

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
SUFFOLK COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS,
RECREATION AND CONSERVATION
MINUTES OF APRIL 25, 2019
INLET POND COUNTY PARK, RED HOUSE, “ROY LATHAM” NATURE CENTER
GREENPORT, NEW YORK**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Christopher Bodkin	Member of the Board
Gilbert Cardillo	Trustee, Town of Riverhead
Kathleen Gooding	Trustee, Town of Shelter Island
Peter Leis	Chairman, Trustee, Town of Islip
Daniel Lloyd	Trustee, Town of Babylon
William B. Sickles	Vice Chairman, Trustee, Town of Southampton
Richard F. White, Jr.	Trustee, Town of East Hampton

ABSENT

Dawn Hopkins	Trustee, Town of Brookhaven
Debra Kolyer	Member of the Board
Joseph Kukral	Member at Large
Arthur W. Leudesdorf	Trustee, Town of Southold
Michael Rosato	Trustee, Town of Smithtown
James W. Wright	Trustee, Town of Huntington

PARKS DEPARTMENT

Don McKay	Deputy Commissioner
Richard Martin	Director of Historic Services
Tony Trotta	Senior Superintendent
Barbara Rittman	Senior Office Assistant

GUESTS

Robin Simmen	Member of Bd. of Directors, L.I. Native Plant Initiative
Tom Damiani	North Fork Audubon Society
Gwynn Schroeder	Aide, Hon. Legislator Al Krupski, District 1
Alexandra DeRosa	Aide, Hon. Legislator Kara Hahn, District 5
Xicheng Zhou	Intern, Hon. Legislator Kara Hahn, District 5

PUBLIC PORTION

Robin Simmen presented a summary of the rain garden she designed using native Long Island plants at the front entrance of the Red House “Roy Latham” Nature Center. While working at New York Botanical Garden and the Cornell Cooperative Extension, Robin explained that she focused on getting people interested in native plants and finding ways to use them in their own landscapes. In order to provide environmental education, Robin began offering workshops on rain gardening and then decided to do a community project rain garden at the Red House and fill it only with plants that are native to Long Island. In the fall of 2017, Robin called in some master gardeners and did soil tests. She wasn’t surprised to find there was no percolation problem with the soil, it was extremely sandy loam, typical of Riverhead and a good place for a rain garden. Richard Martin added that the rain garden was a nice design complement to the handicapped ramp and walkway that was built next to the garden.

Robin distributed information which is also posted on the Cooperative Extension website. One booklet is entitled "Creating a Rain Garden" and the other "Native Plants for Long Island Rain Gardens." She added that the whole point of having this colorful garden is for it to be an educational demonstration garden. The over sixty species in the garden are going to be labeled with both the Latin and common names on more permanent metal markers so that people will know what to ask for when looking for plants at nurseries.

Robin described a rain garden as a place where water will percolate through the soil and re-enter the aquifer. It will never cause a problem with mosquitoes because the water moves into the ground and exists in relationship with the water shed that feeds it, which in this case is the roof. Every time it rains, the opportunity to use all of the water that falls into the gutters is created for use in the rain garden. Robin worked with volunteers to excavate the lawn (a 600 sq. foot area), during the spring and summer of 2017. A shallow basin was created (forming the wettest areas), and berms were created from the soil that was excavated (forming the driest areas) in order to mimic nature. The garden was planted in the fall, giving the perennial plants all winter to establish root systems. The plants won't use their energy to emerge until they have the heat and sun to do it successfully. Birds and butterflies begin to cover the garden when it's in full bloom during the month of June and the plant selection offers four season appeal. All of the native plants utilized enjoy a "drought and drench" lifestyle. They can take huge amounts of water and also survive without water for 2-3 weeks. Robin stressed that a rain garden is a very good way to landscape in a more sustainable, super low maintenance fashion.

Clean up of the garden will take place once the temperature at night is fifty degrees, which will be next week. Native pollinators hibernate in the hollow canes and leaves during the winter months and a generation of insects would be destroyed by clearing out the garden too early. Robin gave a description of each of the plants used while outdoors with the group in front of the building. The piping used for the rain water coming from the gutters is permeable on the bottom and disperses the water throughout the garden. No pesticides, fertilizers or additional irrigation are used, and the garden provides real habitat for native wildlife, insects and birds. Robin added that last spring, a huge snapping turtle dug out its nest on the side of the berm. Many of the plants were purchased from the Long Island Native Plant Initiative, and also some from Glover Perennials (Cutchogue), Long Island Natives (Eastport) and Pinewood Perennial Gardens (Cutchogue).

It was noted that North Fork Audubon Society will be holding a native plant sale on the Saturday and Sunday of Memorial Day weekend and plants will be provided by Glover Perennials.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MARCH 28, 2019

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Co-Chairman William Sickles and it was seconded by Trustee Daniel Lloyd. The minutes were approved by a vote of 7-1-0.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Deputy Commissioner McKay reported on progress at West Hills Stables. The new concessionaire is now on site and aggressively working on the barns, removing debris, painting and putting up new plywood inside the barns. Parks staff, under Senior Superintendent Trotta's direction, did a great job eliminating a lot of small metal sheds that were scattered on the site. Progress has not been made getting the dirt delivered to restore the site. There are still holes on the site where soil was excavated and the County Attorney's Office has been working to come to a settlement.

Deputy Commissioner McKay passed an article from the newspaper about the glamping planned this season at Cedar Point CP in East Hampton. They aim to open for business on Memorial Day weekend.

Deputy Commissioner McKay reported that a new sign will be posted in about two weeks at Inlet Pond CP for the renaming of the Red House building to the “Roy Latham Nature Center”. The legislation for the renaming was approved a few months ago.

Business is going well and numbers are strong for camping, as well as golf. Deputy Commissioner McKay noted that the golf courses are in excellent condition.

Legislators Anker and Hahn held a nice press event last week to announce “Suffolk County Parks Week”. The Parks Department very much appreciates their commitment to raising awareness and support to get children and adults out to enjoy County parks.

Parks Trustee Lloyd reported about an area at Weeks Road and Bay Shore Road in North Babylon because there were complaints about a need for a clean-up of the site. Senior Superintendent Trotta stated that he was informed of it and went to the site to make certain that the outside perimeter of the sump had been cleaned up and found that it had already been taken care of. The site will be checked periodically for debris.

CHAIRMAN’S REPORT

Chairman Leis inquired if there were any updates on cell towers. Deputy Commissioner McKay stated that Commissioner Berdolt is working to advance plans for cell towers installed in some County parks.

Chairman Leis inquired about erosion at any of the County park ocean beaches. Senior Superintendent Trotta stated that the beaches are currently ok as a result of the mild winter. He added that Cupsogue CP lost some sand on the bay side where camping sites are and a few sites had to be moved down.

Chairman Leis requested an update on construction work at the Third House. Trustee White reported that he met with Commissioner Berdolt and Nick Gibbons at Third House for a site visit and was surprised that the floors have already been removed. There are a lot of old beams as well as new beams, and it has now been all opened up. Richard Martin reported that in order to bring it to code, a lot of the framing in the large dining room in the back towards the cabins can be kept, but a majority of the framing will have to be replaced.

ROUND TABLE

Trustee White reported that he was very displeased to hear that a Parks employee was living in county housing and paying \$1,000/month. The Superintendent of Montauk State Park lives in a house by the lighthouse and pays nothing. He feels that it’s appalling that County employees living in County housing have to pay rental fees when they are the ears and eyes of the property and protect it. They are constantly badgered and questioned by visitors and he feels that it isn’t right that they should have to pay rent. Richard Martin stated that the Suffolk County Legislature, by resolution directive declared that Parks Department housing rentals be brought up to market rate and tenants charged rent.

Co-Chairman Sickles agreed with Trustee White and inquired if there has been any further word from Legislator Lindsay or the Legislature regarding the proposal for turning the Parks housing program over to private enterprise. Deputy Commissioner McKay stated that he will check into it and get back to him. Co-Chairman Sickles stated that the last he heard from Legislator Hahn was that it had been tabled. He added that the Parks Trustees voted twice unanimously that they are in opposition to it. He stated that he spoke against it at the Parks Committee Legislative meeting and it has been tabled a number of times since then. He feels that part of the problem is that there is a misconception on the part of the Legislature and others that if someone is living in Parks housing that they are getting away with something if they’re paying less rent. Initially, people paid no rent and no utilities and then over years, utilities started being charged with some rent, but then rental

fees rose higher and higher. It now appears that it is looked upon as a cash cow to help offset shortfalls. The larger picture is not being looked at because if there is a Park employee living in a park house, they have a vested interest in what is going on there. Co-Chairman Sickles stated that he lived in a park house for over ten years and stressed that people constantly call and knock on your door with questions. You don't mind doing it because you know you're providing a service to the parks and it is recognized because your rent is a little lower. If tenants have to pay market value and utility costs, it isn't worth it and instead of having somebody who cares about a park, there's just a tenant living there.

Trustee Cardillo stated that something should be said about who Roy Latham was. Deputy Commissioner McKay passed the resolution renaming the Red House at Inlet Pond County Park for Roy Latham so that the trustees could review the background about Roy Latham's life interests and reasons for supporting the renaming. **Tom Damiani** stated that Roy Latham was a potato farmer, his collections as a naturalist are unparalleled and he donated tens of thousands of specimens collected over many years to various museums. The territory Roy covered went from Riverhead out to both of the points on Long Island. Trustee Cardillo added that he was recognized by the American Museum of Natural History. Tom stated that Roy was self-educated, his wife was a teacher and the North Fork Audubon Society is happy to commemorate him so that he is not forgotten about. Richard Martin reported that the new sign is completed and will be put up at Red House in about two weeks. Gwynn Schroeder added that North Fork Audubon would also like to have a plaque made in honor of Roy Latham to be hung on the front door of the Red House.

Trustee Cardillo recognized David Gatz, a Southampton resident who organizes the Paumanok Path 70 km race every year, which goes from Rocky Point to Sears Bellows CP (43.5 miles). The entire length of the Paumanok Path continues out to Montauk Point. This is the 6th year of the event and is a race that brings hundreds of people to the greenbelt trails and through parks at a time of year when parks are not that busy. Last year, a group of the runners participating in the race assisted in apprehending some ATV drivers who were caught illegally on the course.

Tom Damiani reported that there will be more of a presence at the North Fork Audubon "Roy Latham" Nature Center with the building being open Saturdays, from 10am-2pm. A record of how many people come to visit will be kept.

Tom also inquired about the results of the bow hunting that was opened up at Inlet Pond CP this past season. Tony Trotta stated that Nick Gibbons would have a record of that information.

Alexandra DeRosa reported that Legislator Lindsay's park housing bill will be on the floor at the next General Meeting and it doesn't expire until the end of the year.

Alexandra reported that Legislator Hahn will hold her 'Park-a-Day-in-May' challenge again this year. She goes to a different County park every day during the month of May to promote people getting out to visit public lands and it will also be posted on social media.

Co-Chairman Sickles reported that next year, on April 22, 2020 will be the 50th anniversary of Earth Day. The 40th anniversary was celebrated at Indian Island CP with activities and a lot of groups were represented. The Friends of the Long Island Greenbelt, Long Island Greenbelt Trail Conference, Pine Barrens, Audubon Society, Nature Conservancy, Group for the East End and more were represented. Co-Chairman Sickles strongly encouraged the Parks Department to begin thinking about recognizing the 50th anniversary of Earth Day by making plans for Indian Island CP. The County's initiative to reduce nitrogen from seeping into estuaries, the new septic systems being installed, the use of rain gardens and a multitude of other possibilities could be presented, aside from hiking and trails.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Parks Trustee Richard White and it was seconded by Parks Trustee Daniel Lloyd. The motion was unanimously approved by a vote of 7-0-0.

The next Parks Trustee meeting will be held at Bergen Point Golf Course in West Babylon on Thursday, May 23, 2019.