

PARKS COMMISSION

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Parks Commission

*Diane Gruskin
Joanna Galdone
Claudia Perry
Geoffrey Welch
Kevin McGuinness*

Commission Staff

*R. Allan Beers, Coordinator
Michael DiMola, Parks Operations Manager*

**Park Commission Minutes (APPROVED)
May 25, 2022**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Geoff Welch
Joanna Galdone
Claudia Perry
Diane Gruskin
Kevin McGuinness (phone in)

OTHERS PRESENT

R. Allan Beers (staff)
Michael DiMola (staff)
Tom Starr (staff)
Charlotte Ramsey – Dept. of Law

Meeting opened at 4:40 pm
Quorum Present

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Roll call was taken, and a quorum was present.

ITEM # 1 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

November 3, 2021, minutes approval deferred until next meeting.

ITEM # 2 NEW BUSINESS

Pete Erickson Farm – A. Beers informed the Commission that phase 1 of the agricultural development of the farm has exceeded our expectations. Mr. Zev Oster has developed most of the property with a mix of agriculture and creating the County's only petting zoo. Mr. Oster has privately funded the entire project.

Early in 2022, we advertised for bids to develop phase II of the property which is located on the east side of West Maple Ave. Mr. Oster was the sole bidder, and a License Agreement was prepared to permit the expansion of the agricultural development on that side of West Maple Ave. Prior to the final execution of the agreement, a meeting was held between the County Executive's staff, Mike and myself and Mona Montel from the Town of Ramapo. M. Montel requested that the Town of Ramapo be able use the east side of the

property for both short- and long-term recreational use. The short-term use would be used for summer camps in August. The long-term use is to develop a playground and other recreational amenities. Ramapo would maintain the property.

When the property was purchased through the Open Space Acquisition Program, the objective was to save the vacant fields for future agricultural use. The property deed that was filed dedicated the west side of Maple Ave as agricultural or natural, the east side a park or agriculture.

The County Executive's staff had a follow up meeting with Mike and me to discuss the towns proposal. Being that there are no specifics, other than a general request for summer camps and playground. The County Executive's staff will reach out to M. Montel for specific details on the Town's needs.

A. Beers recommended that if a park was created on the property, it be developed and maintained by the County not the Town and open to all residents. Letting the town take over the management and maintenance may be an alienation of parkland and subject to State approval.

G. Welch said that M. Montel spoke to him about the towns interest in the Erickson Farm property. It was suggested that any future communication between M. Montel and G. Welch be directed to the entire Commission.

A. Beers said that he would keep the Commission updated on this matter.

Haverstraw Bay Park – American Rescue Plan Grant – A. Beers informed the Commission that he had applied to the County for a grant to replace the playground surface and make some repairs to the playground equipment. He received notice that a \$190,000 American Rescue Plan grant would be awarded to the department.

M. DiMola discussed the current condition of the playground surface and some equipment. The Parks Department conducts weekly inspections of the equipment, and an annual inspection is performed by a certified playground company to ensure the playground meets national playground safety standards. He said the surface replacement and repairs would likely take place in August.

Park Department Logo – M. DiMola distributed a copy of the Parks Department Logo that he created using our current logo, which we use for uniforms. He said that the County's Fleet Management Policy requires all newly purchased vehicles to be white. Our vehicles have always been green. He said it was important that the public be able to recognize Parks Department vehicles from another County department in order to report issues in the parks. The Commission approved of the new logo. (Photo attached).

New Park Staff - A. Beers was pleased to report that the department has hired 4 new positions which were approved in the 2022 budget. At one time, the department had a total of 22 employees and an approved vacancy for 23. Between 2008 – 2010 during the recession, a total of 7 employees and the vacant approved positions were laid off. This created a significant negative impact on the management and maintenance programs for the department. When the COVID pandemic hit the country and mandatory lockdowns took effect, the parks were overwhelmed with the public looking for recreational opportunities. This combined with the shortage of employees to provide maintenance and security created a serious operational problem for us. A. Beers met with the County Executive last summer and discussed the need to hire more staff. It was agreed that the department would be able to hire 4 employees in 2022 and 3 in 2023.

M. DiMola provided an overview of the new positions. 2 new Park Ranger I positions were filled using the list provided by Personnel from the last Civil Service Exam. There were many qualified candidates that were interviewed. Of the two selected, one had a

master's degree and experience. The other had maintenance experience. The two are learning much from each other and have complemented each other well. There were also 3 Groundswokers hired. The first was a Youth Worker with the Parks Dept. for many years. He was familiar with our operations, so he adjusted well. He was also used as a success story by the Youth Bureau in their May Newsletter (article attached). The other 2 were hired and are working out very well. Considering the hiring shortage, we were very lucky to find 5 people who get along and are working out very well.

ITEM # 3 OLD BUSINESS

Open Space Properties Update – A. Beers informed the Commission that Westrock Appraisals inc. has been retained to prepare appraisals on the 5 properties that have been selected for acquisition. Once the property appraisals have been completed, our attorney, Charlotte Ramsey, will conduct the negotiations to acquire the properties.

K. McGuinness asked if the Tilcon Property located between Mountainview Avenue and Route 303 has been considered for acquisition.

A. Beers said that the property was nominated for acquisition, and he reached out to the General Manager of Tilcon to discuss the process, Tilcon was not interested is selling at that time.

Cropsey Farm Update – A. Beers informed the Commission that the Rockland Farm Alliance (RFA) has a new Executive Director. The RFA has requested to hold additional types of events at the farm to help raise funds to cover the \$375,000 annual operating costs. A. Beers requested that the RFA discuss the types of events with the Town of Clarkstown who owns a 39% share in the property and receive their approval since some of the events will require Town permits including the selling of alcohol. The Town has agreed to the special events and the next step it to meet with the County's Code Enforcement Officer to receive his approval.

C. Ramsey requested that the Town's approval for special events and alcohol including the County's No Smoking in County Parks be included in the amended Licensee Agreement.

ITEM # 4- PARK UPDATE – M. DiMola

Park System

- Performed security patrols and addressed violation.
- Cleaned restrooms and facilities as needed.
- Cleared drainage as needed.
- Checked trails for storm damage.
- Performed routine lawn maintenance and snow removal.
- Trained new employees.
- Removed trees as needed.
- Cut fallow fields at the end of the growing season.
- Performed roadside and trailside clean ups.
- Woodchipped dog runs as needed.
- Weeded, edged and mulched beds.

Haverstraw Bay Park

- Cleaned and organized garage and yard.
- Replaced stone on shoreline as needed.
- Cut False Indigo Bush along shoreline at the end of the growing season.
- Removed and replaced docks in the spring.
- Removed Trees of Heaven by Gulf War Monument.
- Pruned trees along wood lines, paths, and parking lots.

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- Replaced signs due to renaming.

Kennedy

- Filled in along paving of auxiliary lot.
- Staged materials for RCSC program this summer.
- Repaired washouts on Parcourse trail.

Kakiat Park

- Repaired washouts on Old Mill Trail

Demarest Kill

- Repaired washouts on trails.

Mountainview Nature Park

- Woodchipped trail head.

Sean Hunter Ryan Park

- Removed fence installed in Park without authorization.

Management

- Coordinated, scheduled, and monitored Parks Dept. operations.
- Prepared purchase orders, vouchers, requisitions, modifications, evaluations, and transfers as needed.
- Reconciled P Card purchases for Parks Dept.
- Processed invoices for payment.
- Reviewed phone records.
- Processed Park and geocache permits.
- Coordinated equipment and building repairs as needed.
- Prepared security schedule for Haverstraw Bay Park.
- Addressed staff issues as needed.
- Performed equipment repairs as needed.
- Completed DGS Work Orders for DER.
- Briefed Coordinator on Park issues as needed.
- Administered Court Appointed Community Service Program.
- Administered Youth Employment Program.
- Responded to complaints and concerns.
- Processed boat launch and permit revenues.
- Inspected trees and coordinated removals.
- Reviewed GMLs and made recommendations.
- Coordinated events in the County Parks.
- Coordinated filming scouting and shoots in the County Parks.
- Continued Developing online permit system.
- Coordinated EEO training for staff.
- Performed Open Space inspections and completed evaluations.
- Coordinated Dog Waste Control Program ordering with the Soil and Water Conservation District.
- Coordinated Trout Stocking with the Soil and Water Conservation District.
- Updated ARP project list for the County Parks.
- Coordinated irrigation and restroom winterizations and openings.
- Met with resident and the Sheriff's Marine Unit regarding Personal Watercrafts at Haverstraw Bay Park and developed rules for use when launching at the park. (Rules attached)
- Reviewed Work around Well 31A at Monsey Glen Park.
- Prepared information for vacant positions, reviewed application and attended interviews.
- Prepared specifications for Parks Department vehicles and equipment.
- Coordinated bird net installation at Haverstraw Bay Park.
- Reviewed impact on Long Path at Mountainview Nature Park from construction at Oak Hill Cemetery.
- Prepared picnic table, bench and garbage can orders.
- Met with new Rockland Farm Alliance Executive Director.
- Coordinated rental of scissor lift and projects with staff, Facilities Management and Contractor.
- Reviewed Proposals for Erickson Farm.
- Coordinated bench installations at Buttermilk Falls Park and Kakiat Park.

- Coordinated Sewer pump repairs at Haverstraw Bay Park.
- Provided documentation for Claims against the County.
- Met with NYNJ Trail Conference staff regarding shared responsibilities.
- Coordinated the collection of information to determine the feasibility of the installation of internet/WIFI at Haverstraw Bay Park.
- Obtained quotes for replacement of the playground surface at Haverstraw Bay Park.
- Obtained quotes for replacement of fence at Kennedy Park.
- Met with Town of Clarkstown regarding Bear Swamp Town Park connection to Mountainview Nature Park.
- Provided information on employee success story to the Youth Bureau.
- Met with RCSC regarding this year's projects.

ITEM # 5 – PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No public present

ITEM # 6- ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn the meeting by D. Gruskin, seconded by G. Welch - unanimous.

Meeting adjourned at 5:45 pm.

ITEM # 7- NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting date will be determined

Respectfully submitted by:
Allan Beers and Michael DiMola