

36-1 Buttonball Committee FINAL Minutes
Old Lyme Town Hall Meeting Room
Tuesday, March 14, 2023 8.15 am

Present: Ex-officio members: First Selectman Tim Griswold, Selectman Matthew Ward, Selectwoman Martha Shoemaker (via phone)
Committee members: Fred Behringer (Chairman), Michael Barnes, John Mesham, Michael Aurelia, Jared Bombaci, and Sloan Danenhower

Absent: None

Also present: Amanda Blair, Charlie Delinks, Greg Futoma, Teri Lewis

Call to order by Chairman Fred Behringer at 8.19 a.m.

Approval of Minutes from February 23, 2023.

Sloan Danenhower motioned to approve the February 23, 2023 minutes. Michael Aurelia seconded. All in favor. Motion carried by unanimous assent.

Draft Recommendation provided by John Mesham and Jared Bombaci

John Mesham and Jason Bombaci presented a list of proposed recommendations from the Committee to the Board of Selectmen. (Document attached to these minutes as a PDF). All committee members were given an opportunity to comment.

Discussion addressed trail format and location, potential safety and maintenance issues, and shared management of the area. Michael Aurelia suggested all should work together to develop a detailed landscape plan. First Selectman Tim Griswold suggested the Tree Commission could also be included in planning. John Mesham said he would like the Committee to agree today on the conceptual plan.

Fred Behringer read the statement the Open Space Commission February meeting that had been provided to John and Jared as they prepared their recommendations. Discussion re the respective responsibilities of Open Space and Harbor Management Commissions. Suggest parking for up to 8 cars, allow unloading/ loading watercraft. Other areas maintained in a natural state. Tim Griswold expressed a concern about buses, given the size of the area. Should have an eye toward the size of vehicle and number of passengers. Michael Aurelia said that any non-town group seeking to use open space must file an application, which would address these issues. Michael Barnes asked for further discussion of the trail, saying he would like to see a loop trail plan close to the way it was proposed, and since the dock permitting process could take longer, would like to see the trail implemented first. All agreed to this. Fred Behringer asked if the area inside the loop trail would be mostly undisturbed? Michael Barnes said yes, and Tim Griswold reiterated the need to keep people off the marsh itself. Fred Behringer agreed, stating that he is concerned about the fragility of the marsh, and there will need to be some form of deterrent, such as a split rail fence, or vegetation border. Fred Behringer said the document provided by Mesham and Bombaci is well written and provides a framework. Details can be worked out on the ground. Selectman Matt Ward congratulated the committee on their progress, and thought the document provided enough flexibility to work things out as situations arise.

Public Comment

Amanda Blair expressed her ongoing concerns as an abutter to this parcel, especially the trail, and cited incidents of dumping and cars trespassing into her driveway. Fred Behringer stated that there is no proposed trail along abutters' properties, and that dumping has been issue before this. Any incidents of dumping or trespass should be reported to the police.

Greg Futoma clarified that Amanda Blair was speaking as a private citizen and not as a member of the Open Space Commission with regard to the parcel. He stated that Open Space has a goal of making trails accessible to everyone and will work for the betterment of the town.

Charles Delinks said he lives at Homestead Circle, in close proximity to the parcel. He expressed concern for the safety of having a dock there given the tidal cycles. Fred Behringer said the tidal issue will be addressed with signage, so people will be aware that there are certain times when the area may not be suitable for kayaking. He stated the committee is aware of the risks but feels access to the river for responsible boaters should not be denied because of the potential and likely occasional poor judgment of some.

Further Discussion of Draft Recommendation and Next Step- Vote to Approve

Michael Barnes motioned to approve the Recommendations to the Board of Selectmen in the document put forth by John Mesham and Jared Bombaci. Michael Aurelia Seconded. There was no further discussion. All in favor. Motion carried by unanimous assent.

Set Next Meeting Date

The next meeting date to be determined if necessary.

Adjourn: Michael Barnes motioned to adjourn at 9:35 a.m. John Mesham seconded. All in favor. Motion carried by unanimous assent.

Respectfully submitted,
Michaelle Pearson

Note added 4/21/2023: The committee's recommendations were accepted unanimously by the Board of Selectman on April 3, 2023. The committee was also disbanded by a unanimous vote. Therefore, these are the final minutes of the 36-1 Buttonball Road Property Committee.

Note added by Fred Behringer, Chairman