

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
SUFFOLK COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS,
RECREATION AND CONSERVATION
MINUTES OF JANUARY 23, 2020
WEST SAYVILLE GOLF COURSE, MEADOWEDGE
WEST SAYVILLE, NEW YORK**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Christopher Bodkin	Member of the Board
Gilbert Cardillo	Trustee, Town of Riverhead
Dawn Hopkins	Trustee, Town of Brookhaven
Debra Kolyer	Member of the Board
Joseph Kukral	Member at Large
Peter Leis	Chairman, Trustee, Town of Islip
Michael Rosato	Trustee, Town of Smithtown
William B. Sickles	Vice-Chairman, Trustee, Town of Southampton
Richard F. White, Jr.	Trustee, Town of East Hampton
James W. Wright	Trustee, Town of Huntington

ABSENT

Kathleen Gooding	Trustee, Town of Shelter Island
Daniel Lloyd	Trustee, Town of Babylon
VACANT	Trustee, Town of Southold

PARKS DEPARTMENT

Philip Berdolt	Commissioner
Don McKay	Deputy Commissioner
Emily Lauri	Community Relations Director
Richard Martin	Director of Historic Services
Tony Trotta	Senior Superintendent
Barbara Rittman	Senior Office Assistant

GUESTS

Honorable Kara Hahn	Legislator, 5 th District
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PUBLIC PORTION

There were no members of the public present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF DECEMBER 19, 2019

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Trustee Richard White and it was seconded by Trustee James Wright. The minutes were unanimously approved by a vote of 10-0-0.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Berdolt reported that through a recommendation by Suffolk County Veterans Service, he met at North Fork Preserve with the organization Paws of War to discuss the possibility of the group occupying and maintaining the building and a portion of the property in Riverhead. The building is in fairly good condition

and the roof has just been replaced. The organization trains and places shelter dogs to serve and provide independence to our U.S. military veterans that suffer from the emotional effects of war, such as PTSD.

The Parks Department would like to enter into a yearly agreement with the Paws of War organization to occupy the building. There is a master plan that is under way for North Fork Preserve and that same building would be incorporated into it but the Paws of War could occupy and maintain it until such time comes when the Parks Department has the funds to do something else with the property. Parks Trustee Sickles inquired if the dogs would be staying on the premises. Commissioner Berdolt stated that they would and the group would be providing the kennels. The building also has an apartment where an employee resides. There is an outside garage door located between the kitchen and the front furnace room where the group would like to put a door into the garage where the kennels would go.

Trustee Sickles commented that in the past neighbors have been very concerned about any activity there. Commissioner Berdolt stated that he would be meeting at the North Fork Preserve with Legislator Krupski and the Paws of War group to discuss the organization's interest. He added that the portion of the property of interest is on active parkland and that the portion that was of concern to the neighbors in the last year was at the passive end of it because of the drainage structures that Parks was building.

Legislator Hahn inquired if that portion of the property is where the farmland portion is located and cattle may be brought in. Commissioner Berdolt noted and Trustee Cardillo agreed that the fifty acre farmland portion is bordered by parkland and close to ½ mile away from the area that the Paws of War organization would be. The farmland portion was determined to be of mediocre quality and there is a financially qualified party very interested in using the farmland for his cattle. Commissioner Berdolt stated that the County currently has a surveyor who is determining the exact property lines to be sectioned off. The interested party is also interested in using another County property to be used as an abattoir (slaughterhouse). Member at Large Kukral inquired if the fifty acre farmland parcel is on the western end of the property and Commissioner Berdolt stated that it is and that it also borders Sound Avenue. Nick Gibbons added that there is an access road that goes up to the north as well.

Trustee White stated that the purpose of the Paws of War organization is to benefit our U.S. military veterans and that the neighbors would probably be reluctant to have an issue with it. Deputy Commissioner McKay stated that he is personally familiar with the organization and it is an excellent group who provide support and tangible benefits for our veterans by training the dogs to help them assimilate back into the community. Commissioner Berdolt added that he will also be seeking an accompanying resolution from Legislator Krupski in support of the motion.

A motion to support Suffolk County Parks going into contract with the Paws of War organization was made by Trustee Gilbert Cardillo and it was seconded by Vice Chairman William Sickles. The motion was unanimously approved by a vote of 10-0-0.

Commissioner Berdolt reported that the recent issues with the Indian Island Golf Course concessionaires have been somewhat resolved and Parks has come to an agreement with them. Because they did not build the miniature golf course that was included in their original contract and they were supposed to pay Parks \$175,000 if it wasn't built, there is a check in that amount waiting in escrow. The final details of the next contract are currently being negotiated, and the building of a miniature golf course is not included in it. They've been out of contract for two years so the next five year contract has only three years left of it. The concessionaire will be paying Parks the \$175,000 that is owed, plus any additional funds that are owed, which is approximately \$40,000. Those funds will be used for golf course equipment and improvements.

Vice Chairman Sickles commented that he wasn't sure if a miniature golf course at Indian Island would have worked out. He stated that it would have been too close to the fairway and with all of the children that play miniature golf, constant monitoring would have been necessary so that they didn't go out onto the fairway. There would also be the possibility of golfers slicing shots and landing in the miniature golf course area, possibly causing injury to someone. He added also that the driving range has been closed for a period of time because of the netting and Commissioner Berdolt stated that the netting is included in the last contract as a capital improvement.

Vice Chairman Sickles inquired if it was part of the agreement to keep the greens open over the winter at Indian Island and Commissioner Berdolt stated that it was. Vice Chairman Sickles commented that if the other courses are closed, that Indian Island should be as well because of the wear and tear on the golf course. One day the greens are somewhat frozen and the next there's warm weather and people play and create foot print markings and depressions which are difficult to bring back. Trustee Cardillo stated that from the restaurant standpoint they may want golfers there because it contributes to that business. Commissioner Berdolt stated that he spoke with the golf staff who said that it would be better to have no activity, but there isn't that much play right now that it's damaging the greens.

Vice Chairman Sickles also commented that it has always been the case that the golf courses have a Class A Golf Pro present who can give lessons and that he doesn't feel it's necessary because County golf courses aren't private clubs. Parks staff could sell Green Keys at the Pro Shop and enter into an agreement with a golf cart company for rentals.

Commissioner Berdolt reported that there is an issue with Seatuck Environmental Association that is located at the Scully Estate in Islip. A meeting will be held regarding compliance with their capital commitment and also their old contract that needs to be updated. The property is used by the organization mostly for fundraising (such as Brews and Bats and Earth Day), weddings and 50% of the use of the property is supposed to be open to the public. The association also derives revenue from a rental on the premises.

Legislator Hahn reported that Legislator Calarco has replaced Legislator Gregory as Presiding Officer, and Legislator Hahn is now Deputy Presiding Officer. There have also been some Legislative Committee changes. Presiding Officer Calarco has combined the Environmental, Parks and Agriculture Committees, Legislator Hahn is the Chairperson and meetings will now be held on Mondays at 10:00 am. Deputy Presiding Officer Hahn is also Chair of the Economic Development and Planning Committee.

Legislator Hahn reported about a neighbor of the Arthur Kunz County Park in Smithtown expanded their property into the parkland, fenced it in, and added a putting green and a gazebo. They later decided to sell the property and had to remove everything encroaching on County property. Legislator Hahn stated that in the future, any fencing company that installs fencing along the border of County parkland should be responsible for getting a survey first so that fencing does not get installed on County parkland. The installer can require that the homeowner pay for the survey. The Parks Department should also be notified of any such action as well.

Commissioner Berdolt stated that there is another resolution coming up pertaining to Coindre Hall. Legislator Spencer is seeking to form an advisory board for any issues related to the 34 acre property. Included on the board will be the Commissioner of Parks or his designee, the County Executive or his designee, DPW, two representatives from the 18th District of the County Legislature, one representative selected by the Huntington Town Supervisor, one representative of the Greater Huntington Council of Yacht and Boating Clubs, and one representative from North Shore Baymen's Association.

Trustee Cardillo stated that there was an issue at Coindre Hall several years back when patrons were exercising civil disobedience by using the property to run their dogs unleashed. There were a few meetings held and there

was a big response from the community. Commissioner Berdolt added that there were a lot of complaints last year that went to Legislator Spencer's office because patrons with dogs didn't like the fact that they were getting ticketed. Trustee Cardillo commented that it isn't fair to the concessionaire who holds weddings on the property, to have dogs running around off leash.

Commissioner Berdolt reported that plans are being finalized to renovate and restore the Coindre Hall Boathouse and adjacent granite sea wall. The Department of Public Works will be overseeing the restoration effort and a bid for the work is expected to be released shortly.

Member at Large Kukral inquired if the sand that is planned to be taken out of Cupsogue CP for the wash over will affect the new ten campsites that were set up a few years ago. Commissioner Berdolt and Nick Gibbons agreed that they hope to make the campsite area bigger and the job is planned to begin on February 1st.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman Peter Leis wished all a Happy New Year.

Chairman Leis thanked Legislator Hahn for attending the meeting and congratulated her on her new responsibilities as Deputy Presiding Officer.

Chairman Leis inquired if there are any updates on the erosion issues at the parks. Commissioner Berdolt stated that they have been doing fairly well but it's still early in the season.

Chairman Leis inquired about the plans for cell towers. Commissioner Berdolt reported that he had a meeting on it yesterday and it looks positive, but there are two sites that have to be revisited which are Cupsogue and Cordwood Landing. The first cell tower to be installed will be at Gardiner CP on Montauk Highway in Bay Shore. Funds accrued from the cell towers will go directly into a separate account specifically marked for Parks Department Capital Projects. The very minimum amount that can be made per tower per year is approximately \$38,000 and potential to make \$100,000 or more per year. The Parks Trustees were very pleased to hear the great news.

There is a preliminary sketch for the cell towers that Commissioner Berdolt stated he will be reviewing with Parks staff to make certain all of the locations are appropriate and acceptable. At the eastern end of Gardiner CP, just past the parking area is where the flag pole style cell tower will be located.

Chairman Leis inquired about what happens to funds for capital projects that are appropriated but not completed. Commissioner Berdolt stated that if a project isn't bonded out, there is no debt to it. Legislator Hahn stated that there were funds in the capital program for the dining hall at Peconic Dunes CP, the appropriating resolution was obtained, but Parks didn't get the twelve votes for the bond so those funds were kept for a period of time for the project, but were never borrowed from a bank for it. Commissioner Berdolt added that whatever wasn't used doesn't get charged to Parks. At the end of the year when it's closed out and there are funds left from a capital project, that amount is never charged to Parks and it only gets charged what was spent.

ROUND TABLE

Trustee Rosato stated that he feels it's extremely important to create a separate taxing district for the SC Parks Department because of the maintenance of the very large amount of parkland it has and continues to get underfunded by close to \$2 million every year. If a separate taxing district were to be created and Parks

generates \$12 million, and Parks needs another \$2.5 million, the taxing district would have to raise \$5 to cover that cost on top of the funds that Parks brings in every year. He added that it would be such a minute amount to have a separate taxing district that charges every household \$5 or \$10 to achieve state of the art parks across Suffolk County and would be well worth it. Trustee Rosato also added that he feels strongly that the Parks Trustees should lobby for it.

Legislator Hahn stated that she feels it's the tax cap issue and we go up to the tax cap just about every year. This means we are only allowed to increase our taxes by as much as 2% which is based on cost of living adjustments. This year the cap is only 1.81% but the problem is if you try to add a new tax it goes into the tax cap. It's as if you're increasing your overall tax even though it's for a new item and won't go anywhere unless the state offers an exemption. Trustee Rosato inquired what Parks' overall budget is per year and Commissioner Berdolt stated that it's a little over \$14 million. Legislator Hahn added that back in 2003 there was a report done on historic structures and that's not even including the \$58 million that we're short in capital expenditures on our historic buildings. Trustee Rosato stated that in order to get an exemption you'd have to go to the State Legislature and added that now would be a very good time since the Democrats control both the Senate and the Assembly. He added that it's more likely to be approved with the Democrats controlling both, than if the Republicans were controlling the Senate. Trustee Cardillo added that this is also a time of very low unemployment and considered to be good times. Legislator Hahn commented that it was also just announced that there's a \$6.2 billion budget deficit and while it's worth considering, a new revenue stream for water quality is being sought right now and is one of this administration's priorities.

Legislator Hahn stated that there is talk of hotel/motel expansion and it's possible to seek a different formula to acquire more funds for parks through that. At 3%, our hotel/motel tax is very low in comparison with the rest of NYS and Legislator Hahn added that she has a meeting scheduled with Assemblyman Englebright and Presiding Officer Calarco to discuss it. There's a lot of East End negativity about it though so she isn't sure if anything will come of it. Trustee Rosato inquired why there's a need for a water tax when ¼% goes into sewer stabilization and Suffolk County Water Authority collects money from every household and business in the County. Legislator Hahn stated that the Water Authority extracts water from the ground, cleans and delivers it to the homes and they also have some of the lowest rates in the country. There has been some talk of a water tax on our water bill that may turn out to be just flat out or based only on usage. Legislator Hahn stated that she feels the hotel/motel tax has more potential and would be a more realistic way to go as long as we don't keep the same formula and get a higher portion of it to go to parks.

Trustee James Wright stated that he has become very interested in creating apps without code which could potentially contribute to promoting Suffolk County Parks. There's software called Glide apps that allows you to take information and google sheets and turn it into an app. He has been creating apps in-house and for websites and it takes a few hours to do because it uploads the hotlinks. He suggested taking the Parks website and creating an app called Suffolk County Parks so you don't have to bookmark anymore and go in through a search to find Suffolk County Parks. You then push the app out in either a QR code which you can scan with your phone or a hotlink that you put in to get the app. By the next meeting, he added that he could make one up for Parks, and send it out for the Parks Trustees to look at.

Trustee Wright commented that he does it now with his professional association so that people can register for conferences, and through his school website, parents can register for sports without having to go to the homepage, but he also connects to the homepage. He put his school one out two days ago and he already has 350 people who accessed the app and increased his web traffic by 10%. At the bottom of the app it shows all kinds of link categories you can pick from and comment tabs can be added as well, to receive positive and negative feedback. He inquired if he could work on it for the Parks website and Commissioner Berdolt stated that everything that Parks comes up with will need to be approved by the IT Department. Trustee Wright added that it's even un-hackable.

Trustee Cardillo reported that everything is good at Indian Island CP. He inquired if there is a separate hotel/motel tax in Montauk, on top of the state tax. Trustee White said that there is not.

Member of the Board Debra Kolyer inquired about how the holiday light show at Smith Point went. Commissioner Berdolt stated that the numbers in comparison to last year haven't come back yet. Trustee Cardillo noted that there were signs at a lot of locations advertising the event which was good. Trustee Sickles commented that he has been to the Smith Point Light Show twice and enjoyed it very much. This year there was one in Riverhead, where the old Calverton Links Golf Course used to be on Edwards Avenue. He found it to be a big disappointment and the Smith Point one was much better. Commissioner Berdolt added that there were a lot of compliments on the friendly deer at Smith Point as well.

Member at Large Joseph Kukral reported that he has been hearing from a lot of campers he knows that the new web track reservation system and viewing of the website is phenomenal. It doesn't seem to be having glitches and isn't locking up. Commissioner Berdolt reported that they just held a meeting with the Park Supervisors and pointed out which parks don't have pictures on the website so that some can be taken and uploaded to the website for next season.

Trustee White inquired about a new concessionaire for the camp store at Cedar Point CP. Commissioner Berdolt reported that a waiver was obtained and the concessionaire who manages the Glamping at Cedar Point will be moving in and running the camp store this upcoming season. Trustee White stressed that the operation of the camp store is more of a convenience for the campers than the purpose being to generate money. It should be a consideration and recognized in the contract that a profit not be anticipated and also that usage of the camp store is primarily on the weekends. Commissioner Berdolt reported that the contract was tailored with minimal rent, maintenance and percentage of profit. Trustee White inquired if the concessionaire has the option to keep a camper on the premises so they can stay on site if they wish to. Commissioner Berdolt reported that they do have the option, Parks staff ran a hubbell connection for a camper and they also have access to dump into the septic system as well. To get started this season, only pre-packaged food items will be offered to the public.

Trustee White reported that a meeting was held out at Third House with Dean Filippe. Dean was a resident Parks Supervisor at Third House for many years and he agreed to do a taped story time, speaking about the years that he lived and worked there. Another taping is scheduled for January 30th.

Trustee Dawn Hopkins reported on the SUNY Oneonta program and agreement that was entered into with the Ronkonkoma Lake Foundation to sponsor graduate student who would develop a Lake Front Management Plan for Lake Ronkonkoma. The graduate student has now completed two years of research work, has earned her Master's Degree and is employed in Syracuse, New York. Trustee Hopkins stated that she has received all of the copies of the Lake Front Management Plan which is approximately 104 pages of data and accompanying analysis that was collected. Trustee Hopkins reported that staff from Newsday has contacted her and requested a copy of the plan. She reported that she plans to distribute copies for review to all of the appropriate people.

Richard Martin reported that work is starting at the Cedar Point Lighthouse next week. Rebuilding of the interior scaffolding will be first so that the architects and engineers can get to the top of the building to start the roof work.

Emily Lauri reported that 11,222 cars, 16 mini buses and 5 buses visited the Holiday Light Show this year. The Parks percentage for the event was \$33, 666.00, plus whatever the electric total is. The total bill, including electric was \$47,532.

Barbara Rittman asked for some suggestions from the Parks Trustees for meeting locations within their townships for the 2020 calendar schedule. Coindre Hall (Huntington) was suggested as one of the meeting sites. Third House, Montauk (East Hampton) and a site for Shelter Island were suggested as well. Commissioner Berdolt suggested the Beagle Club in Calverton (Riverhead). Shinnecock East (Southampton), Cupsogue (Brookhaven), Scully Estate (Islip), Deepwells Farm (Smithtown) and Van Bourgondien (Babylon) were added.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Trustee Richard White and it was seconded by Member at Large Joseph Kukral. The motion was unanimously approved by a vote of 10-0-0.

The next Parks Trustee meeting will be held at **West Sayville Golf Course, Meadowedge on Thursday, February 27, 2020.**