

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
SUFFOLK COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS,
RECREATION AND CONSERVATION
MINUTES OF OCTOBER 24, 2019
MASHOMACK PRESERVE
SHELTER ISLAND, NEW YORK**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Christopher Bodkin | Member of the Board |
| Gilbert Cardillo | Trustee, Town of Riverhead |
| Kathleen Gooding | Trustee, Town of Shelter Island |
| Joseph Kukral | Member at Large |
| Peter Leis | Chairman, Trustee, Town of Islip |
| 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 |
| Daniel Lloyd | Trustee, Town of Babylon |
| Michael Rosato | Trustee, Town of Smithtown |
| James W. Wright | Trustee, Town of Huntington |
| VACANT | Trustee, Town of Southold |

PARKS DEPARTMENT

| | |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| Philip Berdolt | Commissioner |
| Don McKay | Deputy Commissioner |
| Nick Gibbons | Principal Environmental Analyst |
| Emily Lauri | Community Relations Director |
| Richard Martin | Director of Historic Services |
| Tony Trotta | Senior Superintendent |
| Barbara Rittman | Senior Office Assistant |

GUESTS

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Melissa Kangas | Suffolk County Department of Planning & Real Estate |
| Rebecca Mundy | Mashomack Preserve |
| Alex Navarro | Conservation & Outreach Manager, Mashomack Preserve |

PUBLIC PORTION

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Jack Monti | Trustee, Mastic Peninsula Historical Society |
| Edward DeGennaro | Mastic Peninsula Historical Society |
| Brad Shupe | Mastic Peninsula Historical Society |
| Michael Lubrano | Mastic Peninsula Historical Society |
| Richard Oldham | Mastic Peninsula Historical Society |
| Bill Roach | Mastic Peninsula Historical Society |

Parks Trustee Kathleen Gooding introduced and thanked the hosts of the Parks Board of Trustees meeting at Mashomack Preserve, Rebecca Mundy and Alex Navarro. Manor House Operations Manager Rebecca Mundy thanked all for attending. Conservation and Outreach Manager Alex Navarro welcomed all and stated that his position at Mashomack Preserve combines education and conservation biology. He oversees and directs the

maintenance staff, all conservation research, as well as the stewardship and education programs on the premises. He noted that Mashomack has a tremendous cultural land use history. Much of the property has been largely affected by human land use over the past several hundred years, in addition to all of the natural events that have occurred. Alex added that most recently, the last storm that came through last week created surprising changes in the habitat which makes it a very dynamic job for him.

Alex noted that the meeting was being held in the Manor House, which was built in 1890. There are nine functional rooms and it is owned and used by the Nature Conservancy for Nature Conservancy events, such as team retreats and trainings. The Nature Conservancy also partners with local organizations, as well as the Suffolk County Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation. The preserve is 2,039 acres in size and contains an amazing diversity of flora and fauna. Alex stated that he is trained as a wildlife biologist and commented on the great number of insect species, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals that are present on the property, and added that he sees a fox just about every single day. Currently, the preserve is treated as a living laboratory, which includes top notch research on the effects of climate change documenting how our ecosystems respond, and also how a healthy regenerative forest will help mitigate the changes we are experiencing in the world today. The Nature Conservancy brings in 20,000 visitors each year to engage with the research and see things changing in real time. Alex invited the group to explore the grounds and visit Bass Creek.

Rebecca Mundy shared with the group a brief video about nature activities available at Mashomack Preserve. She explained that the Preserve is not set up as a hotel lodging facility, but a conference center and donor cultivation site by and for the Nature Conservancy. Staff from all around the globe visit the Preserve, and housing and meal service is provided. Mashomack is also open to Suffolk County Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation, and other non-profit organizations across Shelter Island as a community outreach facility.

Mike Laspia introduced himself as a former Shelter Island representative to the Suffolk County Parks Trustees. He served for thirty-eight years as director of Mashomack Preserve and retired three years ago. He worked as the outdoor manager for several years for the previous owner of the property who had brought in a shooting club, and then later as caretaker of the property when the shooting club was evicted. When the Nature Conservancy took over, Mike was asked to meet with the development staff and foundation heads to familiarize them with the site to help raise the \$6 million that was needed to purchase the property. Mike also worked on the Community Preservation Fund.

Gordon Gooding reported that he has been on the Community Preservation Fund for about three years and Mike Laspia has been his historian on the team. Shelter Island has acquired some properties in partnership with Suffolk County and has been working very closely with Nick Gibbons. Their goal is to identify the property for multiple reasons, but mainly for safety during hunting seasons and to ensure that the land is open for public enjoyment. They are very happy and thankful for the current relationship partnering with Suffolk County. He displayed a map of the open space properties that show not only the county properties but town owned ones as well. Many of the parks and preserves were at one time closed, but now they are very proud and thankful to Suffolk County for being a partner with these properties. Through community preservation, they are creating some trail maps that go through not only Suffolk County joint partnership properties but also their own.

Nick Gibbons stated that Suffolk County has purchased properties on Shelter Island and continues to spend money there for good reason, but historically without much benefit or return to the County residents. For many years, these properties sat vacant and unused, with the potential for them unrealized. Nick stated that he then made connection with former Highway Superintendent Jay Card who was a great partner in helping Parks to maintain the properties due to the distance away and the inability to send a crew. They trimmed county parks trails and responded to any issue that the Parks Department had which was very helpful. Jay recently stepped

down from his position and Nick currently works with Brian Sherman and has a very positive relationship with him as well.

Nick noted a piece of public open space property called Fresh Pond (Turkem's Rest) where Gordon Gooding and Community Preservation Fund members were interested in opening a trail. Nick stated that the land was a large, overgrown wetland area where he saw no potential for public access. Nick went to Shelter Island to visit the site and was very surprised to find that the first 50 feet of overgrown brush had been cleared away and the sign that Parks made had been installed at a beautiful trail that was created leading down to the pond where a bench had been placed as well. Over the past 12-18 months Nick has been working together very closely with Gordon Gooding on up to six more sites similar to Fresh Pond. Signs are currently being made for them by the Parks Department and the Town of Shelter Island will be installing them. Nick stated that this is the kind of partnership that Suffolk County had always envisioned for open space acquisitions. He added that Gordon Gooding has been instrumental in making progress locally in Shelter Island and Nick stated that he is very pleased that there is now real public access for all county residents.

PUBLIC PORTION

Ed DeGennaro introduced himself as president of Mastic Peninsula Historic Society, and five members of the restoration committee. He reported that he and members are looking forward to trying to obtain the Hawkins House in Moriches. The house is over two hundred years old and members would like to restore the house to create an 1800's museum. Working together with the schools, the goal is to bring school children in to tour the house and learn what life was like for farmers and blacksmiths of that time period. The house would be furnished with antique furniture of the time and guides dressed in colonial garb would provide the tours.

Commissioner Berdolt inquired how the Mastic Peninsula Historic Society would finance restoration of the building if the land acquisition was made. It was stated that there is an approved town resolution in place for them to maintain the property with the historic society as the lead agency and the intermediary between the town, the county and their organization. Commissioner Berdolt stated that there has to be funding identified in the resolution. He added that Suffolk County is currently locked into a lot of similar deals where Parks has the buildings which are deteriorating and it falls upon the county to maintain them. One example is the Commerdinger House. The Town of Smithtown was supposed to take it over and didn't because another similar historic society came in. Commissioner Berdolt stated that this group may have the means to get the renovation done, but if the town isn't willing to commit any money and it's just left up to the Mastic Peninsula Historic Society, he isn't convinced that all of the necessary work will get done. Ed DeGennaro stated that they plan to seek out grants and obtain as many as they can, in addition to fundraising efforts. He added that they have been very successful with grants in the past, through Suffolk County hotel/motel, Fund 192, the Pomeroy Foundation and also Lionel Gardner Foundation. They have a good grant writing staff, have had only one grant in ten years turned down and they're prepared to put a full effort behind that.

Commissioner Berdolt inquired what kind of funding it will take to restore the house. Estimates have not yet been acquired because access to the house is needed in order to determine the assessments. There are people who have offered to do the assessments pro bono and then they'll work out the numbers. It is estimated that approximately \$200-300,000 will probably have to be raised over the course of the project for completion of the restoration. The house is two hundred years old and has gone through several hands over the years. Some people tried to modernize the house by gutting some the original walls to add plumbing, electric and duct work. Other sections are almost completely original to the 1780-90's which is beneficial because their organization has already obtained period wood from what was once the home of the Woodhull Family.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 26, 2019

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Trustee Richard White and it was seconded by Trustee & Co-Chairman William Sickles. The minutes were unanimously approved by a vote of 7-0-0.

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & REAL ESTATE

Melissa Kangas, of Suffolk County Department of Economic Development & Planning reported on the Bummer (Webb/Hawkins House) property in the hamlet of Moriches, Town of Brookhaven (SCTM #0200-82600-0400-004000). Melissa distributed the concept plans and reported that the property is located north of Montauk Highway and west of Moriches/Middle Island Road. It is approximately 4.6 acres in size, mostly wooded with freshwater wetlands in the north corner of the property. There is a historic 19th century residence on the site known as the Captain J. Hawkins House and it is located within the town's designated Moriches historic district. The Town of Brookhaven approved Resolution #2018-0201 on March 1, 2018. Another Resolution (#2018-0315) was passed to amend #2018-0201 which states that the Town of Brookhaven will enter into an agreement with the Mastic Peninsula Historical Society. There would be no cost to the Town and Suffolk County would acquire the property. A subsequent resolution would "authorize" the Town of Brookhaven to maintain the property if Suffolk acquires it.

Co-Chairman Sickles commented that on page two of the resolution that was adopted by the Town of Brookhaven, it states that the Town of Brookhaven makes a commitment to improve, develop, maintain and repair the property as a historic facility with public access to all Suffolk County residents. He inquired if the resolution means that although no funding is mentioned, it falls on both the Town of Brookhaven and Suffolk County to maintain it. Richard Martin stated that the way in which it is written is misleading and it was brought up at the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) meeting held last week. The understanding was that it would be fully on the Town of Brookhaven to maintain the property, with the help of the Mastic Peninsula Historic Society. Suffolk County would only supervise what would be done to the house since it is a historic house. It would have to be clarified with the understanding that this is a hamlet park acquisition where the county lays out the full funding for the acquisition and then turns it over to the town for repairs and management. There are questions remaining about how much the Town of Brookhaven is willing to commit to on the property and it needs to be finalized.

Melissa stated that the county has a resolution drawn up (but not submitted yet) that specifies to the Legislature that the town will be responsible for repairing and maintaining the property. Richard added that it was the CEQ's request to have it in specific language in the county resolution which would be the final resolution on the acquisition of this property.

Commissioner Berdolt stated that the Washington Lodge in Bellport was purchased separately by the town in that open space acquisition and he suggested it for this acquisition as well. The town would then deal directly with the restoration group.

Trustee Cardillo inquired about the town resolution dating back to 2018. It was stated that the most recent owner of the house passed away which went to his estate. He had two elderly sisters who are infirm and have very few resources to clean out the many items left in the house. For the past eighteen months, members of the Mastic Peninsula Historic Society have been making an effort to find out if and where oil tanks/furnaces are, and how to get the house cleared out. There are also auxiliary structures that are in a state of disrepair and could be hazardous to the people who will need to go in to clear them out so that they can be removed. There are two other structures that go back over one hundred years and are part of the history of the property. An assessment will have to be made to get the house in a condition that's saleable and at the same time preserve the site so that it can become part of their educational program and an asset to the community.

Deputy Commissioner McKay inquired what guarantee there is if Suffolk County purchases the property that Brookhaven will pay to fix it. Member at Large Kukral commented that there is no dollar value commitment on the part of the Town of Brookhaven attached to the resolution and questioned what the actual commitment level is.

Commissioner Berdolt stated that Suffolk County Parks currently has 250 historic sites, many are in disrepair and he can't see taking on another that could very well be in much worse condition than the ones Parks already has. He added that he fights for every single dollar on the Parks capital line before the Legislature and can still barely maintain what it already has. It's very difficult to maintain the structures that it has and it's costing quite a lot of money. If Brookhaven would entertain an agreement similar to the one with the Washington Lodge in Bellport, or another resolution created with the Town of Brookhaven making an actual financial commitment, the Parks Department is all for open space and public access, and would then support it.

Co-Chairman Sickles suggested tabling the acquisition and a representative approaching the Town of Brookhaven requesting some financial commitment in writing that the Parks Trustees could go ahead and move on because as the resolution is currently written, it would place a financial burden on the Suffolk Parks Department. Commissioner Berdolt stated that the resolution for the acquisition has not been put in yet so there is still time.

Deputy Commissioner McKay stated that when the Town of Huntington acquired land in Northport, the Fuchs/Alex McKay Preserve, the Suffolk County Parks Commissioner at the time, Judy Gordon did not want the house on the property because she had a lot of the same concerns as this acquisition, so the town paid for the house portion of the acquisition. The town presently maintains the mansion and the county maintains the land, so an agreement similar to that one would not be unprecedented. Nick stated that the county worked very closely with the Town of Huntington on that acquisition and it is today a public holding and the county has no liability with respect to the building. With Washington Lodge, the building started out to be in somewhat reasonable condition at the time of the acquisition about ten years ago, but later fell into disrepair. It was never the county's liability for the same reason because it was cut out of the acquisition. Richard Martin agreed that there was no county responsibility.

Commissioner Berdolt commented that with the Commerdinger property, the Town of Smithtown was going to work out an agreement with the local civic group and then someone backed out of it. A resolution was submitted by a Legislator and the burden was put back onto the county.

Richard Martin stated that John Lesler was supposed to attend today's Parks Trustee meeting and represent the Town of Brookhaven. Richard met with John Lesler at the site and he also attended the CEQ meeting. At the site meeting, Mr. Lesler stated that the town was planning to board it up and not make any investment in the house. At the CEQ meeting, Mr. Lesler listened to all of the concerns and should have brought them back to the town, explaining that the county is concerned that there is nothing in writing to confirm the town's responsibilities. Richard added that the CEQ mirrored all of the comments made at the Parks Trustee meeting today. Maryann Spencer, who is the chair of the Historic Trust Committee, abstained from the vote because of the concerns and prefers that the town purchase the property and maintain it. Commissioner Berdolt commented that the CEQ did still pass the acquisition. Richard commented that the CEQ added further recommendation guidelines to the approval and text to be included in the county resolution, to make it very clear that the town has responsibilities for this property.

Co-Chairman Sickles stated that the Town of Brookhaven Parks Trustee is not in attendance at today's meeting and some other Parks Trustees are not present who may also have input so he suggested tabling the matter and having a representative go back to the Town of Brookhaven with the concerns because the Suffolk County Parks Department does not have the resources for this.

Richard Martin added that Bert Seides, who is on the Suffolk County Historic Trust Committee met with him at the site, and stated that he has similar questions and concerns about what the town will commit to with this project. Bert has worked with the town on a number of projects and because of his efforts, they've been successful.

A motion to table moving forward with an approval for acquisition of the Hawkins Webb House property was made by Co-Chairman William Sickles and it was seconded by Member at Large Joseph Kukral. The motion was unanimously approved by a vote of 7-0-0.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Berdolt reported that it was a great summer season due to the beautiful weather. Numbers are up which should be positive at budget time. At the budget hearings, Parks wasn't doing too badly in comparison with previous years and received a little more in its seasonal line which is helpful. Golf and Concessionaire numbers are up as well.

Commissioner Berdolt reported that the agreement between the Parks Department and the Warrior Ranch Foundation at the Beagle Club in Calverton was finally resolved after many months. There will be a ribbon-cutting welcoming at the site tomorrow, October 25th at 1:30 pm for anyone who would like to attend.

Co-Chairman Sickles reported that he visited several Suffolk County Parks during this past summer, including Shinnecock East, Sears Bellows, Cedar Point, Montauk and a number of others. He commented that for being short staffed and having limited resources, he was amazed at the great job that was done. July 4th weekend at Shinnecock East was very well organized, and Cedar Point as well. He commented that the staff deserves a lot of accolades for the great job done!! Trustee Cardillo added that Indian Island and Sears Bellows have been kept very clean, and staff even made benches from the trees taken down from the southern pine beetle infestation. Commissioner Berdolt commented that the only occasional complaints Parks has been getting are from squabbling between campers, so next year there will be a closer involvement with the Park Rangers to police the campground areas in the evenings, especially on the weekends.

The walking path created at Old Field Farm in East Setauket was completed. The work was contracted out and a very nice job was done.

There was a wash over on Dune Road near Shinnecock West (Altenkirch CP) in Southampton during the last storm. A pile of sand in the parking lot that accumulated since Hurricane Sandy was used to rebuild the dune where the breach was. DPW and NYS assisted with their trucks through four high tide cycles. Emergency dredging is still needed to rebuild the dunes and possibly get a stock pile of sand too. Tony Trotta, Nick Gibbons and additional staff were out there to help out through the night as well.

Commissioner Berdolt reported that next Tuesday, 10/29 at 2 pm there will be a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Navy SEAL Museum access road opening in West Sayville.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman Peter Leis inquired about the status of the RecTrac computer upgrade. Commissioner Berdolt confirmed that the upgrade is now fully operational. Parks also rolled out obtaining Green Key renewals online. The Green Keys no longer have an expiration date on them, they're still good for three years, can be renewed online and will save money on cards not having to be replaced. Anywhere patrons go, the cards can be scanned and it will show up if it has expired and needs renewing.

Chairman Leis inquired if there are any new improvements being done at the Shinnecock Marina. Commissioner Berdolt reported that there are plans for the bulk heading but it hasn't yet gone out for bid.

Chairman Leis inquired about the possibilities for a restaurant concession at the Third House. Commissioner Berdolt stated that the meeting hasn't been scheduled yet.

ROUND TABLE

Richard Martin reported that there will be a ribbon cutting ceremony at the Homan House in Yaphank this Saturday, October 26th at 2 pm to open the house up to the public. It will be hosted by the Yaphank Historical Society. The next Parks Trustee meeting in November will be held at that location.

Member at Large Joe Kukral inquired about plans to develop a policy for dealing with unruly guests in parks. He commented that he camped last weekend at Cathedral Pines CP, and a Park Ranger was called in because a camper was running a commercial generator nonstop and someone made a noise complaint. The Park Ranger questioned what is considered excessive noise. Member at Large Kukral commented that the decibel level of a 5500 watt commercial generator is extremely high. Commissioner Berdolt stated that the new policy hasn't been completed yet.

Member at Large Kukral inquired if there has been any progress made on bringing in camping at North Fork Preserve. Commissioner Berdolt stated that no decisions have been made yet.

Member at Large Kukral inquired on any progress with contracting for cell phone towers and the revenue generated staying in the parks system. Commissioner Berdolt stated that it's an eight month process. Some of the local Legislators are concerned and want to be notified when a cell tower is planned for their district but the plan is ready to be rolled out. The preliminary plans for the GATR site are under way. Trustee White commented that they found out that an 85 foot tower costs a lot more than a 90 foot tower so now they've gone back to the FAA to get approval for a 90 foot tower instead.

Member at Large Kukral inquired on the status of work plans at Cathedral Pines CP. Commissioner Berdolt reported that the DEC permit was never submitted by DPW. Nick stated that a permit is necessary because the entire park is under the regulatory authority of the DEC. Commissioner Berdolt stated that the job is now unfortunately going to be delayed. They wanted to start it in May and close the entire park down for the season but Commissioner Berdolt has decided to push the project back until next November, 2020.

Trustee Richard White thanked Trustee Gooding for making all of the arrangements to hold the meeting at Mashomack Preserve because it is a very special place. He also appreciated seeing Mike Laspia again.

Nick Gibbons reported that Vector Control at DPW has identified Indian Island CP as a location for a pilot program for tick control. The concept has been approved by the Legislature but details have not been forthcoming so Nick and the Commissioner will be meeting with Vector Control to find out exactly what they intend to promote. A combination of four-poster deer feeders, deer fencing, deer culling and a variety of other things will be used. They expect to get more details in the coming months.

Beginning tomorrow, the third and final phase of tree removal for the southern pine beetle infestation will begin at Hubbard CP and Sears Bellows CP. Approximately 2,500 trees will be cut down. Three \$75,000 grants were received from NYS and this is the third and final project. It will take 3-4 weeks to complete the work. An advisory was sent out to the archery hunters that their spots could temporarily be closed on any given day. It has been done in the past with the DEC and the public is cooperative since the dead trees are such a hazard.

Co-Chairman William Sickles followed up regarding Indian Island CP. He stated that some years back, there was a Parks Trustee meeting held at Indian Island CP and there was a discussion about the restoration of an old dredge spoil site in the center of the park. Vector Control was involved in it with regards to some structures along the road to let water in to flood the area without going into an extensive heavy equipment restoration. He inquired if there has been any other activity on that project. Nick reported that Parks continues to apply for extensions for the project. Trustee Cardillo commented that funds were received for the project and recalled that there was a difference of opinion on whether it is fresh water or brackish water going in and out at the site. There was one spot that was marked off and they were going to dig a tunnel and install a bridge. Nick stated that the plan is still in place to install a box culvert. The problem is the toxicity of the dredge spoil material which will be moved to another location on site. Nick added that Parks has received its last and final extension from NYS.

Trustee Gilbert Cardillo inquired about the deer culling that would occur at Indian Island CP. Nick stated that it would be archery hunting only and would help in reducing the number of ticks. He added that there are a few areas within the park that deer culling can be accommodated. Trustee Cardillo inquired if Parks has tried birth control with the deer as is done on Fire Island. Nick stated that it is not being done.

Emily Lauri distributed a calendar of holiday events for the months of October through December.

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

The next Parks Trustee meeting will be held at the Homan House in Yaphank on Thursday, November 21, 2019.