

**Town of Cape Elizabeth
Fort Williams Park Committee
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, June 9, 2022**

Present: Jim Kerney (JimK), Jon Dienstag (JD), Suzanne McGinn (SM), Lauren Springer (LS) and Doreen Theriault (DT)

Absent: Ken Pierce, Mark Russell

Staff: Chris Cutter (CC), Fort Williams Coordinator, Kathy Raftice (KR), Community Services and Fort Williams Park Director

Call to Order: Substitute Chair, Jim Kerney (JimK) called meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Approval of April 21, 2022 Draft Minutes

Motion by SM to approve the April 21, 2022 draft minutes second by JD, motion passed (5 - Yes, 0 - No).

Public Comment Opportunity for Discussion of Items Not on the Agenda - None

FOF Update

AS not in attendance. KR shared her report and strong possibility that event scheduled for July 23rd will not take place until the fall. As more information becomes available and planning is finalized, AS will share with committee.

Park Update

JimK explained committee recognized the number of folks in attendance were more than likely attending to discuss “Dogs in the park” and we appreciate the attendance. JimK initiated discussion on food vendors; questions on signage and when the contracts in place would go back out to RFP. He shared that the committee should review some of the verbiage to ensure we are all in agreement. KR shared there is one more year, 2023, on the present agreements. JimK introduced the RFP process and need for feasibility studies to assist the committee on next steps with some of the larger projects. KR shared that two RFP’s on the Goddard Mansion and the Pond were due today at 2:00 pm. She and Town Manager, Matt Sturgis received those submitted. The committee will need to schedule a meeting to discuss and determine next steps. JimK explained the need still for the Powers Road RFP. KR will schedule a meeting with Matt Sturgis, Jay Reynolds, Public Works Director and Steve Harding, Town Engineer. KR shared if any committee members would like to be a part of that discussion to let her know. JimK feels there can be some small steps taken now, for instance delineating sidewalks at entrance to Powers Road. Is there a possibility of painting white for safety? KR will check with Public Works. Some discussion by public on sidewalks and safety.

KR brought the committee up to date on the legal opinion received from town attorney, Mike Hill, on whether a sign is needed on the gates to the rocks. Mike's opinion is that whether the gate is locked or unlocked plays a key role. If unlocked, he would recommend a sign. Additionally the wording is important. Mike feels "pass at your own risk" could imply invitation to pass. He suggests possibly "Authorized Persons Only." The committee discussed and feelings are mixed. They have asked that KR go back to Mike for some additional suggestions for wording.

KR began discussion on the moving of the playground. She met with local representative for O'Brien and Sons. He feels playground too old and may not move well and will be a large cost item. He feels should be demolished and new built in new area. KR received a quote from LP Murray on demo and remove which is reasonable. Possibility to utilize remaining funds to purchase new equipment. LS asked if FOF would contribute to new playground. JD feels playground where it is not safe and we need to move/build in the Children's Garden area. JimK shared that clearing the playground out of the parking lot and making way for Cape Campus is a future development and maybe we should use the funds left to develop a new design RFP on what could be done up by the Children's Garden and then put money into next fiscal year. JD asks that we do not demo old until new in place and all agreed. DT moved to develop a new RFP for a playground design. JD seconded. Motion unanimously passed (5 – Yes, 0 – No).

KR shared that Frisbee Golf group will not be holding event at Fort Williams however she did receive a new request for a Nordic Rollerski Race to be held in the park. Roughly 80 participants. Committee discussed and voted 5 – Yes, 0 – No to approve the event to take place after the busy season and to avoid the off leash area. KR will notify the group.

KR brought committee up to date on National Governors Association event planning.

Dogs in Fort Williams Park Discussion

JimK clarified the existing dog ordinance, the history and recommendations to the Town Council. KR shared police department report results. There have been 27 incidents in the park since records were started on 1/4/22; 25 warnings and 2 dog bites. One of the dog bites involved a child. KR and CC shared there have been more dog bites however not reported. KR clarified this meeting is to have discussion around how to make the park safe for all.

Susan Haltof, Smugglers Cove, CE – asked for clarification on the numbers. Over what timeframe? Why only warnings? What were the warnings for? JimK clarified that police started recording in January due to complaints. Warnings only so far as steps needed to reach citations. KR clarified all warnings were for dogs off leash out of off leash areas.

Scott Irving, Crescent View Ave, CE – asks if the number is high due to more police presence and are these mostly residents or tourists. KR shared that record keeping did begin due to complaints and we have asked for more specific information going forward on residency.

Susan Cary, 178 Ocean House Road, CE – shared she appreciated the conversation. She said when she first moved here it was hard to figure out the off-leash area and suggests more signage. Possibility of making fines higher and be a little stricter would help.

Larry Borysyk, 178 Ocean House Road, CE – appreciates the conversation and discussion.

Rita McPhillip, 83 Starboard Drive, CE – feels it is difficult to have a mix in the off-leash area. People without dogs and bicycles make it difficult for off-leash dogs. Maybe a sign clarifying so all are aware. Dogs are not 100% trainable.

Linden Thigpen, Hillside Ave, SP – shared what happened in SP. Feels signs are very important. Maybe larger signs with less wording for people new to the area. Possibly a sandwich board that can be put out during busy times when lots of visitors. Use a different color to draw attention.

John Kane, 6 Cape Woods Drive, CE – Shared he has walked dogs in the park since 2008. He has been involved in the annual clean up. He is a good resource and happy to help where needed.

Nell Huber, 25 Thrasher Rd, CE – asked what the flags were for. CC shared some of his findings as park coordinator from bags left around the portable toilets, inside the portable toilets and he had picked up 42 bags on one occasion.

Eve Raymond, Angell Ave, SP – shared a community develops when walking dogs. Feels signage helps. Happy to see the discussion so open, shared in SP caused huge rift and many hurt feelings.

Sandy Larlee, 154 Ocean House Rd, CE – feels signage needs to be more prominent where the kiosks are in the parking lots. Can there be trash cans by the portables? Feels scooters in the off-leash area scare the dogs.

Linda Thigpen, Hillside Ave, SP – asks about signage near portables that says not for dog poop bags.

Larry Borysyk, 178 Ocean House Road, CE – asked why the bags provided are not biodegradable.

Committee Discussion:

LS dog walker herself and shared her biggest concern was the child dog bite. She asked for more information to be shared at next meeting. She likes the idea of information at the kiosks with possibility of QR codes with rules and suggests moving the sign coming out of the back parking lot to further down the pathway. JD feels most dog walkers are adults and know the risks. We need some human trust and agrees moving the start of the off-leash to the end of the multipurpose field may help. SM shared she feels it is the responsibility of the committee to ensure it is safe for all users of the park throughout the park. DT shared when she was new to the area she could not figure out where to go. JimK feels maps need to be improved and to

lessen visibility on the website. He likes the idea of the sandwich board signs on high tourist days and signage at the parking kiosks. He also asked why the bags are not biodegradable. KR and CC will follow up on suggestions and committee will have a follow up meeting in the fall to check in on progress of; moving sign further down on pathway by multipurpose field, QR codes at kiosks, sandwich board signs, rework maps, less emphasis on the website. SM questions what our threshold is with dog bites. What is our responsibility? LS thanked those in attendance for the open communication and feedback.

Fran Minden, 5 Surf Rd, CE – as a dog owner who uses the park daily she wanted to emphasize the park is for people. That should be the first priority.

JimK thanked all in attendance for their participation and mutual respect shared by all.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:33 pm. SM motion to adjourn, second by LS, motion passes unanimously, 4 – Yes, 0 – No. (JD had left meeting by then).

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Raftice