

PARKS COMMISSION
Thursday, January 7, 2016
City Hall ~ Room 24
5:00 p.m.

Attendees: Steve Morgenstein, Nathan Robbins, Troy Moon, Melissa Graffam, Cynthia Loebenstein, Diane Davison, Craig Lapine, Michael Mertaugh, Carol Hutchins, Meri Lowry, Joe Dumais, Bill Needleman, Sally Deluca, Laurie Mondor

Citizen Comment Period – Carol Schiller spoke to the Commissioners regarding Longfellow Park. She is advocating for walkway repairs and lighting in the park. She mentioned that the walkways within the park are not wide enough for park visitors in wheelchairs to maneuver safely.

Jessica Russell from Deering Avenue asked the Commissioners to reconsider their CIP priority listing to include Longfellow Park. Ms. Russell is wheelchair bound and mentioned that the walkways are not wheelchair assessable. She said she moved here three (3) years ago and looked forward to being in the park, but she finds it hard to navigate on the walkways and there is no turning radius (where a patio in the middle area that is proposed would be great to help). Ms. Russell has also mention that she has fallen out of her chair due to something in the walkway. It was also mentioned that the residents of the assisted living facility would benefit from the repairs.

Emily Smith from 2 Dartmouth Street said ditto to what Jessica said. This would be good for the older people at the assisted living facility. She works as a C.N.A at Maine Medical Center and knows that making the park handicapped accessible would be therapeutic to residents and they would get great enjoyment from it.

Ann Shay, members of the University and the Friends of Longfellow Park Associations and longtime resident of the area until recently. Always saw the parks as a community center, a place where families can come together.

Nancy Knauber, Portland Resident – Asked if the park was currently handicapped accessible and if anyone was in charge of looking into park renovation.

Acceptance of Meeting Minutes – December 2015

A motion was made by Michael Mertaugh accept the meeting minutes. Motion seconded by Carol Hutchins. Motion passed 8-0.

New Business

Fort Gorges – Joe Dumais from Public Works updated the Commission on an opportunity that has become available to the City from the Army Core of Engineers. Fort Gorges has been on a very long waiting list for the opportunity to get many of the items that are in disrepair out on the fort fixed and our turn is here. Some of the things that they would be fixing are the items that are in the post inspection from many years ago. They are the stairs that lead to nowhere; cisterns; rotting flooring. They would be fixing falling and drowning hazards and would start in the spring of 2017.

Joe mentioned that if we pass on the money that they are offering to spend to fix these items, we may never get a chance in our lifetimes to see any changes made. He has talked to the City Manager about this and he is in favor of this project. Currently there is no money budgeted for this.

The Army Core of Engineers has no ceiling to their budget, but it is estimated to be \$500,000 to a million dollars. One of the problems is that they will not be making a permanent structure so getting to the island and safely is still an issue. There is some grant money that could help. Deb Andrews from Historic Preservation will be working on a Master Plan for the Gorge.

A motion was made by Michael Mertaugh to support the work of the Army Core of Engineers and to work with the City on this process. Motion seconded by Steve Morgenstein. Motion passed. 8-0.

Amethyst Lot- Bill Needleman updated the Commission about the lot. It is the last piece of public undeveloped land to provide boating. The City Manager's priority to do something with that area. The first step would be a planning and conceptual design. This would include working with the Parks Commission and other interested parties.

Meri Lowry asked if this property could be included in the Land Bank. Bill replied no, as it will be a park like with the potential for structures to be placed on the property.

When more information is available, city staff will let the commission know.

Community Gardens – Lift 360 – Craig Lapine, updated the Commissioners about the growth of the community gardens within the city. In 2013, the city has 134 gardeners; in 2015 it has 421. Cultivating Committees along with Lift 360 is offering leadership training for gardeners. There will be 35-50 gardeners attending.

Vote: Chair, Diane Davison and Vice Chair, Dory Waxman – Michael Mertaugh moved to vote Diane Davison as chair and Dory Waxman, Vice Chair. Seconded by Nathan Robbins. Passed 7-0.

Unfinished Business

2016 CIP Discussion – Database is closed. Department Heads are prioritizing items and then sending to City Manager.

Approve/Vote: Protocol for PC Meetings – Craig Lapine made a motion to accept with changes. Motion accepted by Michael Mertaugh. Passed 8-0.