**TOWN OF ENFIELD**

**JOHNSTON PROPERTY USE COMMITTEE**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**May 25, 2023**

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

**Brad Rich made a motion to accept the minutes of May 11, 2023 which was seconded by Julie Eckert, motion passed by roll call vote 9-0.**

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Dave Beaufait asked for a brief Public Comment period to be added to the end of the meeting.

**BUSINESS**

The meeting started with Ed Morris giving a Power Point Presentation on the recommendations submitted to him by the committee. The presentation provided anonymous style comments from each member to start the discussion. Of the 9 recommendations:

* 1 was to sell the property.
* 1 was to sell a portion of the property.
* 7 were to keep the property as a minimally disturbed park.

Discussion commenced after the presentation, and each member shared their comments concerning their opinions and thoughts about other ideas. Many comments were made about a three year trial period and whether or not that was kicking the can down the road, or a good way to determine the true value of the property as a recreation asset. There was discussion about tracking use, costs and nuisance measures and response. Ongoing maintenance costs and the costs of removing structures was a concern for many on the committee.

There were also multiple discussions about the idea of making available 2-3 handicapped parking spaces. There was no discussion about allowing open public parking, but whether or not a few spaces should be available for those with mobility issues. Ed Morris explained that the park would not be ADA compliant, but he felt not having some spaces for mobility challenged individuals was a conscious decision to exclude people with mobility issues. Nate Miller and Julie Eckert voiced similar concerns that some parking should be made available.

Brad Rich and Affrille Degoma stated they were the two who discussed selling the property. Brad Rich stated he understood and was moved by both sides of the discussion and felt that selling a part of the property for development while keeping a portion for the public to enjoy seemed like a good compromise. Affrille explained that she felt keeping the property benefitted the few people that actually use the park but selling it and adding it to the tax rolls would benefit everyone in Town. As she tried to determine her recommendation, she kept going back to what would be the best use of the property for the entire Town.

Nate stated his idea of a three year trial was his way of balancing the two sides and understanding that the property could still be sold in the future. He felt we should give the park a try and track usage and costs and allow the Select Board to review the data in a few years to determine if the benefit outweighed the costs.

Kevin Marker discussed the benefits of keeping the property and the effect it may have on the Town’s summer camp. He stated that once a week they take the kids on a field trip and often bus them to places like Lake Sunapee to swim because our beach is not conducive to 30-40 campers and councilors being on the beach along with the public. He felt the Johnston property would add a resource where the kids could walk to and be semi-contained with water to play in and a large grassy area to play and spread out.

There was also some back and forth discussion about whether or not there should be a porta potty down there. Some felt is summer camp was going to go down there, a porta potty should be supplied. The discussion ended on usage needs possibly determining the need.

Ed Morris explained that all the details of the park did not need to be decided by the committee but could be implemented by staff once a decision is made. He then stated that this does not mean that strong feeling such as not placing a porta potty, if that is decided, could not be part of the recommendation, but how many tables, benches, bike racks etc. did not need to be decided.

Alice pointed out that she worked hard to keep her personal feelings at bay and to report back what she felt she heard from the people the committee talked with, and the majority of people wanted to keep it as a natural park. Her concerns are the cost of removing structures, and long term ongoing maintenance costs.

As the conversation came to an end, Nate Miller thanked the committee for the good discussion and asked how they could move forward. He thought maybe the committee could do the same homework again and see what comes out after discussion of where people stand. Ed Morris asked if he could give four options for the committee to choose from with some explanation:

1. Sell Property
2. Sell part of the property
3. Keep
4. Keep with 3 year trial period

Alice Kennedy and Nancy Smith asked if we could get better costs for building removal and maintenance.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Kurt Gotthard stated that parcel 6 could be sold any time.

Dave Beaufait commented that he thought this was a very good process.

**Upcoming meetings:**

June 13, 2023, Deliberative Session at DPW

Nancy Smith made a motion to adjourn seconded by Bud Lynch, the meeting adjourned at 6:42.