

**FORT WILLIAMS ADVISORY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 2009**

Attendance: Dan Chase, Maureen McCarthy, Chuck Wilson, Bill Nickerson, Bill Brownell, Greg Alznauer

Absent: Frank Butterworth

Staff: Bob Malley

Guests: Jean Gross, Lighthouse Gift Shop
Janet Hopkins, Community Services
Joe Edgar, Betty Crane, Jean Gross, Lois Carlson, Fort Williams Charitable Foundation

Meeting called to order at 7:05 p.m.

Dan welcomed Joe, Betty, & Jean, Janet & Lois had not arrived at opening.

Approval of the March 19, 2009 meeting minutes:

Dan moved to accept, Bill Brownell seconded. Unanimously approved.

Park Update:

The lights have been installed on top of the entrance gates. Interpretive display bases installed today, signs tomorrow. Next week looking at the hardscape, made adjustments to home plate and overall ball field alignment, no changes to the backstop.

Picnic Shelter steel structure sand blasted and painted, work done by facilities department. Did more tree work in the Oaks. Rangers are on board. No ground maintenance crews available yet.

Budget:

Tree work in the Oaks consumed the remainder of the tree work budget for this year. New fiscal year begins July 1st.

Discussion with Jean Gross about possible impact on bus fees:

Jean began the conversation about charging fees for buses. She has always counted bus traffic when the cruise ships come in, but this year she will start counting buses beginning Memorial Day. Cruise ships typically are the busiest Sept-Oct. Buses usually stay 20-30 minutes. She reported that 70-75% of their business is by cruise ships during those

months. Approximately \$100,000 in revenue. Total revenue is around \$500,000 a year. During June-August most sales are from car traffic, about 80%. Dan asked what about the Trolley buses? Jean replied about 6 a day. Chuck asked if trolley bus people stay? Jean responded they stay typically for only those 20-30 minutes because it's another 1- 1 ½ hours until the next trolley bus. Chuck we have a directive from the Town Council to be self-sufficient by 2010 calendar year. To Jean, what would the impact be for the buses on the gift shop? She said it all depends on the fee, if the fee is higher she thought it might discourage some buses. Would we charge per person, per resident, per bus? Jean stated bus excursions are planned 2 years out, if we decide to charge a fee, we would have to notify the bus companies. Chuck we need to figure out what makes sense if only have parking fees, it will not cut it-we need to charge at the gate, parking fees will not be enough income. We do receive monies from the trust and lighthouse, thank you. Jean mentioned most bus people are senior citizens and would hurt them if we raise fees. She suggested we contact the Maine Tourist agencies to get figures on what they charge for bus tours. Chuck counted 14 buses one day in October; Victory at the sea cruise ship had 25 buses.

Chuck, we need to find a way to make this work, how do we comply with the Town Councils guidelines. Do we charge the bus company per bus? Jean suggested to contact the bus tour operators. Destination Canada is a company that sells packages to the cruise ships, also check out Maine Tours on Ocean Street. Chuck asked again what are her thoughts on fees, and the response was in the perfect world we would not need fees. Chuck most of the people who visit are not from the Cape, we have maintenance issues, funding projects, sanitation, garbage, and lots of wear and tear with all the use.

Dan asked if we charge fees, would visitors expect something in return. 1) Bathroom was mentioned- they are being cleaned everyday and complaints are down, according to Bob. How about building real toilets instead of port-o- potties?? Other issue was 2) trash cans- problem with trash cans there was a lot of household waste, did not work, said Bob. The park is carry in carry out.

Chuck commented on we are all on the same plain-we don't want to hurt sales at lighthouse but we need to come up with something to Town Council, Dan- Need to figure out a way to make it work.

Bill N. gave an update on his conversation with Evan Richert about possibly being a consultant for developing a fund raising plan. This conversation led to two other names, Gore Flynn and Mark Eyerman. Eyerman is interested. Greg mentioned how his old town did visitor fees. During the month of Feb.-March town sent out a letter to all residents- each resident would pay a fee and receive a beach card. All non-residents would be required to pay an entrance fee per person and a car fee. All walkers, roller-bladders, and bike riders would get in for free.

Bob mentioned we have no idea how many people use the park, we need a survey. Bill N we need new data, Chuck we need sound data so we can forecast sales. Bob said he has a 10 year old survey which he look at. Conversations drifted into looking

at fundraising, Dan put out feeler for a consultant, Lise Pratt wrote letter requesting she could help. A decision to initiate a conversation with Eyerman was tabled to later in the meeting.

Discussion with Janet Hoskins about current usage fees

The Shelter is the big winner. Bandstand and Gazebo does very little business. Of the 104 bookings, 43 are on weekends and 61 on weekdays. Reservations are down by 40 this year. Janet stated when people make reservations its 50-50 to half like the fees and half doesn't like. She observed when fees go up, less people book. Sometimes large groups use park without reservations, there is an issue with non-residents using park by using a resident to get in park by paying lower fee. Janet mentioned Pat @ Community Services suggested a user fee, also building a second shelter. Bob suggested the beach parking lot for the additional shelter. Dan questioned who is complaining about the fees-instate or out of state. Dan suggested having higher fees on weekends, since the park is being used more. Chuck stated the usage fees are not the ideal source of our budget woes. Janet was asked what was the breakdown on visitors for non-residents and residents. She did not know but will get those figures to us by the next meeting.

Dan suggested one fee for everyone-resident and non-resident and maybe higher on weekends. Comment rebutted on same fees-since the town is putting up money, through taxes- the residents could pay less.

Commission thanked Janet for coming and she responded we support your endeavors.

Discussion on the various letters

A citizen has sent a proposal to open a hot-dog stand as a pilot project. Bob and the rest was concerned the Commission should send out an RFP first. What do we charge, a percentage? Chuck asked, do we want vendors in park? Do we build a building and lease it? Bill N said the Freeport hot dog stand makes \$200,000 a year. Chuck stated its premature to say yes or no to a RFP Greg will look into the Central Park Conservancy does their vendors and Bill B will ask the Portland people.

Where do we go from here? Asked Maureen

The responses were we need to find out how many people use the park, what is the traffic? Bill N do we get volunteers to look at license plates? Have someone count people and cars.

Betty is against fees- wanted to do whatever possible to take a whole year with surveys, need more time. Joe feels the same way, need more data, how many buses? How many people, 1 million visitors? Joe offered to get volunteers to do the surveys. Everybody thanked him. Lois would like to see a 5 million dollar endowment, preferable 10 million. Discussion on Foundations responsibilities on endowments.

Maureen asked, what are the plans to move forward? Bill and Bob will meet with Mark Eyerman and try to determine if hiring him as a consultant has enough potential to invite him to next meeting. Bob will see if John Duncan from PACTS, who did the previous park access survey, is available to do a new survey, and also unearth old survey.

Bob will get information on when the Goddard Mansion workshop will be.

Betty suggested to Bob to use St. Gabriel's organic weed killer for around Battery Blair, Bob will look into it, the acting secretary is starting to fall asleep.

Next Meeting: May 21st, 2009

Meeting Adjourned at 9:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Greg Alznauer
Acting Secretary