

Public Safety Property Reuse Working Group  
February 22, 2023  
6:00 PM  
Ipswich Town Hall  
25 Green Street, Meeting Room A

Minutes

Working Group members present: Gordon Harris, Chair, Linda Alexson, Janet Craft, Michael Dougherty, Laurie Paskavitz, John Sarni, Paul Seaman

Not present: Scott Glosserman, Donald Greenough, Jeff Poirier

Gordon Harris called the meeting to order at 6:10 PM.

**Citizens Queries:** None

**Approval of Minutes**

*Vote:* Michael Dougherty moved to approve the January 31, 2023 minutes. Janet Craft seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

**Community Gardens**

Janet gave an update since the last meeting. She and Michael met with representatives from Open Space and Conservation. It was confirmed that the town owns the Bialek site and there was concern that wetlands may be within 100 feet of the Bialek site. Janet then met with Rick Clarke and Frank Ventimiglia. There was discussion about submitting an application to the Conservation Commission for approval and potential timeline.

Michael spoke to the cost for bringing water to the site, which would require digging in the roadway, running the line across the street and hooking up a meter. The meter at the existing site can be used, but running the water line would be the most expensive part of the project. He will follow up with Vicki Halmen of the Water Department for a cost estimate.

Linda asked about who would ultimately be filing ConsCom applications and taking other steps. She thinks it's time to bring in the Town Manager into the loop as he is the lead on the use of town property and critical to this process. Town employees should not be moving forward with filing applications and beginning any processes without Town Manager knowledge and approval. The committee needs to be careful about the whole process. The committee hasn't even made its recommendation to the Select Board yet.

Gordon suggested scheduling time with the Town Manager to discuss next steps before moving forward with the Conservation Commission. Next steps were identified as follows: the committee formalizing a recommendation to the Select Board, meeting with the Town Manager, determining the water costs, and preparing to present to the Select Board. The biggest hurdles will be the Water Department's schedule for running the water line and determining how much the project will cost and where the money will come from.

Tanya Rosenbaum and Carolyn Walfield from the Community Gardens attended and shared an overview of community gardens in Hamilton-Wenham, Georgetown, Rowley and Gloucester. Hamilton-Wenham's is managed by Essex County Greenbelt, the others are municipally owned and managed by either a town committee or a non-profit organization. Each is handled differently as far as

plot size, annual dues (ranges from \$0-\$60), amenities (i.e., shed, rain barrels, fencing, etc.), and all have access to town/city water service.

Carolyn also provided a draft Community Garden Agreement for consideration that outlined regulations for gardeners. There was some discussion about what a new community garden in Ipswich should have, as well as safety and security, and organic gardening.

Discussion turned to design and raised beds. There was consensus among gardeners Carolyn spoke with that raised beds alleviate some of the issues with ground preparation, i.e., no need for rototilling, easier to amend the soil for gardening, etc. A draft plan was produced showing the site holding 19 plots that could be split into 2 each, either 18x32 or 16x16, accommodating 2 gardeners per plot. Phases of development could include fencing, a shed for gardeners to keep equipment, etc., and there are ideas regarding grants, fundraising, sponsorships by local businesses.

It needs to be determined whether the wetlands need to be flagged.

Michael suggested by the next meeting, we should have an estimate from the Water Director as to cost of running water to the site, we should meet with the Town Manager to review the draft community garden agreement and ConsCom application, and review water-related estimate. Hopefully, a recommendation to the Select Board could be made following that. The DPW would submit the ConsCom application, but the Town Manager should approve that first.

Linda asked about fees for the gardeners and whether that would require 2 Select Board public hearings. There was discussion about who would be managing the gardens and the other towns' fee structures.

Michael suggested possibly meeting with the Town Manager on March 6.

Carolyn will draft a construction plan that will include cost estimates for split rail fencing, raised beds, soft commitments for possible outside funding sources, contingent on Select Board granting approval for this project being at Bialek.

Linda noted that this project will be municipally-owned versus the existing garden on church property. Different rules for dealing with contractors, etc. We have to make sure we go through the right channels, all of the moving parts should be coordinated through the Town Manager, and the process will take time.

The idea of a community garden coordinator was raised for consideration. There should be a liaison from the community gardeners. Would someone from the Parks & Cemetery Department be managing the gardens?

### **Next Meetings**

- Tuesday, March 14, 2023, at 6:00 PM.
- Thursday, March 30, 2023, at 6:00 PM

**Adjourn**

*Vote:* Michael Dougherty moved to adjourn. Linda Alexson seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM.

Submitted by Linda Alexson