Minutes of the July 9th, 2018

Winslow Park Commission Meeting

6:30 PM

@ Freeport Town Hall

As produced by Neil Lyman

Winslow Park Manager and Winslow Park Commission Secretary

In Attendance- Robin Baron, Doug Reighley, Karissa Davan, Susan Hazzard, George Connick, Nancy Marquis, Neil Lyman

Absent- Lucy Lloyd, Kim Swett

Also in Attendance were a large number of members of the public and town manager Peter Joseph.

Meeting convened at 6:30

* Susan Hazzard moved that the meeting be convened and welcomed a large number of the public to the meeting, also explaining that there would be a designated time for public comment. George Connick seconded the motion to convene the meeting. All were in favor.

The Minutes of the June 11, 2018 meeting were approved with changes to three misspellings of names.

**Old Business:**

* Discussion was had between commission members about voting to rescind the motion which was passed at the previous meeting concerning the elimination of seasonal sites.
  + Susan Hazzard made a motion to vote to rescind that previous vote with Doug Reighley seconding said motion. Doug Riley suggested that discussion be had before the actual vote is taken.
  + Karissa Davan made a motion to open a public discussion with a limit of three minutes per comment. The motion was seconded and all were in favor.
  + The commission decided to poll the board (not vote) for commission member’s feelings on the motion to rescind. Three members were in favor (Robin Baron, Doug Reighley and Susan Hazzard) and three were not (George Connick, Karissa Davan and Nancy Marquis).
  + Doug Reighley stated that he thought the community may feel that they had not had a chance to be heard on this issue. George Connick stated that this topic has come up a number of times over the years. Karissa Davan stated that there had been serious discussion on this topic since the fall of 2017. Doug Reighley explained that there are monthly meetings open to the public and notices are posted in various locations.
  + Peter Anzuini, a Freeport resident and former town council liaison to the park commission, commented that he understands that meetings are posted, but that most park meetings revolve around fairly mundane topics of park operations. He commented that this is not a mundane topic and that people did not realize what was going on.
  + **A formal roll call vote was taken to rescind. The outcome was three in favor and three not, with members voting the same as they had when polled. Peter Joseph, town manager, clarified that the motion does not pass in a tie vote.**
  + Karissa Davan once again moved that public comment be opened and Doug Reighley seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous and the public hearing was opened.
  + Jim Hughes, a Freeport resident, called for a point of order questioning why the commission had taken a vote before hearing the public out. Susan Hazzard replied that the commission could make another motion, but were hoping to see if there was a strong leaning in one way or the other.
  + Doug Reighley explained the process of a public hearing, which includes stating your name and where you are from and a time limit of three minutes per comment. He also asked that if someone has already made an argument that people just state that they agree with said argument.
  + Robert Levi, a Freeport resident, asked that commission members introduce themselves, which they did.
  + Peter Anzuini, a Freeport Resident, stated that he would like to ask the commission a few questions. Karissa Davan stated that he could not ask questions, only comment. Mr. Anzuini commented that the park is a great place that doesn’t cost the town any tax payer money. He commented that in the park’s current state the lots are well maintained by seasonal campers setting a tone for others to help keep the whole park well maintained. He voiced concern with the atmosphere of the park declining without a seasonal camper presence, causing problems with maintenance, noise, and income.
  + Bill Ross, a Freeport resident and former 25 year member of the commission, stated that he saw value in seasonal sites, citing revenue, security, and support for the park. He stated that he would like to see the policy stay as it is. He stated that he believes, from his experience, that the change would also hurt income.
  + Robert Levi, a Freeport resident and seasonal camper, commented that he feels the written motion, prepared by George Connick, is flawed in many ways. He does not feel it is financially sound and that it lacks research. He also does not feel that the proposal takes into account the culture and community of the park. He is not in favor of the proposal. Mr. Levi also commented that the question of seasonal camping meeting the intent of the trust has been asked numerous times and answered; that it is within the intent of said trust. Mr. Levi is concerned that the commission made the previous vote in a “vacuum” without public input. Mr. Levi also noted that he had written a letter (which was distributed to all commission members) and asked that they read it.
  + Lee Hutchins, a long time user and employee of the park from Westbrook, Stated that as a ranger at the park he does not have to worry about the seasonal campers and that they help police others in the park from breaking rules. Mr. Hutchins stated that he does not see any downside to the current policy. He also stated that a lot of campers attend the park as regulars because of relationships they have made with seasonal campers. Mr. Hutchins feels that the seasonal campers have a great deal of pride in the park and that the elimination of them would cause instability in both atmosphere and income. Mr. Hutchins also stated that very rarely is the park full and that the sites that they are on have historically not been great sites.
    - Karissa Davan commented to Mr. Hutchins that the park trust is not public, it is private and that the trust states that the park is for the “People of Freeport”. Mr. Hutchins asked if it was for the “People of Freeport” or “The Public”. Ms. Davan stated that the deed and the trust stated the “People of Freeport”. Mr. Hutchins stated that, as he understood it, the trust attorneys had stated that the current seasonal policy did not violate the trust. Ms. Davan commented that only three seasonal campers are from Freeport. She commented that the trust lawyer was in the opinion that the policy be terminated. Doug Reighley quoted from the previous meetings notes which read “Mr. Standen also noted that either the proposed motion or the current practice could be embraced by the language in the trust.” Mr. Hutchins questioned the commission’s statement that the practice violated the trust. Ms. Davan asked how Mr. Hutchins justified the practice benefiting the people of Freeport with only 10% of the seasonal sites being occupied by residents. Mr. Hutchins again questioned whether the campers needed to be Freeport Residents and noted that he understood that Freeport residents got a discount.
  + Samantha Barry, a former employee, seasonal camper and Freeport Resident, Stated that she has grown up at the park and has fallen in love with it. She feels that the seasonal campers set a tone for others at the park, resulting in a very nature-oriented and safe zone for families and their children. Ms. Barry commented that she agreed with staying in line with the trust’s intent, but that she felt that the intent was to leave the land to the public and that the current practice was in line with that intent. Ms. Berry, as a former employee felt that there were almost always open sites at the park.
  + Dave True, a Resident of Brentwood, NH and seasonal camper, stated that he does not understand wanting to change the current seasonal practice. Mr. True feels that the seasonals act as a welcoming presence at the park. He noted that the seasonals take pride in the park and their sites and help maintain the park.
  + Kathy Kroll, a resident of Portland and seasonal camper, stated that the seasonal campers set the tone for the park, noting a recent incident where seasonal campers helped an elderly couple when their carbon monoxide alarm was going off, checking on them to make sure everything was ok. She also feels that the seasonals are good ambassadors and good for the park and town.
  + Vicky Marquart, a resident of Waltham, NY and park camper (non-seasonal), stated that she has been camping at the park since the 1970’s and that the relationships she has formed with seasonal campers is one of the main draws to the park for her. She also stated that if the seasonal campers were not there she would camp elsewhere.
  + Herb Taylor, a Freeport resident, stated that he agreed with all the previous public comments. Mr. Taylor questioned whether the trust intended the park to be exclusively for Freeport residents.
    - Karissa Davan stated that it was to benefit the people of Freeport, but that it wasn’t exclusive.
    - Mr. Taylor referenced a portion of the motion at hand where it was written, “We have heard public commentary to the effect that the intent was to provide a public facility for all the citizens of Freeport and others.” Mr. Taylor also stated that he sees the seasonal campers as a subtle, unpaid security force and that they bring issues to management improving the safety of the park. He hopes that the seasonal campers will remain.
  + Jim Hughes, a Freeport Resident, stated that he uses the park daily, year round. He had previously given the commission a written letter stating his concerns. Mr. Hughes’ issue with the proposal is that it states equitable access to seasonal sites. Mr. Hughes feels that Freeport residents aren’t looking for seasonal sites. He stated that the Park is open 365 days of the year to all and that he doesn’t understand who is complaining about not getting a site. He noted that the commission and town has the right to run the park as is best for the park and that although state and federal park guidelines can be used, it is not necessary to stick to them all the time. Mr. Hughes stated that he loves the park the way it is and asked that it be left that way. Susann Hazzard thanked Mr. Hughes for his letter.
  + Ken Matzner, A resident of Montpellier, VT and seasonal camper, stated that the notion that eliminating seasonal campers to make room for Freeport residents does not make sense and that there is no data. He asked how many more residents would camp there if the seasonal campers were gone and if research has been done on that. He also noted that seasonal campers had invested in camping equipment specifically for the park. He feels that research needs to be done on this topic and that if the park needs to be more available for Freeport residents, will everyone else be excluded.
  + Anne Campbell, A resident of Montpellier, VT and seasonal camper, questioned the need of Freeport residents to have priority. She stated that this was a rather extreme way to make that possible and that there were numerous other ways to make resident access possible such as sites specifically reserved for residents.
  + Janice Levi, a Freeport Resident and seasonal camper, noted that the seasonal campers provide good income for the park and questioned how the commission intends to make up for the loss in revenue.
  + Warren Horst, a resident of Nashua, NH and seasonal camper, stated that he has had a site since 2016 and is concerned about the future of the park because of people not taking into consideration the downsides of eliminating the seasonal sites. He noted higher work load for staff with more campers coming and going as well as more wear on facilities. He also noted that if attendance did go down that he was concerned that the park would have to invest more money to fill sites. He noted that the seasonal campers are less of a burden on the park.
  + Bob Kroll, a resident of Portland, ME and seasonal camper, stated concern that people complaining about not getting a site were mostly speaking of waterfront sites, which seasonals don’t have access to. He stated concern that the park is very rarely full. Mr. Kroll noted that the seasonal campers bring in a lot of business with family and friends who fill inland sites. He also noted that very few Freeport residents take advantage of the weeks that are free of charge to residents.
  + Elizabeth Young, a resident of Burlington, CT and seasonal camper, noted the safety and beauty of the park. She has come back to the park year after year because of relationships with seasonal campers and staff and that the elimination of seasonal campers would take this away. She also noted that before she had a seasonal site, she never had an issue with getting a nightly site at the park.
  + Sandy Barry, a Freeport resident and seasonal camper, stated that she had been camping her entire life and other campgrounds are often not welcoming. Ms. Barry feels that Winslow is more welcoming from other campgrounds and that seasonal campers had added to that. She felt that the elimination of the seasonal campers and more short term campers would mean the need for more facilities and staff.
  + Richard Davan, a resident of Freeport, stated that he has been denied campsites at the park from time to time or has chosen not to camp because the only sites available were undesirable. He is concerned that the current practice limits access by taking up roughly a third of the sites. He feels that the extra staffing could be made up by volunteers. Mr. Davan is concerned about the limits of what improvements seasonal campers can make to their sites and that they could ask for reimbursement for said improvements. He also addressed the issue of notice before meetings and that when certain important issues are raised that there should be extra effort to inform the public.
  + Paula Wade, a resident of Livermore Falls and on site employee of the park, stated that she and her husband have been long time employees of the park. Ms. Wade feels that the improvements the seasonal campers have made, such as flower beds, are good for the park. Ms. Wade also stated that more short term campers could be a maintenance issue at the park. She also noted that about 10-15 Freeport campers come on free weeks and they get a very steep discount on sites at all times.
  + Doug Reighley motioned that the public comment session be closed, Karissa Davan seconded. The vote was unanimous.
  + Mr. Reighley asked Bill Ross, ex-commission member, if the question of removing seasonal sites had been asked in his 25 years on the commission. Bill Ross stated that the question of removing them had not been asked, only questions regarding governing the sites. Mr. Reighley noted that a plan on policy if the seasonal sites were eliminated has not been made and asked for public input in those policies going forward.
  + Karissa Davan stated that she felt that people in attendance felt that the commission was trying to get rid of them as campers and that this wasn’t the case. She noted that the commission is going forward with a new reservation system and that even if the seasonal campsites were eliminated that people could still possibly camp for the whole season.
  + A member of the public stated the minutes from the meeting had not been online since January. Karissa Davan stated that she was not aware of this. Neil Lyman stated that there has been confusion with turnover on the commission and that he could provide any notes upon request.
  + Karissa Davan stated that this motion was not meant to be hostile to seasonal campers. Ms. Davan stated that the reason this was brought forward is because of the possibility of inconsistencies with the trust.
  + Peter Anzuini asked when this would go to the town council. Mr. Reighley replied that it needs to go to the ordinance committee, then to a public hearing, and then to a council vote should it clear the previous processes. He also reminded people of meeting times.
  + The commission discussed having meetings at the park.
  + Susan Hazzard asked the commission for their feelings on the public hearing.
  + Doug Reilly asked Neil Lyman how many camping days there were last year. Mr. Lyman replied 129. Mr. Reighley asked how many days were full. Mr. Lyman replied 27. Doug asked about percentage of rented sites nightly. Mr. Lyman replied that 39 percent of inland sites were rented and he thought that around 70-80 percent of waterfront sites were rented, although he did not have that number in front of him. Mr. Lyman added that the percentage of rented sites was an average and that some sites, such as the ones by the cove, rented much more than others.
  + Bill Ross commented that this process could drag out until winter and that if that was the case it should be pushed to the next summer so that people can attend.
  + Susan Hazzard again asked for commissioners’ comments.
  + Doug Reighley stated that his opinion is that Winslow is unique and that he feels that the limitation on a certain number of sites at the park allows for relationships. He noted that the park trustee has stated the either practice could be supported by the trust.
  + Mr. Connick stated that he was not sure about the next step. He stated that he agreed with the comments from the crowd, but that he was in another position, which was concerned about policy being in line with the original intent of the park. He noted “equal access to everyone” and that priority camping such as seasonal camping does not fall in line with that.
  + The commission debated and disagreed with the language from the trust attorney as to his opinion on the seasonal camp sites.
  + Nancy Marquis stated that she appreciated the turnout, but that she knew people from town who had tried to get seasonal sites, but couldn’t. She feels many don’t even try anymore.
  + The commission took another poll to rescind. The poll was still a three to three tie.
* Neil Reported that he had spoken with INFORME and that the per night fee was down to $2.50 per night and a $10,000 up front fee.
  + Karissa Davan asked if any work had started. Neil Lyman responded no and that it would need to go to bid at that price. The issue was tabled until the next meeting. Robin Baron and Neil Lyman will work on this.

**New Business:** None

**Other Business:** None

**Public Comment: Non Agenda** None

Meeting Adjourned @ 8:05PM.