



TOWN OF WELLESLEY

MASSACHUSETTS

**NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
REMOTE ONLINE MEETING AGENDA**

February 9, 2021, 7 PM

Approved 3-18-2021

Present: Raina McManus, Chair; Laura Robert, Vice Chair; Jay McHale; Allison Burson; Brandon Schmitt, Director

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jim Miller, of 50 Pine St., stated he was co-chair of the committee recommending lights at WHS stadium. He noted benefits of adding lights include the addition of much needed field time, player safety, and community building and school spirit. He added that 2500 residents have signed a petition in favor of the lights and noted there would be no cost to the town, as they'd be paid for through private donations.

Kristina and Ned Desmond and their WHS senior daughter Maja, joined to voice their support of adding lights at the WHS track and field. Maja stated she had an incredible experience at WHS and hopes her younger brother and others will be able to have night games. Ms. Desmond highlighted the community building aspect, stating her family will want to continue to go to night games after her kids graduate.

Maureen and Rob Lally, of 38 Rice St., are abutters to the field. Ms. Lally believes lights would be a great benefit to the town, offering a feeling of connectedness. Mr. Lally stated there is a well thought out proposal with overwhelming support that will bring the community together.

Karl Tucker, of 43 Kenilworth Rd., is a former coach and is a father of two soccer players. He believes lights will benefit the sports programs. He stated lights can help by extending practice sessions and allowing for makeup practices and games in the event of rainouts. He believes kids deserve a big stage with large turnout under the lights, whereas currently afternoon games have few spectators.

Amy Munchak, of 16 Wildon Rd., joined representing the Wellesley Youth Lacrosse Club. She noted it has been a year since the lights were last discussed and discussions had been ongoing prior to that. She stated the need to prioritize and move forward. While there has been a downward trend in school enrollment, sports programs have been growing with three to five teams per grade, making it difficult to schedule field time. Organizations have spent thousands of dollars using Babson or other colleges for field time.

JOINT MEETING WITH NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION: DISCUSSION OF PRIORITIES FOR HUNNEWELL FIELDS COMPLEX

Raina McManus called the NRC meeting to order. She recognized members in attendance were Laura Robert, Allison Burson, Jay McHale, and herself. School Committee Meeting Minutes February 9, 2021 3 Ms. Chow noted the committees were also joined by colleagues from DPW, Dave Cohen and Dave Hickey. In addition, Athletic Director John Brown and WHS principal Jamie Chisum joined to discuss priorities around Hunnewell Field Complex.

Ms. McManus began by discussing the role of the NRC. She explained that the NRC owns the land and has a jurisdictional responsibility to be its stewards. With regards to improvements projects, the NRC remains objective as project proposals are brought to them and they can analyze the plan against the land use criteria. Once a plan is approved by the NRC, they then may become proponents.

Ms. Chow summarized a timeline of various projects that have taken place at the Hunnewell Field Complex over the past several years, highlighting projects currently approved or ongoing. Notably, bathrooms and team rooms were approved at the 2018 Annual Town Meeting (ATM) with funding appropriated. Subsequently, the funding proved insufficient to cover bids for the project and it is currently at a standstill. In 2019, the NRC and School Committee received a presentation from

the Lighting Committee of the Playing Field Task Force (PFTF) at their respective meetings. Currently, the Lee and Warren softball fields are near completion.

The conversation then turned to the School Committee and School Department's priorities. Dr. Lussier stated that for the schools, as users of the space, the priority of what would best meet the needs of the schools is first and foremost the bathrooms. Team rooms are also important, as locker room space was lost with the new high school. He noted they would like to see lighting while being mindful of neighbors.

Priorities - Bathrooms/Team Room

Ms. Chow stated that in order to move forward with the approved but stalled bathroom and team room project, it may be necessary to revisit the scope and funding of the project. She noted that currently underway at the Hunnewell field is an aqueduct bathroom project using a precast concrete solution that is scheduled to be completed spring/summer 2021. This could serve as a model that could be applied for the track and field bathrooms and potentially team rooms as well. Ms. McManus added that the aqueduct bathroom is NRC's current main priority. Town Engineer Dave Hickey offered further details on the current project. He also offered insight into a comparable project in Weston, in which they were able to change the size of the bathroom without lowering its capacity.

Ms. Burson clarified that the bathroom and team rooms project as originally presented to the NRC and approved at Town Meeting had them being coupled as one project. Regarding funding, possibilities were discussed that included exploring the use of a precast concrete building combining the bathrooms and team rooms to reduce cost or separating the two into two projects. In the case of the latter, Mr. McHale noted it would not be necessary to go back to Town Meeting to get approval to use the allocated funds for a bathroom only, followed by addressing the team rooms as a separate project at a later time. Regarding ownership of the project going forward, Mr. Hickey clarified that this was not currently a DPW Capital project. It was discussed that as the PFTF put forth the article at ATM in 2018, the project would continue to be in PFTF's purview. Mr. McHale stated the PFTF would likely create a subcommittee to take on the project but only if the School Committee and school administration voiced it as a priority. Ms. Chow and Ms. Burson are respective School Committee and NRC representatives to the PFTF and they will bring forward the topic at the February 12th meeting.

Priorities - Lighting

Per Ms. McManus, NRC's priority involving lighting is to fix existing lighting around the tennis courts and to improve lighting at the fields along Rt. 16, the Reidy Little League field, tennis School Committee Meeting Minutes February 9, 2021 4 courts, and Warren field. She believes it will go a long way with the community to fix existing lighting before building new. She described problems with the lighting to include the lights not giving off good light, a hazardous glare that shines off them affecting both players using the field and passersby on the adjacent road and sidewalk. A lighting consultant was hired to determine if the problems could be mitigated by adjusting the lights, adding shields, dimmers, or timers, or if new fixtures are needed or poles need to be moved. She noted fixing the lighting is in the NRC's five-year plan in the budget. She also noted that replacing existing community lighting is allowable for CPA funds and they may look to use those funds to complete the project sooner.

The topic of adding new lighting to the track and field was discussed. Ms. Chow reiterated that NRC is the landowner and it was important to follow the appropriate process. She noted the Committee had heard from speakers in favor of the lights yet they have also received many emails and messages from people who are concerned. Mr. Roberti agreed both sides have been vocal and he believes there is work to be done between the advocates for the lights and the neighborhood. He voiced support for the idea of renting lights as a trial. Ms. Mirick asked if the Lighting Subcommittee of the PFTF included neighbors, to which Ms. Robert replied she did believe there was a neighbor component.

Laurance Stuntz joined the meeting. He is chair of PFTF and a member of the Lighting Subcommittee that NRC asked be put together in the summer of 2019. He stated they have held community forums and have done their best to reach out to neighbors. He noted the Lighting Subcommittee included a plan to improve the Reidy field lights. He discussed there was a previous exploration into using temporary lights. However, they discovered that in order to get grid-connected LED lights, the lights would need to be positioned on the track. These are 40,000 pound units and may have invalidated the warranty on the track, so the idea was dismissed. He acknowledged it may be worth looking into other solutions.

Next Steps

Ms. Mirick emphasized the importance of developing a defined process that will bring a resolution to the community on the proposed projects. Ms. Gray added it is important to define the work and who will be responsible for it.

Ms. McManus stated the NRC requires specific criteria for any proposition of land use change, particularly regarding impacts on natural resources, impacts on neighborhoods, impacts on the town and schools, and cost. Mr. Stuntz stated the PFTF needs to be informed by elected boards and the NRC what they would like PFTF to specifically submit to them.

Mr. McHale stated he notes consensus from all at the meeting that getting a proper bathroom on the field is priority. He is hopeful Mr. Hickey can leverage what he has learned from the aqueduct bathroom project to find a solution. Ms. Chow stated she hoped she could speak for the School Committee that bathrooms remain the top priority and agrees it should continue moving forward.

A discussion and vote regarding lights will be added to the February 23rd School Committee agenda. Ms. Robert offered to share reports and feedback the NRC has received.

At 8:27 pm, Ms. McManus adjourned the NRC meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Brandon Schmitt, Director