

Town of Cape Elizabeth
Fort Williams Advisory Commission
Meeting Minutes (Approved)
August 20, 2009

Present: Dan Chase (Chair), Bill Brownell, Frank Butterworth, Maureen McCarthy, Bill Nickerson, Chuck Wilson

Absent: Greg Altnauer

Staff: Bob Malley

Call to order: Meeting called to order by Dan Chase at 7:07 in the Public Works Conference Room

Minutes:

Upon motion by Chuck Wilson, seconded by Frank Butterworth, minutes of the June 18th meeting were unanimously approved.

Park Update:

Bob Malley reported on the following:

Traffic level at the Park has been high and the Public Works staff has been very busy keeping up with the mowing. Presumably because of the rainy weather, sales at the gift shop were off about 10 per cent in July.

The Beach to Beacon race was held on August 1st. Many people filled the Park and again it was a grand success. Bob acknowledged that, as in the past, the organizers and volunteers of the Race are good stewards of the Park.

Approximately 800 people attended the funeral service for Sean Casey, the son of two CE Middle School teachers, which was held at the Park on August 6th. There were no logistical problems and the Town was compensated for the personnel costs that were incurred.

The four college students who have been hired by the Public Works Department for the summer will be returning to school which presents a man-power problem for the Department for the next month or so. Bob is looking for 2 part-time employees to work thru the month of September, one to continue on to November.

Budget Update:

Almost \$15,000 was carried forward from last FY operating budget and there is now \$18,914 in the capital budget for this year, some of which will be used for the needed repair of stone walls and tree work.

GPCOG Traffic Study Update:

On June 25, 27 and July 25, 2009, the Greater Portland Council of Governments (COG) performed traffic surveys collecting data to determine the number of vehicles accessing the Park, the movement of the vehicles within the Park, and the number of vehicles parked in the parking areas. Licenses of in-state and out-of-state vehicles were recorded separately and the license numbers taken from the Maine vehicles have been sent to the Department of Motor Vehicles in order to determine the town of residence. Additionally, random individuals were questioned inside the playground to determine residence, length of stay at the playground, and how often the persons visited the playground. Bob reported that although COG conducted surveys on four days, the data from one of the surveys was mistakenly erased and COG now intends to undertake another survey within the next several weeks. A final report from COG, which will be informative in deciding upon any prospective fee system, may not be received until October due to a possible delay in getting information back from DVM. Bob also noted that Dan Chase and Joe Edgar each volunteered and helped COG one day conduct the surveys.

Skystone Ryan Proposal:

Extensive discussion was had concerning the proposal made by Skystone Ryan, Inc. to work as consultants to the Commission for the purpose of developing a business plan to raise funding for the Park, as part of the effort to make the Park self-sustaining. (See the meeting of the June 18, 2009 FWAC meeting). Chuck initially raised three concerns: that the unstated price would be too costly; that general fundraising would conflict with the goals of the Charitable Foundation; and that the proposal lacked sufficient substance.

This led to a more general discussion about fees, specifically the pros and cons of either a parking fee, or paying either an entrance or an exit fee at a booth. The Commission members discussed at length the feasibility of having resident stickers and seasonal passes, and the fee amount associated with such. Among other issues raised: Frank queried if start-up costs will be coming from the General Fund, Maureen noted that the costs associated with establishing and maintaining a booth have never been determined, and Bill N. noted that any fee schedule will necessarily have to be subject to change since it is impossible to project the exact amount of revenue that will be raised by any system. Chuck suggested that we may want to hold a workshop on the entire fee issue, perhaps with an outside facilitator.

Dan reiterated that the Council is looking to start implementing a fee plan next fiscal year and Bob urged the Commission to have recommendation by November. It was agreed that at the September meeting, the Commission members would be prepared to fully

debate the merits between either a ticket booth or pay and display parking and that the members endeavor to come to a consensus at that time. Chuck suggested we also address the issue of concessions as a source of revenue at that time. In preparation for that meeting, Dan asked the members to e-mail to him, no later than September 10th, their respective positions regarding the pros and cons of either a booth or pay for parking system, as well and their preliminary opinions regarding concessions at the Park.

Given the above, Chuck moved and Bill N. seconded, that any action on the proposal from Skystone Ryan be tabled at this time.

Review of the Recommendation Regarding the Goddard Mansion:

Following the release of the recommendation and long-term plan concerning the Goddard Mansion, there has been some public comment that because of its historical and architectural value the mansion should be preserved. Dan therefore asked whether there was any interest in revising the recommendation prior to the public hearing on September 14. There was none. The members reaffirmed their support of the recommendation, which does not call for either the restoration or the demolition of the mansion, but only that it be fenced off to protect the public until such time when funds may be available to undertake other action.

Update from Battery Blair Subcommittee

Chuck reported that the Subcommittee has met several times during the summer and is close to completing a mission statement and planning document for consideration by the Commission, possibly by the September meeting.

Central Maine Paranormal Investigators Request

Central Maine Paranormal Investigators, a non-profit group which uses infra-red cameras and other equipment to look for paranormal activity, has requested permission to have access in the Fort from 7 pm to midnight during an evening in early October in order to undertake an investigation for spirits. Although Bob reported that the group was very professional and willing to sign whatever waivers may be required, the Commission was very concerned about establishing any precedent allowing nighttime access and use of the Park. On motion by Bill B., seconded by Frank, the request was denied.

The next meeting is therefore scheduled for September 17th.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:12 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Bill Brownell
Acting Secretary

