

36-1 Buttonball Committee Meeting Minutes

Monday, February 6, 2023 @8:15 a.m.

Old Lyme Town Hall Meeting Room

Present: Committee members, Michael Barnes, Fred Behringer (Chairman), Jared Bombaci, Sloan Danenhower and John Mesham. Ex-officio member First Selectman Tim Griswold. Selectwoman Martha Shoemaker and Selectman Matt Ward attended via phone. Absent: Michael Aurelia

Call to order: Meeting called to order at 8:31 a.m.

Assign person take minutes

Fred Behringer explained a clerk was not available and offered to provide minutes for this meeting. Michael Barnes motioned to approve Fred to take minutes. John Mesham seconded, and all voted in favor.

Approval of Minutes from December 20, 2022

John Mesham motioned to amend the minutes as follows: Add “The discussion included that this was a road since it was a gravel pit.” to the end of the “Status of Phase 1 Recommendations” paragraph. Michael Barnes seconded, and the motion was approved.

Review of previous meeting

The chairman reviewed the key topics from the December meeting. He commented on the discussion regarding shared management and acknowledged the skepticism of a majority of committee members and the need for Open Space to present a clearer vision. He also mentioned the initial plans that Harbor Management presented which led to agreement that Harbor Management should bring more complete plans to this meeting. Today’s meeting was delayed at the request of Harbor Management to allow time to prepare their plans.

Recommendations in chairman’s draft and Open Space update

Fred Behringer reported that Open Space responded to the need for more specific recommendations regarding shared management at their Jan meeting. Fred read the recommendations and members of the committee received written copies. Key points of the recommendations are:

1. Support for a structure that has minimal environmental impact, gone through DEEP review, and is approved by a registered engineer
2. Shared management (Harbor Commission, Open Space)
3. Passive use with strong protections, especially the marsh
4. Help with funding

Recommendations from Harbor Management

Harbor Management provided a hydrographic survey and a detailed map showing a proposed site for a 100 x 4 foot-wide walkway with a 10 x 10 foot observation platform at each end and a 40 x 4 foot gangway to a 10 x 10 foot floating dock. The ramp and dock are shown parallel to the creek. The location is considered the least costly at this time. The map also shows a turnaround near the entrance to the walkway. In his presentation Chris Staab emphasized that locations were chosen with consideration of abutters. Several

graphics were also presented to help visualize concepts. Some graphics represent the area with fewer trees than currently exist and underbrush removed. Members from Harbor Management emphasized this is misleading and that they wish to keep the area in a natural state.

A question and comment period followed with good committee and public participation. Among the issues discussed:

- A number of Harbor Management's views on use of the property align with views Open Space has been voicing, including not having picnic tables or a kayak rack, parking for around 8 vehicles, keeping the public off the marsh, and keeping the area natural. There appear to be some differences in interpreting what natural means which will require further discussion.
- The hydrographic survey indicates that Horse Neck Creek and the Black Hall River are navigable by small watercraft through all tidal cycles, excepting extreme low tides. The channel appears to be wide enough for small watercraft to pass by a dock on Horse Neck Creek.
- During public comment several speakers expressed the view that the property be kept in a natural state.
- Members of Open Space expressed their appreciation for the Harbor Management's presentation and materials presented and offered to work with Harbor Management.
- Questions regarding timing and cost were raised. Without knowing more details, Harbor Management indicated it is difficult to provide dates and costs.
- Harbor Management has used money from its deposit account to pay for the survey, and Mike Barnes indicated he has contributed to lower expenses. Tim Griswold requested more formality in decisions regarding future expenses. The investment Harbor Management has made is appreciated by the committee. It has been helpful to provide preliminary plans and concepts.
- Harbor Management was asked about their views on shared management. Reservations were still expressed, but this possibility was not dismissed. It was suggested that Harbor Management and Open Space work on developing a site plan they can both agree on as a step in exploring this option.

The Harbor Management members were thanked for their effort and the very helpful information they provided.

Next Meeting

The next meeting was set for February 23 @ 8:15 AM

Adjourn: John Mesham motioned to adjourn, Jared Bombaci seconded. All agreed, and the meeting adjourned at 9:52

Respectfully submitted: Fred Behringer, Chairman 36-1 Buttonball Committee