

Freedom Park Board Meeting
Tuesday, October 15, 2013
6:00pm

Start Time: 6:00p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

President Alice Dahl led members in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Board Members Present:

Alice Dahl, Harold Mussman and Robert Philpot. Board Member Randy Hall was unable to attend. Also present, Tom Sullivan and Candy Johnson.

Press member Lola Jean Brink of the Lowell Tribune was present.

Guests present: Bark Park Representative Courtney Cherry was present; also present, Town Council representatives Craig Earley and Edgar Corns.

Lowell Little League representatives Brian Roney and Jim Brooker were present. Also in attendance was Sara Pierce.

After roll call, Alice Dahl requested that the Lowell Little League be added to the Freedom Park agenda.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion to approve the September 2013 minutes was made by Harold Mussman and seconded by Robert Philpot. There was no discussion and the motion carried 3/0.

At this time Freedom Park Board member and Town Council representative Robert Philpot stated that he would like the minutes to show that there are three (3) Town Councilmen present: two (2) are here, I think as citizens which every right they have to be here. Craig Earley, myself and Edgar Corns.

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Review Freedom Park Claims:

Secretary Candy Johnson advised that claims to be reviewed are from the September 23, 2013 Town Council meeting:

1. Long distance phone bill in the amount of \$41.93
2. Ruim Equipment for maintenance supplies in the amount of \$10.70

The October 14, 2013 meeting docket was not available due to a computer problem at the Town Hall. These figures will be available at next months Freedom Park meeting. Motion to accept the Freedom Park claims was made by Robert Philpot and seconded by Harold Mussman. Motion carried 3/0

Reports:

Freedom Park Updates:

Superintendent Sullivan advised that mechanically everything is working very well. Mulching around the trees also continues. Tom advised that the disc golf looks really good. Tom advised the disc golf area looks better then it ever has. He said that he has recently spoken with Brian Cummings who was involved in the design of the golf course. Tentatively, Brian is planning on holding a disc golf tournament at Freedom Park on or around November 3rd. This event would be a "fund raiser" for Freedom Park, but it is tentative. With regard to volley ball, there has not been any progress made on this project. Tom advised that he is looking at spring of 2014 for completion. Alice asked what is needed to get the volley ball court done. Tom advised that the court(s) need to be measured and dug out, then filled with sand prior to finishing up with the posts and net.

The walking/bike path is an ongoing project. The out buildings are all in good shape as well. There were no questions and discussion moved on to "Old Business" and Bark Park updates.

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Old Business:

Dog Park Updates:

Courtney Cherry was present. She advised that the Annual "Barktoberfest" which was held on October 6th went very well. The event took in approximately \$1000.00. Doctor Cherry announced that the next scheduled event for the Bark Park will be "The Parade of Lights."

Doctor Cherry also advised that the vandalized lock at the Bark Park has been removed. Since it is so late in the year, the decision was made to wait to replace the lock system until the 2014 memberships go on sale in December. So, until then, the entrance to the large bark park will not have any lock.

Mr. Philpot asked Doctor Cherry what kind of lock is going to be used to replace the vandalized lock. Courtney stated that she does not know the details. This will be discussed at the next Bark Park Committee meeting. Alice Dahl asked if John Chase had been in contact with Tom about the security camera option that was discussed at the September meeting. Tom advised that he has not heard from John Chase. Alice then asked Mr. Philpot if he has spoken to Officer Chase recently. Bob replied that he had not spoken to Office Chase, however he had spoken with a Bark Park Committee member about the lock and security camera options. Bob advised that he had looked at the current locks and they had discussed purchasing a very high grade commercial lock which would cost about \$300.00 verses the projected cost of a security camera system, a decision can be made about which option will be most cost effective once we have the cost of the security camera option. Mr. Philpot stated that we do understand that there are going to be people who are not members who will break the locks so they can gain access and use the bark park. This is definitely a concern to the committee and to paying members who abide by bark park rules to ensure the safety of their pets.

Mr. Philpot asked Doctor Cherry if he could be notified of when the next bark park will be held because he (Mr. Philpot) would like to attend.

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Bob said that until we get an estimated cost of security camera(s) and the cost involved with setting them up, he is reluctant to make any decision about security at the dog park at this time.

Doctor Cherry advised that bark park committee would like to donate \$500.00 toward whatever decision is made about security.

Mr. Philpot stressed that he need to know the cost of all options prior to any decision. Once the costs are known, we could discuss options as a meeting or hold a "work shop" with the Bark Park committee and the Freedom Park Board and make a decision.

Tom Sullivan advised that he goes to Phil and Sons in Crown Point for all the Freedom Park locks. Tom said that they sell a lock that he thinks would be effective in keeping non-members out of the bark park.

Mr. Philpot added that in speaking with that gentleman at the bark park about installing a special lock, he said that the keys for this kind of lock would cost \$8.00 each. Bob asked how many members the bark park has. There are currently 107 members.

Alice Dahl asked if the cameras that we have in place by the recycle center also included activities in the skate park. Tom advised that it does. He does review the tapes if there should be incidents of vandalism; otherwise he views the tapes randomly. Alice advised that someone had approached her about concerns about activities in the skate park.

Harold Mussman asked if the camera records the license plates of vehicles that are going to the bark park. Tom advised that the cameras go as far as where you make the turn to go to the bark park. Harold questioned if it would be necessary to go to the expense of putting cameras at the bark park. Tom said maybe a camera could be added to the big barn pointing toward the bark park. Mr. Philpot says that he thinks that the camera would be too far away to be effective. Mr. Philpot added that there is a solar panel out at the bark park that provides power to a pump for water.

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Possibly, that solar panel could be used somehow to power a camera or, other solar panels could be added if necessary. There are numerous options. Alice Dahl asked Doctor Cherry if the sign was up warning that vandalism will not be tolerated. She advised that the sign is being made now and will be in place soon. Mr. Philpot also added that the Lowell Police have stepped up patrol at Freedom Park which definitely helps to detour vandalism.

New Business:

Girls Softball Discussion:

Mr. Philpot advised that he had requested that Girls Softball be added to the agenda. He addressed newly elected Lowell Little League officers, Brian Roney and Jim Brooker. Mr. Philpot stated that there is currently an existing contract between the Little League and the Town of Lowell.

The Town is unable to make any decisions about this existing contract without the Little Leagues cooperation.

What we are here to discuss the existing contract and make a recommendation to the Town Council. The Town Council will then take it up as they see fit. "The way this works, it is my understanding, under this contract, is you've got a 25 year lease on approximately 34 acres. Those 34 acres represents, and this is a very big guesstimate on my part: 40 to 45 percent of the usable land out there." The Girls Softball have expressed that they would like to come to Freedom Park to play softball.

When we approached your LLL Council you also said that would be fine.

What that's going to entail then, is a renegotiation of the existing contract. But one thing I do want to make absolutely clear, emphatically clear, nobody on the Town Council, nobody on the Freedom Park Board wants to see the Little League go, we want the Little League there, we want to see them play at Freedom Park. What we also would like to recommend to the Council that we have the ability to bring in other teams, other players at the same time and in order to bring the girls softball out here, we are going to have to renegotiate the contract and that is what I am going to recommend to the Council, that we renegotiate the terms.

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It is my understanding that initially when this all started and I don't have anything to prove it, its just my understanding, that the 25 years was determined because the Little League was going to get some bonds.

The bond did not happen, but yet this contract went in and we are tied up, we can't bring in the girls softball. By bringing the girls softball league, hopefully the little league comes out, maybe we can address bringing the Babe Ruth leagues out to the park as well. It's a win-win situation for Freedom Park, the Town and the citizens, the parents and the children. If you have any concerns that you want to address, that you want me to bring before the Town Council, let me know.

Newly elected Lowell Little League President and Vice President Brian Roney and Jim Brooker addressed the Freedom Park Board. We are not here to stop any progress at Freedom Park. We have a new Board now and we want to open up new relations with everybody. Jim and I don't see a problem at this point and what would happen is specify an amendment to the original contract; is this what you are saying? Mr. Philpot replied "Yeah, my vision is that it will be scrapped and if a new contract is required, a new one will be put in place. That will be up to the Town Council to decide and do that. The one thing I do want to point out, it was pointed out to me I believe in the contract you guys had an obligation to mow and maintain the property and it was not done. So I need to point that out. We want the Lowell Little League there, we want them out playing, so you are aware, we are looking into some grants, very preliminary, to get some money. If we are awarded these monies, we are looking to update and improve the fields, correct Alice? Alice replied, "yes that is what we are wanting to do." That will help the whole system out, but again that this is very preliminary. Alice and Randy Hall are in the process of getting the paperwork and whatever materials and documentation they need to submit with this. We will keep you notified about how this turns out. Mr. Roney asked about bringing other leagues in. Mr. Philpot replied that he was including girls' softball and Babe Ruth league. Mr. Philpot advised that under this contract the Little League has 34 acres, the Cubs would love to have 34 acres; they could build quite a sports complex, so I assume that the acreage would be negotiated down.

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What I would ask you, when this comes about, you would have idea of the minimum acreage you are going to need to put a field out there. This would include all that will be needed. We are looking forward to the partnership enthusiastically. Mr. Roney advised that the Little League is also looking forward to a partnership with Freedom Park. Mr. Philpot advised that he is glad to see the Little League Board open up because the Town Attorney did write a letter to the Little League and no one gave us a call back or contacted the Town Council or the Attorney back or anyone. So, we had to proceed under certain assumptions. Mr. Roney advised he was not aware of any letter and this would not happen in the future. Mr. Philpot offered Brian Roney if he wanted a copy of the Attorneys letter and he advised that he would. Now that we have a new understanding, new cooperation, I would like for us all, including the Town Council to operate from the beginning with that new understanding and forget about what went on in the past.

Alice asked if Mr. Brian Roney and/or Jim Brooker wanted to say anything. Mr. Roney advised that they do have prints for field layouts for both softball and baseball. At this time Jim Brooker came forward. He stated that there are definitely parts of the current contract that need to be reevaluated, such as the length of the contract (25 years) and the amount of acreage need. The current contract specifies 34 acres. Mr. Brooker advised that by reviewing the prints they will be able to determine the amount of acreage that will be needed. Mr. Philpot advised that he is going to attempt to get this (Little League Discussion) either in a workshop or at the next Town Council meeting. Mr. Philpot asked Mr. Roney to bring the field prints with him to the next meeting or workshop. Mr. Roney advised he has the prints with him. He spread the prints out for the Freedom Park Board to review. These prints were completed in 2010 when Tim Griesmer was the president of Lowell Little League. Discussion about the layout of the ball fields followed. The plans consist of 5 baseball fields and 4 softball fields; also a "T" Ball field and a concession stand. The plans include all the "grades" as well. Mr. Philpot said that it was his understanding you had and paid for engineering work to be done. Mr. Brooker advised that all the elevations are already figured in. Alice advised that at one time Freedom

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Park was speaking with members of Local 150. Members had volunteered to help with this project. Mr. Brooker said that for a project of this scale, and knowing that other ball parks in the county/area are spending anywhere between 2 and 10 million dollars on fields and upgrades, our fields would also be a multi million dollar project, especially when you include the surface grading, all electric and lighting, and all buildings such as concessions and washrooms.

As far as local companies' such as Hardings and Ronson, we understand that they would be willing to donate equipment for volunteers to use during construction. Also, baseball and softball are loaded with parents who are tradesman and are willing to donate their time and expertise for this project. Discussion followed.

Mr. Philpot asked everyone to keep in mind also that we are doing a study on a bike path here in town. One of things we have discussed is putting a "rest stop" along the proposed bike path.

In summary, Mr. Philpot stated that we are of the understanding that the current Little League contract is going to be renegotiated with the Town Council and that you (Little League representatives) are open to that.

Mr. Philpot advised that he will take it to the "Council" and we will work with you as far as this renegotiated contract. Mr. Roney advised that he would take this information back to his Board when you are done and we will go from there. Mr. Philpot repeated that he would like the Little League Board present during contract discussions; rather this contract is discussed at a work shop if necessary, or is discussed during a Council meeting. I can't speak for everyone, but I assume they would want Little League Board members to be present so all issues can be discussed and worked out.

Mr. Brooker asked what the date would be. Bob advised that he would bring this up at the next Council meeting in 2 weeks. Mr. Philpot advised the Little League that they will be kept aware of everything that is discussed at the next Council meeting. Mr. Philpot added that he wanted to discuss the Little League coming before the Council on the concession stand and requesting that the fees be removed, which was done, and there were comments at the time that with you going ahead and building at the VFW location, the Little

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League no longer had any interest in putting fields at Freedom Park. When the lawyer sent a letter requesting that the current contract be reevaluated, no one in the Little League organization responded to our requests which led us to make assumptions that we did not like. Mr. Roney responded that he was not aware of any letter and apologized for any misunderstanding. Mr. Roney advised that they are looking forward to building beautiful complex at Freedom Park and added what a great asset this would be for Town of Lowell.

At this time Alice Dahl asked, "does the Freedom Park Board have to ask for a recommendation that the Freedom Park goes to the Town of Lowell next. Harold Dahl made that motion. Mr. Philpot clarified that this means that the current Little League contract will be renegotiated and brought before the Town Council and seek their approval, which I am sure we will get. At this time Robert Philpot seconded that motion. Motion carried 3/0.

At this time Alice asked if there was any public comment from the audience. Councilman Craig Earley asked if he could speak before the Little League representatives left. Mr. Earley thanked Mr. Philpot for taking this endeavor on. "I would like to urge him to implore the Council to maintain that same attitude because there is no way that anyone wants to turn this into a battle between the Town, the Little League and Bluebirds. Everyone in this room has the same idea. One thing that I want this Board to understand, the large amount of funds that will be needed to complete this project should not deter us from moving ahead. If this is becoming part of the Freedom Park Boards plan, then you need to understand that this is a big deal and if these plans are going to go through, you need to start planning along with the Town of Lowell to figure out how we are going to pay for this. This complex can be completed in phases which is understandable. This project will be a huge endeavor, and no matter how it is completed, the ground work, rather it is 100% paid for or completed with donations and volunteers, someone is going to need to take on his shoulders to get this done. Again, this is a lot of money and we are going to have to figure out how we are going to pay for it. Mr. Philpot advised that he would recommend proceeding in baby steps. First we look at the contract, and look at the

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acreage, then go from there. Mr. Philpot stated, " What we need this time are realistic goals and I am going to be perfectly up front; I'm not sure a contract is going to be needed but we will discuss this and get the impute on that. Mr. Earley brought up some valid points and we will address these issues together. You are going to go back and put your heads together and I have to go before the Council and we will bring up this issue and see how the Council wants to proceed with this recommendation that we are going to make to them. Mr. Roney replied that this all sounds good. Mr. Philpot added that there are no promises, but we will look at all options. Right now we need to re-negotiate what is going to happen out at Freedom Park, what is needed and what we want to do. We are going to have to contact the Girls Softball League. It is going to be, in my mind, negotiations with the Girls Softball league, Little League, whatever that may entail; this would be two (2) separate deals now. Mr. Roney advised that he had spoken with Mr. Lewandowski who is the president of Girls Softball, and we are aware of his interests. By all means, we want to work together, all three (3) of us, this would be great. We would get his feelings on these drawings also and see what we can do from there. We have some plans to work with, maybe we can get them to the engineers to look at it and some points ready and proceed and go from there.

Alice Dahl asked if there were any other public comments. Edgar Corns suggested the use of the "recycled rubber mulch" like we have recently purchased for the playgrounds at Evergreen and Liberty Park. A brief discussion followed. Mr. Corns feels that it could work well on the volley ball courts. Discussion followed about the use of the shredded rubber and the cost involved with purchasing the rubberized mulch.

Alice Dahl had a comment since we are fortunate to have three (3) Council members present. We are trying to go together for the Dean White Grant, and Crown Points Foundation Grant. Possibly, we will also go for the Legacy money too. I think it would be helpful if the Town Council would write a letter to attach with the Grant application expressing their opinion of why

the grant should be given to us. Bob asked if that is another thing that should be brought before the Council. Alice replied "yes". Alice suggested that if we all would write letters of support, including West Creek and Cedar Creek, then that way, since our request is so community supported, it would be helpful with being considered.

Other Discussion:

Mr. Philpot said he would like to see more benches at Freedom Park. Discussion followed about Lake County Solid Waste. They have donated several recycled benches. Alice said that she would contact Jeff Langbehn about additional benches for Freedom Park.

Discussion then moved to the Disc Golf Course. Mr. Philpot said he would like to get in contact with Brian Cummings about bringing tournaments to Freedom Park. Tom Sullivan told Mr. Philpot he would contact him when Brian comes out again. Mr. Philpot said we have an excellent opportunity to be connected with Lemon Lake. If our disc golf course could be added to the "circuit" that players travel to, this would be a great asset to Freedom Park and the Town of Lowell by bringing players and fans to our Town.

Discussion followed about ways to encourage bench donations at Freedom Park. The Scouts built and donated fourteen (14) benches as merit badge project. Since they have the construction plans for the bench, possibly other Scouts would want to build and donate additional benches. Tom advised that currently he has six (6) additional benches that he would like to put out at the Disc Golf area. He advised that he is considering options to secure the benches in place so they stay put. Discussion followed about ways to secure the benches.

A brief discussion followed about the memorial brick that was purchased for the tree that was donated by Cedar Creek Township. Harold advised that West Creek would like to pay for this brick. There was no other discussion.

Motion to adjourn made by Harold Mussman and seconded by Bob Philpot.

