

Minutes
Pondicherry Park Stewardship Committee
Special Meeting-Wednesday, August 17th, 2016
Town Office at Select Board Meeting Room, Bridgton, Maine

Chair Brian Cushing called the meeting to order at 5PM, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and roll call. Those present included: Brian Cushing, Bear Zaidman, Marita Wisner, Dick Bennett, Ken Murphy, Mary Jewett, Bridgton Public Works Director Jim Kidder, Bridgton Police Chief Richard Stillman, Town Manger Bob Peabody. Absent: Allen Erler, Jon Evans, Leigh Hayes, Dan Edwards

The purpose of the special meeting was to discuss vandalism that occurred sometime Monday, August 15th at the park. Vandals black spray painted inappropriate words and symbols on signposts, walkways, trees, and the chimney and railings at the amphitheater. They also spray painted signs that accompanied the Bridgton Public Library's Storybook Trail within the park. Other business includes the following items: Adam Perron 5 K Scholarship Fundraiser, LRHS/LEA Pondicherry Park Field Guide initiative, and park signage.

Park Vandalism

Brian gave a quick overview of the situation and welcomed everyone. Mary Jewett provided colored photographs of the vandalism to committee and guests.

Police Chief Stillman updated the committee on the current situation and reported that an active investigation of the vandalism in Pondicherry Park is underway. Several officers have visited the scene of the crime and given reports. Pictures of the damage have been posted on the towns facebook page and the public is encouraged to share any information that might lead to the identification of the perpetrator(s). There are several leads already. The Chief explained that his department does not have the capacity to patrol the entire Pondicherry Park but have been and will continue to spot patrol and penetrate the park at certain locations like Dunning Bridge. The Chief also encouraged the general public, while using the park, to be aware of and report any suspicious activity, but to avoid confrontation. The Chief reported that pictures and videos are of great help to the department in solving cases such as these, so any provided are appreciated. The police department has been in contact with local hardware stores regarding the sale of black spray paint recently. Store cameras may be used to assist in the investigation.

Public Works Director Jim Kidder reports that a game camera is currently in place at the Dunning Bridge and will be moved to different locations within the park from time to time. He also reported that the vandalized walkway has been turned over to hide the vandalism. The railings at the amphitheater will be unscrewed, taken to a shop, and planed to get rid of the graffiti. Appropriate power washing equipment will be brought in to remove the graffiti on the stone fireplace in the amphitheater. The committee voted

and approved wheeled transportation to bring equipment into the park to do the cleanup. Bear Zaidman shared contact with Jim that might help facilitate the cleanup process. Jim reported that the Storybook Trail signs, some of which had been spray painted, some thrown into Stevens Brook, have been removed by public works and returned to the library. Different ideas were shared regarding the removal of graffiti on trees: scraping, painting included. Perhaps unrelated to the vandalism, Public Works has removed human feces and vomit from the Dunning Bridge.

The committee thanked Police Chief Stillman and the police department for their efforts to solve this case. The committee also thanked Public Works Director Jim Kidder for his work to get rid of the graffiti and for other work they do above and beyond the call of the duty.

The committee will discuss additional use of surveillance cameras within the park at future meetings and how they will be paid for. Committee members with leads on vendors will do research and report back to the committee.

Adam Perron 5K Scholarship Fundraiser

The committee approved the use of the park **as part** of the 5K Scholarship Fundraiser planned for September 24, 2016. Town Manager Peabody will bring this to the Select Board for consideration. The committee stipulated that only the main trails should be used for the run and that runners be made aware that they need to stay on the trails and be respectful of others using the park. Brian will contact the organizer, Beth Perron, and let her know where the request stands and encourage her, if she hasn't already, to contact the Bridgton Police Department and go through whatever process is necessary to run such an event.

LRHS/LEA Pondicherry Park Field Guide

Lake Region High School Science Department and Lakes Environmental would like to collaborate to create a Field Guide to Pondicherry Park. The committee approved the project with the stipulation that placing markers of any kind in the park would be a violation of the easement. Committee alternate for LEA Mary Jewett will be working with developers and overseeing the process from the Stewardship Committees point of view.

Park Signage

Drug Free Zone metal signs have been placed at the four entrances to Pondicherry Park that have kiosks. Jim Kidder will be placing a fifth sign at the Ham Bridge entrance. The committee discussed additional signage that would more clearly state the other park rules and hours for use. Right now the rules are subtly posted at the kiosks. Other town parks have metal signs that are more obvious and harder for the public to miss. No decision was made to add additional signage at this time.

Brian adjourned the meeting at 5:55.