe and friendly. This is a small community where residents have to live close together. Several residents stated that any harassment is perpetrated by the complainants. Gwenna Dole an Animal behaviorist stated that the space is too small for a dog park so would be considered a dog run. She added that it is run beautifully, very clean and she was surprised that strangers at the park informed her of the rules of etiquette. Those opposed to the property used as a dog park stated that the traffic and amount of dogs has increased tenfold, it has become too popular for its own good. Some suggestions were a barking collar and hours of operation for the area.

At this time, Chairman Grimes gave a brief history of the WFC involvement. First Selectman Ed Haberek stated that he is committed to maintaining the area. He added that it is on record as a *PASSIVE RECREATION OPEN PROPERTY*, not a dog park. He would like a public discussion to have residents work together to come up with a plan. Chairman Grimes asked that the WFC be allowed to discuss and make a plan to present

to the Board of Selectmen. Two issues raised by residents present were a preference for an Open forum discussion and a possible relocation as promised. Mr. Haberek closed by stating that he believes a Town Meeting is best way to resolve the issue.

Previous minutes

Mr. Minor made a motion to approve the minutes of the January meeting as presented. Mr. E. Grimes seconded the motion and voting was unanimous.

Treasurer's Report

Ms. Hayes-Houlihan made a motion to accept the Treasurers report as read. The balance in the WFC account is \$475.00 Mr. Minor seconded and voting was unanimous.

Old Business

Dock Area housekeeping – Tabled

Maintenance items – Tabled.

Donahue Park flag – Chairman Grimes reported that he was contacted by Bill Robinson that the flag wasn't at half mast when it should've been. After a brief discussion, Mr. Minor made a motion to have the Town maintenance department monitor the Donahue Park flag along with other Town flags. Mr. E. Grimes seconded the motion and voting was unanimous.

New Business

Mr. Haberek stated that he is in the process of working toward a Donahue Concert Park series. He will provide the Commission with more information at the next meeting.

Correspondence

Nothing to report.

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Mr. Minor made a motion to adjourn. Mr. E. Grimes seconded the motion and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Ethan Grimes
Vice Chair/Treasurer