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## Minutes of the Commission Meeting Held on October 18, 2007 In the Stone Building 33 New York Avenue, Oak Bluffs, MA

### IN ATTENDANCE

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Commissioners: (P = Present; A = Appointed; E = Elected)

|   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| P James Athearn (E – Edgartown)         | P Ned Orleans (A – Tisbury)          |
| P John Breckenridge (A – Oak Bluffs)    | - Jim Powell (A – West Tisbury)      |
| P Christina Brown (E - Edgartown)       | P Doug Sederholm (E – Chilmark)      |
| P Peter Cabana (A – Tisbury)            | - Susan Shea (A – Aquinnah)          |
| - Martin Crane (A – Governor Appointee) | P Linda Sibley (E – West Tisbury)    |
| - Mimi Davisson (E – Oak Bluffs)        | P Paul Strauss (County Comm. Rep.)   |
| - Mark Morris (A – Edgartown)           | P Richard Toole (E – Oak Bluffs)     |
| P Chris Murphy (A – Chilmark)           | P Andrew Woodruff (E – West Tisbury) |
| - Katherine Newman (A – Aquinnah)       |                                      |

Staff: Mark London (Executive Director), Paul Foley (DRI Analyst/Planner)

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m.

### 1. VEIRA PARK: - PUBLIC HEARING (CONT.)

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**Christina Brown** reopened the public hearing. She read the names of people from whom the Commission has received letters, which have become part of the written record.

#### 1.1 Alternate Sites

**Sam Berlow** summarized the search for alternate sites, as previously presented to LUPC.

- The High School softball diamond isn't available because it's used by the High School at the same times it would be needed for Little League.
- The High School has additional land east of the new field, but the land is being saved for future fields.
- The YMCA site doesn't have enough space for a diamond.
- The Airport has land, but it's not easy to build sports fields next to an airport.
- The State Forest has land, but clearing land, etc., would be very costly.
- Edgartown's field is used for school games and Little League.
- Waban Park was a possibility for two fields, but the Town wanted to keep that open and there were more parking and drainage issues.
- Oak Bluffs School fields are used at the same time as Little League needs fields.
- Tisbury School doesn't have space.

- Veteran's Field is a possibility but it doesn't drain well. Tisbury Parks Department is looking at fixing the drainage but the park is used for youth and adult soccer, softball, men's and women's softball and tball.
- West Tisbury field has youth soccer and doesn't have room for two diamonds. Little League shares the field with soccer and the field needs safer fencing.
- Building the new Veira Park field would move Little League out of Manter Field and West Tisbury and make it safer. Upgrading Manter Field for Little League would cause problems for the other activities that go on there.

## **1.2 Trees**

**Michael Talbot**, consulting arborist from Mashpee, was hired by residents to do a professional assessment of the trees around the Park and the potential impact the proposal would have on them. The assessment was submitted as a report.

- Fourteen different trees could be impacted from root injury from construction activities and compaction from additional parking.
- The second impact would be removal of canopy. Most of the trees are native black oak. Two of them are the best examples of black oak he's seen in thirty years.
- 50 to 60% of the canopies of three trees would be removed which will probably kill the trees.
- He estimates the value of the trees to be about \$200,000.

## **1.3 Traffic**

**Bruce Stewart**, Little League coach and Oak Bluffs resident, supports the plan. Sports is one of the best things for the development of kids.

- One of the biggest challenges is availability of fields.
- The pressure put on the traffic flow wouldn't be different from existing conditions because it's unlikely that games will end at the same time.
- Tournament traffic doesn't add more traffic because kids come by bus or by riding with Vineyard players.

**Richard Combra**, chairman of the Oak Bluffs Parks Commission and Oak Bluffs Highway Superintendent, commented on traffic and safety issues.

- The Selectmen recently voted to install a crosswalk across Wing Road, from Oakland Avenue to South Circuit Avenue, and to install two new crossing signs at both intersections.
- The Chief of Police and the Parking and Traffic Committee are working on a realignment of traffic entering Naushon Avenue with the goal of slowing traffic.
- He's in favor of the project. He believes the Parks Commission is in favor of the project, which will be reviewed after Commission approval.
- He hopes that in the deliberations the Commission recognizes that the Town has voted twice to support the project.

**Charles Ratte**, Spindles Path Resident, applauds Richard Combra for pushing through improvements.

- He said there's a rail fence with brush growing out of it that masks traffic. He asked that the 20 mph sign be moved to be far enough back to properly warn people to slow down.

- He asked that the owners of the rail fence be asked to cut the brush.
- He wondered why Little League wouldn't spend money to fix deficiencies at West Tisbury where there's only one road of traffic. He encouraged the Little League to upgrade existing fields.

**Alex Palmer** spoke against the proposal. He wondered if Commissioners had taken up the suggestion to drive around the area and look at the roads and traffic.

**Skip Davis**, long-term renter, said his concern is vehicular traffic and dangers at the area where Wing Road turns into Circuit Avenue and intersects with South Circuit Avenue, Oakland Avenue, and Naushon Avenue. The dangers are there for pedestrians as well.

There was a discussion of tournaments.

- **Ann Brownell** asked whether there is a contingency to bus people from Waban Park on tournament day.
- **Sam Berlow** said originally, Little League was planning to have the year-end Island-only tournament at Veira Park using both fields at the same time. They've decided not to do two championship games at the same time in the Park. For the tournament games between off-Island teams and the Island team, visiting team players wouldn't generate more traffic.
- **Gail Barmakian** said the plans have changed so much that if Sam Berlow's making the representation about the Island-only championship, the Commission should make that a condition as part of any approval. She added that stop signs are not going to help and the crosswalk could potentially create more of a danger. There's a blind corner. Unless the road is reconfigured completely, she doesn't see how the danger can be minimized.
- **Sam Berlow** said there have been many changes, many of which respond to neighbors' concerns.
- **Christina Brown** added that often applications are modified in the course of the hearing process, and the modified application is what the Commission acts on.
- **Doug Sederholm** said that changes happen almost all of the time through the DRI process.
- **Gail Barmakian** said that the changes get confusing and neighbors want to understand clearly.
- A woman said that she's concerned about pedestrian traffic because a lot more children will be added to park activity and crossing the street.

**Richard Limber** said he's worked at projects on Circuit Avenue. He's seen three accidents at the intersection. A crosswalk won't work properly because the curve is dangerous. It would be safer to have a field elsewhere.

**Sam Berlow** clarified that teams won't play at the same time on Championship Day at the end of the year, which generates a lot of traffic. During the regular season, two teams would play at the same time.

**Peggy Lebrach** said she isn't in favor of the proposal. People don't always park in designated spots, which creates dangerous situations. She thinks the difficulties are insurmountable. There's insufficient space for safely moving about. She would hate to see any increase in traffic.

**Bill Combra**, Vineyard Haven, suggested a snack wagon so kids won't have to go across the street to Tony's. He wondered about Town land available for parking.

**Ann Baird**, South Circuit Avenue, said bringing more people and cars into the neighborhood will be unsafe and someone will get hurt.

**Gail Barmakian** added that during the game there's a lot of activity besides the game and the angled parking won't be safe.

**Warren Gossen** asked about the traffic study. He's certified for accident reconstruction. He said he would love to have a new field but not at this location. He's concerned about safety outside of the field, particularly the speed needed for stopping after coming around the curve. He said he could go on for an hour about how and why this location would be dangerous for the proposed increase in activity.

**Charles Crevo**, traffic planner, said the traffic level of service is 'A' and would remain so with the proposed plan. He met with the Highway Department and discussed possible improvements.

- Aligning Naushon Avenue at a 90-degree angle would increase safety somewhat.
- Bringing curve lines on Oakland and Circuit Avenue out in line with existing pavement would increase safety.
- Raised crosswalks at South Circuit/Wing Road intersection and Wing Road and Circuit would decrease speed.
- Making the intersection a 4-way stop with traffic calming measures before the curve would help.

**Linda Sibley** commented that the applicant is the Little League, not the Town of Oak Bluffs, and the Commission cannot make conditions for traffic improvements to be made. The Commission can't require that traffic improvements be made as a condition of approval.

Commissioners agreed that they may not be able to condition traffic improvements, but they can discuss them.

**Richard Combra** commented that the Highway Department and Board of Selectmen are more than willing to work with the engineer and Commission staff to come up with a plan over the next few weeks.

## **1.2 Trees (cont.)**

**Michael Talbot** said, when asked what method he used for estimating the value of the trees, that he used cost-of-cure appraisal method. On trees number 5, 7, 9 trees, the crowns are over the ball field. The trees won't tolerate removing so much of the crown. They'll die within five years.

**Sam Berlow** said that the Little League is not proposing trimming straight up from fences, only a few lower branches would come down. On the large tree, the fence goes down to four feet and the tree would lose one branch.

**Michael Talbot** suggested that a condition requiring less than 20% crown removal would allow the trees more chance of survival. There are mitigations for root compression but he wasn't asked to cover that in his report and it's expensive. There needs to be some clarification on how much of the canopy could realistically be retained.

### **1.3 Traffic (cont.)**

**Ann Margetson** said people's behavior cannot always be legislated. There's very little monitoring of speed on local roads. That has to be included in the equation.

**Charles Crevo** said whether there are one or two diamonds at Veira Park, changes have to be made at that intersection.

- For traffic generation, he used 50 additional trips to the second field, which would not raise traffic congestion to any great degree.
- The applicant has a parking plan. The parking spaces should accommodate the number of people.
- When using angled parking, parking is safer than unparking. When using parallel parking unparking is safer than parking.
- When there are more vehicles parking, there is more of a traffic hazard.

**Dick Sherman**, Oak Bluffs, said Little League's been having some problems for a while. He suggested eliminating spectators from the games.

**Pia Hazen**, from the corner of Seaview and Cannonicus, said that about fifteen years ago, because of traffic on Cannonicus, she changed the entrance to her lot and latticed off her front yard.

**Warren Gossen** pointed out that without marked lines, parking will be chaos.

**Frank** and **Ann Baird**, South Circuit Avenue, said cars hit the curb of the sidewalk all night long.

**Kathleen Nasser** said there are 20 to 30 cars parked on Naushon Avenue all day long.

There was a discussion of accidents.

- **Debbie Dean** asked about accident reports.
- **Charles Crevo** said he was told it would take a month or two to get accident reports from the Oak Bluffs Police Department and was told he couldn't send someone in to do the research. Mass Highway reports one accident in the three-year period, but not all accidents are reported.
- Several people in the audience said there have been a number of accidents in the vicinity of the intersection in the last few years.

**Ann Brownell** said nowhere is the issue of handicapped access addressed. **Sam Berlow** said there would need to be at least three spaces devoted to handicapped parking.

**Mr. Ratte** said there are 65 parking spaces. Players, coaches, and umpires for two games will need at least forty spaces and those spaces aren't always available.

**Richard Combra** said the Highway Department would work with the traffic planner and Commission staff to develop traffic calming measures.

**Christina Brown** explained that effect on town services, including cost to the Highway Department, is part of the Commissioners' deliberation.

**Richard Combra**, responding to Mrs. Nasser's explanation of her request for speed bumps, said that speed bumps are illegal on Town roads. **Kathleen Nasser** reiterated that traffic is so

bad that the Town can't do anything about it. **Richard Combra** clarified that a raised crosswalk and a speed bump are two different things; a raised crosswalk is a possibility.

**Corinne deLangevant** said she drives tour busses. If stop signs were put at the intersection, there may be traffic like at Barnes Road intersection.

One resident predicted that a result of more use of Veira Park is that other nearby roads will get a lot more use as a short cut, which is a safety concern.

#### **1.4 Other**

**Sam Berlow** said all kids 12 and under play on the same size field. Bases are 60 feet, the pitching mound is between 42 and 45 feet. Adult softball could use the same field. Men's softball plays in Vineyard Haven where there are lights.

**Kerry Scott** said she is an Oak Bluffs Selectman but is speaking as one Selectman.

- The Board philosophically has put a lot of weight on neighborhood considerations.
- Land use is of concern. An attorney told her that Oak Bluffs was the first planned cluster development in the country. Part of the plan was to have planned open space. The parks were everybody's yard.
- Some of the discussion needs to be about committing the park to one purpose predominantly.
- She asked Commissioners to consider that a decision in favor would be taking away a lot of people's access to a front yard.

**Sam Berlow** said there are 14 named parks in Oak Bluffs. There are two active recreation parks. The rest are passive.

**Eric Shenholm** commented that the second vote on funds for Veira Park was a majority by only nine votes.

- He worries about the trees. After the 1991 storm, the park lost a lot of trees.
- The park is in the Farm Pond Watershed.
- The second field flies in the face of the Oak Bluffs Master Plan.
- As a taxpayer, he's glad to know that tax dollars will make people slow down.
- He wonders why OB will spend tax dollars on a regional activity, both to build it and maintain it. He thinks it's a bad place for a second field.

**Ann Margetson** thanked Kerry Scott for speaking about open space. The proposal is only about baseball and convenience. She hasn't heard the proponents thank Oak Bluffs for contributing a third of the park to their activity. She added that Commissioners also need to consider quality of life and the way two diamonds will impact neighbors' quality of life.

**Charles Ratte** added that the 1998 Town Plan stated that the Town doesn't want any new improvements in the Town that will raise taxes without lowering other taxes in return. The Master Plan says that all recreation should be in R3 districts. Veira Park is in R2.

A resident said the significance of open space and open parks is more important to Oak Bluffs than to any other town because of Robert Copeland. Ellen Weiss has written a very informative article about it. The Little League proposal would ruin the open space plan.

**Anita Christian**, speaking for the Garden Club, said they would like the park to stay as a park and would like to protect the beautiful trees.

Commissioners took a brief recess.

### **1.5 Commissioner Questions**

**Linda Sibley** said she understands the desire to have two diamonds together.

- She would like an explanation of the ways in which improving Manter or the West Tisbury School field would compromise the fields' other uses.
- She would like to know why Little League games would take place at the same time as school sports.
- There's an abandoned baseball field across the street from the Tisbury Water Works that she suggested Little League look at, as well as some of the alternatives on the second to last page of the packet.
- She's disappointed to think that this complex would result in Little League not being played in her town. She likes the idea of Little League being played in all towns.
- Chapter 831 requires Commissioners to examine whether this is the best location given the alternatives and she doesn't feel she has enough information along those lines.
- In summary: why would improving the West Tisbury fields make a greater compromise for the other uses? Why would the Little League schedule conflict with school sports? And are the Leonardo property and Oak Bluffs School possibilities?

**John Breckenridge** said he would like the applicant to help Commissioners understand in a much clearer way why alternative sites won't work. He would like to understand more about using Oak Bluffs School as a location. Fencing strikes him as an exclusion. He wondered if the applicant could remove all of the fencing at the end of the season, or more than just the outfield.

**Andrew Woodruff** said he has some concerns about safety of young kids in the picnic area. He'd like to see alternatives on how kids would be contained besides split rail fence.

**Jim Athearn** said there might be a soccer field going in behind Tisbury Land Fill. He wondered whether a Little League field could go in there as well.

**Christina Brown** continued the public hearing to November 8, 2007, at 7:30 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 9:50 p.m

  
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Chairman

  
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Clerk-Treasurer

2-21-08  
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Date

2-29-08  
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Date