

Oak Bluffs Park Commissioners Minutes

August 18, 2008

Members present: Richard Combra, JR, Allan deBettencourt and Nancy Phillips

Meeting opened at 5:00 PM

Niantic Park

Commissioner Combra opened the discussion up to the public; they would be researching funding to improve the area and they want to hear from the neighbors and find out what is most important.

Residents viewed the park as a magnet for kids year round; allowing them to intermingle with people from other places but sorely neglected and needs attention. Basketball courts need a lot of work; new fence and surface. Tennis courts need to be made to standards issued by USTA.

Commissioner Phillips stated that they will be trying to get funding from CPA or Division of Conservation & Recreation and they need public input.

One resident wanted to keep older playground equipment as long as they weren't rusted or damaged; it is one of the few park areas where one sees infants to elderly using the same space as one sees at Niantic Park. One suggested asking the children what they would like to see at the park.

Various questions were put forth to the group.

The following were responded to in a unanimously positive fashion:

- Keep in-town basketball court & programs at Niantic Park
- Replace rusty fence, broken lights on basketball court
- Replace severely aged and cracked asphalt on court/parking, which may allow reorienting the court to maximize parking layout. Asphalt on court and in parking area could be pulverized to reuse as base of new area. It was noted that people do like to sit in their cars and watch the basketball games.
- Tennis/multipurpose backboard need to be resurfaced and have fence with screening shrubs around it.
- Either repair shuffleboard (currently completely unusable) or make new bocce court.
- There should be 1-2 drinking fountains available to the public (old one near picnic pavilion removed a while ago).

A majority would like to see:

- A sprinkler system so the area is not so dusty and new plantings don't die
- Fixed bathrooms hooked up to town sewer system – non port-a-potty bathrooms (because of smell in the heat). Many children and adults vigorously exercising and need to hydrate and access to clean, aerated bathroom facilities.

It was generally agreed that there needs to be a barrier between the infant/toddler area and Tuckernuck Avenue for safety reasons. Both Commissioners Phillips and deBettencourt saw a toddler run between vehicles out into the street with parent frantically chasing behind while they were inspecting the area. Agreed that fence should not be climbable and preferred plantings to screen area.

The "picnic pavilion" does offer shade and relief from sudden inclement weather and therefore worth replacing; everyone agreed it was in poor condition. One participant stated that she was unhappy with youths hanging out there very late at night and police patrol might be helpful.

The yellow infant swing set needs replacement or significant repair. There is a lack of playground equipment for children 5-12+ since items broken were not replaced. People would like a

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playground designer to look at the space and make suggestions. Commissioner Combra noted that the infant/toddler area cost at least \$30,000 a few years ago and was purchased with town money plus donations from the Rotary Club and Farm Neck Foundation.

There are areas of the park which have a severe drainage problem when it rains – mainly Tuckernuck and Wamsutta Ave but also Tuckernuck and Pocasset. These problems have been there for years and only an expensive pumping system has been proposed thus far as a solution. Neighbors anecdotally thought that the severe problems occur around 5 times per year.

The evening men's basketball league games do not seem to have a negative impact on the neighbors. The players do not seem to hang out and play loud music as they once did. This activity was not appreciated.

Commissioner Combra added that he felt the basketball courts need the most attention. More hoops are needed within the lone court for the children's instruction programs. Young adults have expressed a need for a separate hoop/partial court to warm up before their league games. Last year there were 83 men in their league.

Commissioner Combra said he is supportive of clean, well staffed bathrooms in the downtown area but it is a challenge to obtain help at the pay scale offered by the Town.

Commissioner will have further meetings once preliminary plans are put together. Community Preservation Act (CPA) requests are due October 17th. Also, in addition, for many state and federal grants the town would need to match funds requested.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole L Morey
Office Administrator