**TOWN OF ENFIELD**

**JOHNSTON PROPERTY USE COMMITTEE**

**JOINT MEETING WITH THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

**AND RECREATION COMMISSION**

**DRAFT MEETING MINUTES**

**May 11, 2023**

**Johnston Property Use Committee (JPUC) Members in Attendance:** Nate Miller, Alice Kennedy, Julie Eckert, Franklin (Bud) Lynch, Jr, Bradley Rich, Affrille Degoma and Nancy L. Smith

**JPUC Members Absent:** N/A

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

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

Called to order at 5:30 PM

Nate Miller welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**Alice Kennedy Made a motion to accept the minutes of April 27, 2023 which was seconded by Nancy Smith, motion passed 9-0.**

**BUSINESS**

Nate Miller started the meeting by welcoming the attendees and with introductions of the committee.

**Overview of the JPUC Process**

* The purpose of the JPUC is to develop a recommendation to the Selectboard about whether the Town should retain its property on Johnston Drive, and if so, what the future use of the property should be.
* The JPUC has been meeting since December. To date, the JPUC has met with:
  + Town Planning and Zoning Staff
  + Master Plan Task Force
  + Mascoma Lake Association
  + Conservation Commission
  + Recreation Commission
  + Abutters to the Property
* There are two public forums scheduled to hear feedback from the public about the Johnston Drive property:
  + Tonight (virtually via Microsoft Teams)
  + Thursday, May 11th at 5:30 PM (in-person at the Enfield Community Building)
* To maximize the time allotted for public comments this evening, we are not doing an introductory PowerPoint presentation about the property. However, is there anyone attending this evening who is unfamiliar with the town-owned property on Johnston Drive and would like to be oriented to its location?

**Ground Rules for the Evening**

* Anyone speaking tonight is free to share any thoughts you have about the Johnston Drive property. That said, the JPUC is particularly interested in hearing public feedback about two key questions:
  + What is your vision for the Town-owned property on Johnston Drive?
  + What concerns do you have about the Town-owned property on Johnston Drive?
* To ensure everyone who wishes to speak has an opportunity to do so, comments are limited to three (3) minutes per person.
* Everyone who wishes to speak will have the opportunity to speak before anyone speaks for a second time.
* As tonight’s meeting is specifically encouraging virtual participation, those participating on Microsoft Teams will have speaking priority. Everyone participating via Microsoft Teams will be provided an opportunity to speak before anyone participating in person is provided an opportunity to speak.
* Everyone will have an opportunity to speak at least once tonight. When everyone who wishes to speak has spoken at least once, the meeting will be limited to two hours, ending 7:30 PM, for anyone wishing to speak multiple times.
* For virtual participants, please use the “Raise Hand” feature on Microsoft Teams. You will be called upon based on the order you appear on our screen. When you are finished speaking, please “Lower your Hand” in Microsoft Teams.
* Please be respectful of each other’s viewpoints. It’s OK for people to see things differently, and everyone here has important insights. Please don’t talk over people or disparage anyone.

Nate asked if everyone was familiar with the property. Maynard Southard raised his hand and asked for an explanation. Ed Morris shared gave a brief history of the properties and how they moved from railroad property to the State, and ultimately were given to the Town of Enfield. He also explained the long term lease option that was signed over last year for the final property on Lot 5, which opened the 3 lots in the current discussion.

**The meeting was then opened to public for comment:**

**Terri Lynch –** Explained how beautiful the park is and how it may be the last piece of land the Town will have the opportunity to own for public access. She feels the Town should keep the property, keep it natural, and only allow walk, bike, and boat in access. Remove the buildings and make it a swim at your own risk area.

**Doug Smith (Oak Hill Road) –** Concerned about accessibility for all and the increased costs if we make it a full service park. He feels we should sell the land, allow a home to be built on it and allow the long term tax benefits to help the tax rate. He said we will be spending a lot in the next few years on the public safety building, Whitney Hall and the need to raise employee compensation (which he agrees with).

**Linda Jones –** Agrees with Terri that it should be kept natural, access should be walk, bike and boat in. It is a nice stop along the rail trail with parking close by at Ice House Road. We can add picnic tables for people to enjoy. Concerned about swimming because waves there from boats can knock toddlers over.

**Maynard Southard –** Asked How developable is the land, and it was answered that it is in a one acre zone, so per zoning 1 house could be developed.

**Kerstin Stoedefalk** - Thinks the property should be kept. Throughout her life in Enfield she watched the Lower Shaker Village be sold, where she used to go to enjoy the lake. It became private land and they stopped public use. She also saw the picnic area in Lebanon get sold and again the private landowners stopped public use of the area. She now gardens for Barbara Jones and sees how much the property is enjoyed by others and would like to see it stay public use property. Does not think the little bit of taxes would be worth giving it up.

**Bob Lacroix –** Said we already have a beach and there has been a $1,000,000 offer made to the Town for the property. Which if sold and a house was built there would bring in a lot of taxes. We can make Shakoma beach safer with a light for much less than $1,000,000.

**Barbara Ruel –** The land has a right of way on it, it is in a flood zone, and has covenants on it, which makes the lot undevelopable. She thinks the Town should keep it and let it grow naturally.

**David Beaufait** – Would like to keep the property as natural as possible and work with a group of volunteers for maintenance to reduce town costs. The taxes gained by selling this property, he believes, would not lower his taxes.

**Madeline Johnson –** Lives on the lake and would like to see the Town keep the land natural, and possibly mow it, as it is now.

**Dwight Marchetti**- Lived here his whole life and has seen a large focus on recreation. In 1960 the Town only had Huse Park and Shakoma Beach, and now we have added Shaker Ball Fields, Lakeside Park, conserved Lands, Rail Trail, and a Recreation Director. We have too much land and facilities now. So much the grounds crew can not keep up. Look at how poorly the cemeteries were maintained last year. Adding more would not be helpful.

**Shirley Green –** Lived on the Lake most of her life. She feels public access is important, so we should keep the property. She also feels it should be maintained as natural as possible, isolated is OK , but people who do not live on the Lake, should have a place to access the lake.

**Kurt Gotthardt** – Feels the Town should keep the property as natural as possible for walk, bike, paddle in access. Feel vehicles and the road would be an issue. We have missed a few opportunities for lakeside property and this may be the last parcel the Town has access to, and it is already cleared and ready for access. Another option would be to lease the A frame and parcel to a business that could cater to the rail trail. We could always sell it in the future if necessary. The Town could sell the Eastern most parcel to the highest bidder for private lake access.

**Bill Warren** – Stated he was a real estate broker and assured everyone the land would sell if listed but warned that we are not making any more lakefront. He quoted a song from the 60’s that says you do not know what you got until it’s gone.

At this point there were no further first time speakers. Nate Miller allowed second comments.

**Barbara Ruel** – Stated she was an abutter and wanted everyone to know that Johnston Drive is a private drive owned by her and Barbara Johnson and is concerned about people parking on their private parking.

**Dave Beaufait** – Said he spoke with George Butler, who would not come speak, but asked Dave to share that he would like to see it stay the same as it is now.

**Bob Lacroix** – Wanted to assure people that people will and do park on private property. He sees that at his house and his sister’s house across from Lakeside Park. There will be to much traffic and issues if the land is opened up to the public.

The public forum portion of the meeting was closed at 6:18.

Nate and some of the committee thanked the public for their attendance and participation. The committee then discussed the deliberative hearings coming up. Nate Miller said he would like to have a recommendation by the end of June, which gives the committee three meetings with the current meeting schedule. There was a brief discussion about allowing public comment at the beginning of the meetings but needed to spend time deliberating after that.

Dwight Marchetti asked about advertising for the meeting when the committee makes a recommendation to the Select Board. Ed Morris stated that they would advertise that meeting, and that he thought there would be a Public Hearing which would be advertised prior to a final decision.

**Upcoming meetings:**

May 25, 2023, Deliberative Session at DPW

Julie Eckert Made a motion to Adjourn seconded by Brad Rich, the meeting adjourned at 6:34.