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Cape Elizabeth, ME 04107

Cape Elizabeth Town Council
Fort Williams Park Committee
Cape Elizabeth, ME 04107

December 11, 2017

Dear FWP Committee Board members and Town Councilmen,

I am writing this letter to recommend considering an interim plan which assesses the potential monetization of Fort Williams Park's tourism influx that does not cost the people of Cape Elizabeth more money this coming tourist season.

Mark Russell was kind enough to address the FWP Foundation at our December meeting. He indicated that the Foundation may be called upon to help finance the new Park Manager position and other park maintenance this summer while studies are conducted to inform the Committee and Council as to the financial feasibility and political dynamics answering the basic questions, 'To what level are Cape residents willing to accommodate tourism in the park and what is our monetary reward for doing so?' The Committee posed this question to the Council in October.

Several aspects of this are clear:

First, since the need for a new Park Manger position is entirely due to the tourist traffic, the funds to pay for that position should come entirely from fees collected from those tourists. Furthermore, in order to accommodate the current level of tourism properly and safely in the future, several million dollars of improvements must be done in and around the park over the next few years including improving the roads, constructing a fee collection station and wait lane, and establishing additional parking areas in addition to the bathroom facilities and food services that should also be provided. In addition to that investment, several full time and seasonal positions must be funded and Cape residents need to benefit in some way for the loss of their park and the other inconveniences of tourism and traffic. A repair and improvement fund for Cottage Road and Shore Road must also be established. It would seem that the park must be able to consistently generate income of at least \$500K per year to re-pay the bond, pay the staff salaries, and cover the entire annual maintenance bill for the park in order to even consider devising and implementing a master plan with this directive.

Rather than spending more of the taxpayers' dollars and raising donations for this year's manager position, studies, and increased maintenance the Council should

consider charging tourists this season. I would like to recommend a simple plan to achieve this goal that the Council may be able to gain the community's consensus to implement this spring.

This plan would establish a temporary entrance fee collection station to be set along the entry road just before the beach parking intersection (so that the line does not back-up onto Shore Road). Fees should be commensurate with the going rate for park admission in the area. Scarborough's beaches are \$10/car and the state parks are \$7/person. Busses will need to be at least \$150 (about \$3/person) in order to have any chance of reaching the required revenue goal.

A separate entry and designated parking area for Cape residents should be part of this interim plan so as to provide free entry without standing on line. The entrance by the pond with access on the fire lane through Officer's Row or a constructed temporary gravel road to the parking areas around the maintenance area could best fulfill this interim purpose. A seasonal employee and kiosk will also be needed to turn away non-residents at this entrance. Vehicle registration or utility bill and id can be presented as proof of residency and the staff will get to know regulars very quickly. An annual pass to enter this lot can also be issued and sold at this location.

At the end of October, the Committee and Council will have real data on visitor numbers and real revenues. The Council can then present this actual information to the public to see if a consensus can be reached by Capers as to whether the quality-of-life costs of increased traffic and their loss of park use is worth the potential monetary benefits to the community.

Only then can a Master Plan for the park be devised since there will be dramatically different requirements depending on the direction the Council decides to take. The Town can provide some modest seed money to get this interim plan enacted, but the revenues collected this season should fully reimburse the cost of this year's additional staff salaries and fee collection stations.

Thank you for considering this course of action.

Sincerely,

Ilya I. Fleishman