**TOWN OF ENFIELD**

**JOHNSTON PROPERTY USE COMMITTEE**

**JOINT MEETING WITH THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

**AND RECREATION COMMISSION**

**DRAFT MEETING MINUTES**

**March 23, 2023**

**Johnston Property Use Committee (JPUC) Members in Attendance:** Bradley Rich, Alice Kennedy, Nate Miller, Julie Eckert

**JPUC Members Absent:** Franklin (Bud) Lynch, Jr., Nancy L. Smith, and Affrille Degoma

**Ex Officio Members in Attendance:** Ed Morris, Town Manager and Kevin Marker, Recreation Director

**Ex Officio Members in Absent:** N/A

Called to order at 5:30 PM

**Approve Minutes**

**Motion to approve the minutes of February 9, 2023, as amended was made by Brad Rich and Seconded by Julie Eckert Motion was passed 6-0.**

**BUSINESS**

Nate Miller welcomed the Conservation Commission (CC) and asked them to join the JPUC at the table. He started the discussion with introductions of both the JPUC and the CC. He reviewed the questions and information the JPUC is looking for which is, what their vision for the property is and what concerns they may have about the property.

The CC called their meeting to order at 5:34.

Conservation Commission members in attendance: Jerold Theis, Shirley Green, Doug Smith, Kate Plumley Stewart, Lee Davis

The Conservation Commission spoke one at a time, giving their individual opinions of the property. Shirley Green went first. Shirley believes it would be a mistake to sell the property. She stated that they are not making any more lakeside property and parcels such as this do not come along often. Shirley urges the JPUC to work with DES to ensure anything done at the property protects the lake. She feels that if a public space it should be focused on our residents and not used to attract tourism.

Lee Davis stated that she agrees with Shirley and wanted to add that the Town should not remove stumps and rocks and that we should very selective and careful if trees need to be removed. Since the property is currently grass the Town should not use and fertilizers or pesticides because they are not good for the lake. Fertilizers can increase algae blooms. Any chemicals that need to be used, should be applied by a licensed applicator who is working with DES. Lee also agrees that the property should be for local use and the Town should be careful to protect the lake.

Doug Smith said he was going to go in a different direction. If this was going to become a public space, he was concerned about safety. Doug had a long career in the emergency services in both fire and EMS services and spent a part of his career as a dispatcher. If vehicles were using Johnston Drive he was concerned we may have more accidents, both accordion style rear end accidents and even worse some possible T-bone accidents as people tried to turn left towards Lebanon. Some of the worst accidents he responded or dispatched people to were T-bone accidents, with multiple T-bone accidents being fatal.

Doug also encouraged the JPUC to think about the cost/benefit of the property. He stated he believes less than 100 people a week would use the property and that it would take Town services to manage the property, through the patrolling from the police, emergency response, DPW for maintenance, and possibly lifeguards. There would be no financial return, so this property would cost the taxpayers more. His overall feeling is that the Town should sell the property, so it could reduce the tax rate instead of adding to it.

Kate Stewart stated that since she was a Select Board representative, she would hold her comments until this recommendation comes back to the Select Board for decision.

Jerold Theis stated he was not going to give his personal opinion, because as the chair of the CC he wanted to focus on the mission of the CC. He stated he reached out to DES to discuss what would be needed to make the property a beach. DES forwarded some paperwork that Jerold forwarded to Rob Taylor. He asked that whatever the Town Decides to do with the property that they should work with DES early to help streamline the permitting process. Jerold then gave a break down of assessed values and his personal opinion on the value of the property.

Shirley Green ended the conversation by stating that she remembers when their was a vegetable stand at Johnston Drive with a lot of traffic and does not remember any accidents at that intersection.

Doug Smith made a motion to adjourn the CC meeting which was seconded by Jerold Theis. Meeting was adjourned at 5:58

The Recreation Commission (RC) joined the JPUC at the table and a quick round of introductions was again conducted.

The RC was represented by Emily Curtis, Matt Young, Amy Stewart (joined a little late).

With no quorum of the RC Matt Young started discussion. He stated that the RC had discussed the issue and felt that this property should be saved or sold. Overall, what he meant by this is that the Town should not be putting resources into this property at this time. They believe that there are other town recreation facilities that need attention before we add more.

If the Town does decide to keep it, he stated the RC thought the Town should remove the structures so they do not become a place for squatters or dilapidated and dangerous. He stated that since there is power there, they feel it would be a good place to build a few small camping spaces with a single outlet. The RC can see this being a little niche type place where you could hike, bike or paddle in and spend the night. The other part of the property could remain natural and be a place people could picnic, swim, or just enjoy the lake.

When Matt finished, Nate Miller asked what his personal opinion was. Matt Young said he thought the Town should sell it.

Amy Stewart Joined the meeting and Emily Curtis called the RC meeting to order at 6:04, since there was now a quorum of the board.

For her personal opinion, she was concerned about accessibility and visibility. Police cannot just drive by this property but would actually have to purposefully drive in to patrol the property. She agrees there would be extra work for the DPW. She does like the niche campground idea and could see bringing her kids their to camp. She believes if the Town does keep it, it should be walk in walk out, not accessed by vehicles.

Nate Miller asked her if the Town should keep it or sell it. Emily Curtis and Amy Stewart both agreed that if sold she would like to see the money be diverted to other recreational resources.

Amy Stewart said she loves giving access to people but has some safety concerns. Auto access could cause safety issues at the intersection and rail trail. She also has some concerns about the safety of swimming there with the boats in the area. Emily Curtis shared that she likes taking her children swimming there, because there was a long shallow shelf and this seemed to keep boats away from the swimming area.

Matt Young Motioned to adjourn the meeting, which was adjourned at 6:11.

**Next Steps**

Nate Miller stated the next discussion is what are the next steps for the JPUC. The discussion started with review of who was interviewed and if any other groups should be contacted. After some discussion the JPUC decided that they could not think of any. Dave Beaufait asked the JPUC to talk to the two snowmobile clubs. There was some discussion and the JPUC decided to move to the open public meetings.

There was discussion within the JPUC of how and when to meet with the public. There was a brief discussion of micro groups vs, full board meetings. It was decided that two full JPUC meetings open to the public would be a good process. One meeting will be held on April 27th for a virtual public meeting and an in person meeting will be held at the Community Building on May 11, 2023. Ed Morris and Kevin Marker will advertise the events.

The April 13, 2023 meeting will be a work session for review of the interviews they have conducted and to prepare for the meeting.

**Public Comments**

Alan Strickland stated he was the previous chair of the CC and that the mission of the CC was to preserve and protect the natural resources of the Town, which is what this property is. He stated he agreed with the traffic concerns and thought the property should be set aside and preserved.

Barbara Ruel stated the Town has had this land for many years and it has been fine. She stated the Town could sell the A frame and keep the grassy area.

Brad Rich stated people should not be driving on the road and feels it should be a walk in walk out property.

Doug Smith stated that he agrees and believes any problems down there now will multiply if this is made a public park.

Dr. Beaufait again askes that the JPUC talk with the snowmobile clubs. The JPUC asked Mr. Morris to email the clubs the two questions for written comment.

George Sanborn agreed that Route 4 was dangerous and vehicle traffic should not be allowed. He stated the road would need to be brought up to town specs and widened to 18-20 feet, for two way traffic. This means the Town would need to purchase a right of way from the property owners. His opinion is that it should be kept a private road with a gate before the rail trail, that all property owners along Johnston Road has a key. He said we should have a porta potty down there. Overall, he feels we should keep the property and allow it to stay natural, possibly with small camping area.

Kevin Marker had concerned that snowmobiles could cause damage to the park. They use the property next to his house which is getting destroyed by snowmobiles.

Kurt Gotthardt stated that many people that spoke against keeping the property made assumptions that the property would need to be developed and that is not the case. His vision would be to keep the property and to keep it natural. The Town should discourage people from using the road through signage.

Dan Kiley said he sits on the Planning Board, CIP and Budget Committees and sees what comes before them for spending. He stated if we keep it, it will cost money and his opinion is that we should sell it and add to the tax rolls. Dan has been to multiple meetings and said all he is hearing that everybody wants nobody to use it.

Kate Stewart made a comment that the property could be sold so a small restaurant type business or other small commercial use could go down there. She is concerned that if we keep it should be accessible to all, not just those that are able to walk in.

Barbara Jones pleaded not to put a gate on the road. She stated the deed prohibits permanent structures. She is concerned that warning a public meeting will increase traffic during mud season. The Town needs to post signs that Johnston Drive is a private road.

Julie Harmann agrees with Kurt Gotthard that the property should not be sold, it should remain natural with no development besides removing the structures that are there, and there should be no public vehicle access.

Kurt Gotthard since it is a private road, the residents can put up private road signs, but the Town cannot.

**Upcoming meetings:**

April 13, 2023

Brad Rich Made a motion to Adjourn seconded by Julie Eckert, the meeting adjourned at 6:58.