

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
WORKSHOP/MEETING MINUTES**

**Downstairs Meeting Room**

**August 8, 2018  
5:30p.m.**

Board Members Present: Liston E. Easton, Chairman; Glenn R. Zaidman, Vice Chairman;  
G. Frederick Packard; Carmen E. Lone.  
Absent: Robert P. Murphy.

Administration Present: Georgiann M. Fleck, Deputy Town Manager.  
Absent: Town Manager Robert A. Peabody Jr.

1. Call to Order

Chairman Eastman called the meeting to order at 5:30 P.M.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The Board recited the "Pledge of Allegiance."

3. Workshop to Discuss Pondicherry Park

Discussion ensued between Board and Committee Members, Citizens and Department Heads.

Vice Chairman Zaidman distributed the Pondicherry Park Operational Budget FY 2019 and information about the reserve fund. It is my understanding that this was set up by the Board of Selectmen with money coming from the Moose Pond Trust Fund. There was a question regarding money that LEA had when the park transferred over and Town Manager Peabody is still looking into that. There is \$26,836.72 in the reserve account. Public Works Director Jim Kidder explained the difference between the operational budget vs. the reserve budget.

Chairman Eastman said one of the issues that we wanted to talk about at this workshop was how to maintain the hazardous trees in the park and finding a solution that will work between everyone to make sure the park is safe.

Mary Jewett, representative of Pondicherry Park Committee, said there is information in the Management Plan regarding trees. Vice Chairman Zaidman said recently Public Works Director Kidder and Deputy Town Manager Fleck walked through the park and noticed a large number of dangerous trees. They reported that back to Town Manager Peabody and they decided to contact a forester and get a written opinion. Not involving the Committee in this action was not intentional. Every Select Board meeting there is a section on Committee Reports and I understand there was a Select Board liaison who was not very active on the Committee but a member of your Committee could have reported to the Select Board at any one of our meetings. You also had a forestry report that we were unaware of. Present is Shane Dugan, District Forester for the Maine Forest Service representing Pondicherry Park Committee and Jack Wadsworth from Wadsworth Woodlands Inc. representing the Town of Bridgton and we would like to hear from both foresters this evening.

Member Lone asked Mr. Dugan if he had seen the report done by Wadsworth. Mr. Dugan said no, I purposely did not look at it because I did not want to critique someone else's report. Member Lone said the only document we have is the one done by Wadsworth. Mr. Dugan said I was asked by Mr. Evans to walk the Park, I tried to coordinate with Public Works Director Kidder so he could join us but he was not available. Before I walked the park I reviewed the management plan, my assessment and recommendation is it seemed like the general mission statement and purpose of the park was to work with an arborist. An arborist looks at trees individually and determines hazards based on a score and rates each tree 25' or 100' from the trail. If there is a rating they can be ranked on priority for removal. The park does not lend itself to a commercial harvest but the intent is to maintain a safe environment for users. Vice Chairman Zaidman said did you walk the whole park? Mr. Dugan said yes, I walked every trail. Vice Chairman Zaidman said did you go off the trail? Mr. Dugan said no, I did not walk every square foot. Vice Chairman Zaidman said not everyone stays on the trails and we have cameras that prove that. This is a park in our downtown area where more and more people are using it and I want the park to be as healthy as possible. Mr. Dugan said the Management Plan has individual tree management. Ms. Jewett said yes, we want to leave things in there because standing dead trees is very good habitat for the wildlife. If it is not a danger to the trail then I don't think it needs to be addressed. We talked amongst Committee members and we could add more signage. There is already a sign posted that states "use at your own risk." People are going to break the rules. This is a valuable resource for the town and if you start taking out the natural features it will change the park. The town would not be liable if someone goes off the trail and gets injured. Vice Chairman Zaidman said you say that, but I don't care about lawyers or money it is concerning to me that we know the dangers and are not taking care of them. I don't want someone to get hurt as a result. We have problems in there, there is vandalism that takes place and people do go off the trail. Mr. Dugan said you can't mitigate every hazard.

Chairman Eastman said you can put up a million signs but that is not going to address the hazards in the park. There are issues in the park and we need to make sure we address them. My concern is if you have a cut and lie provision and there is enough of it is it really good for the forest and is it creating a fire hazard? Mr. Dugan said there are good guidelines for managing fuels in place such as spreading it out. In this forest I envision them rotting and not laying around for a long period of time. Typical management is 200' wide corridor around the trail and I would be curious to see how much of the park would be left over.

Dan Edwards said if we know there is a limited budget and we know we want to talk to an arborist to rate the trees then why wouldn't we start with the closest and most dangerous trees and work from there to do a little each each year.

Vice Chairman Zaidman said just taking some of these trees down is a huge risk and will be very expensive and because of the size of some of these trees they are going to lay around for a long time.

Dick Bennett said if you are going to talk about the costs you also need to consider aesthetics. It is safety plus aesthetics plus cost. Whoever did the job on Sabatis Island did not have aesthetics in mind.

Ms. Jewett said there is \$26,000 in reserve which should be enough to take down the most dangerous trees and to have Q-team make the inventory of trees within the corridor whatever distance from the trail we determine. If you start taking down large trees that have a canopy the invasive species in the park

is going to get worse. Mr. Dugan said there is a large amount of invasive species in the park which thrives on light. Nothing else will grow within invasive species. Invasive management is very expensive. Vice Chairman Zaidman said isn't there something in the Management Plan regarding removal of invasive species? Ms. Jewett read a section from the Management Plan regarding invasive species. Vice Chairman Zaidman said so the plan is recommending removing the invasive trees but remove the other invasive species? Ms. Jewett said yes. Heather Royer, Loon Echo Land Trust, said that the Wadsworth report identified other invasives that are not referenced in the report and there has not been an updated inventory since then. Chairman Eastman said we are also in a neutral position with the invasives as with the dangerous trees, the issue is not going to go away and needs to be taken care of. Ms. Jewett said the removal of invasive species is going to be much more expensive because they need to be removed by hand.

Public Works Director Kidder said we, the town, asked Mr. Wadsworth to look at the park and its condition and render an opinion, not to harvest, but the health of the park.

Jack Wadsworth, President of Wadsworth Woodlands, there is a tremendous amount of hazardous trees. I don't know what the liability of the town is. We did recommend doing a light timber harvest but I don't know what the plan is and you would have to make arrangements with Lakes Environment Association for a landing. It would be a biomass harvest and the dead trees would need to be chipped. There was a good white pine seed drop and you have white pine trees started but you open up the canopy and you are going to have a lot of invasives. I marked every tree on Sabatis Island that we took out and the town made \$8,000.00. A lot of dead wood was also picked up when we were doing the work. This work will be tough because of the dead dangerous trees and the limited access. You are inviting people to use the park and it is very dangerous.

Ms. Jewett said the Wadsworth report references trails so that I think we are in agreement, with the invasive species, know what needs to be done and come to terms without impacting the ecology of the park causing a negative impact.

Ms. Jewett said there has been a recommendation from the Committee to move forward with a universal access trail that Loon Echo Land Trust has proposed which will eliminate the boardwalks on the main part of the trail. Chairman Eastman said some but not all. Ms. Jewett said correct. There are grants available so the town would not need to pay for the access trail.

Chairman Eastman said the Board said we were for the access trail if the dangerous trees were taken care, grant funds were available to pay for it and money was set aside as an escrow which would help maintain that trail over time so the taxpayers would not have to pay for the maintenance because I assume a trail like that would take more maintenance.

Dillan Smith, Forester with Wadsworth, said when cutting is done you leave what you can and take what needs to be taken. When the report was written it was written with an unbiased opinion. There is a lot of dead trees along the walking path and I know you understand that. We did not solely write the proposal to get a timber harvest job and to lean on the fact that no one would be liable if a tree comes down and injures someone is a poor excuse for not taking care of dangerous trees to keep people safe.

Selectman Lone said I am not in favor of the universal access in an unsafe environment when people can't run. Ms. Royer said we will not do the trail until the hazard trees are taken care.

Vice Chairman Zaidman said the park does not have a right of way to allow the town to mow the Keene field. Is there any work being done to negotiate a right of way? It would also be a good idea to get a right of way for a machine to get into the park to do maintenance. Ms. Royer said if the universal access trail goes through there would be a right to access the trail with machinery. Public Works Director Kidder said I contacted the owner of the Keene field and they allow me access so I can mow the field. Selectman Lone said but a formal agreement has not been established.

Chairman Eastman said there are some discrepancies between the brochure and the management plan such as clarification for the use of bicycles in the park.

**Vice Chairman Zaidman moved** to instruct Town Manager Peabody to discuss with the Public Works Director Kidder contact an arborist to create a list or inventory within the trail area and have another meeting the Committee unless there is a small amount of trees then the Town Manager can handle it. Selectman Packard 2<sup>nd</sup>. 4 approve / 0 Oppose

Public Works Director Kidder said do you want all the trails or selected trails? Chairman Eastman said all the trails. Vice Chairman Zaidman said unless the arborist starts and it is a lot of trees then we should have another meeting to discuss the findings. Public Works Director Kidder said I should be able to report back to the Board at your next meeting.

#### 4. Adjourn

Chairman Eastman adjourned the meeting at 6:59p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

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Georgiann M. Fleck, Deputy Town Manager  
Town of Bridgton