

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE
OF THE
SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE
Minutes

A regular meeting of the Parks and Recreation Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York on May 9, 2007.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Leg. Lynne C. Nowick, Chairperson
Leg. Vivian Vilorio-Fisher, Vice-Chairperson
Leg. Kate M. Browning
Leg. Lou D'Amaro
Leg. Edward P. Romaine

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

William J. Lindsay, Presiding Officer
Steven H. Stern, Sixteenth District
George Nolan, Counsel to the Legislature
Renee Ortiz, Chief Deputy Clerk
Jill Moss, Budget Review Office
Ronald F. Foley, Commissioner of Parks
Paul Perillie, Aide to Majority Leader
Greg Moran, Aide to Leg. Nowick
Linda Bay, Aide to Minority Leader
Fran Siems, Legislative Aide
Justin Littell, Aide to Leg. D'Amaro
Miles Borden, Parks Trustee
Cara Hasler
Ginny Munger Kahn
Pamela Schmidlin
And all other interested parties

MINUTES TAKEN BY:

Diana Kraus, Court Stenographer

MINUTES TRANSCRIBED BY:

Donna Catalano, Court Stenographer

(*THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 1:05 P.M.*)

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Good afternoon, everybody. Welcome to the Parks and Recreation. We will start with the Pledge to the Flag led by Legislator Romaine.

SALUTATION

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Good afternoon, everybody. We have a few cards this afternoon, and we'll start right away with that. Cara Hasler. Cara, you want to come to the microphone? Okay. You have three minutes to address the committee.

MS. HASLER:

The new bill for the dog parks, I just wanted to say that I discovered the dog parks about three or four months ago. And my dog -- I live in Centereach, and the closest dog park I have is Huntington, West Hills in Huntington. And I go there almost everyday with my dog because she loves it so much, but it would be just really nice to have a place closer to home where I could bring her. I have a backyard, but I don't have a fenced area, I have small fenced area, but I don't have a large area where she can run around. And she just absolutely loves it. So I think it's good. I met a lot of new people and made lot of new friends since I've been going to the dog park. So it's good not only for my dog, but also for me. So that's all the I wanted to say. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Well, thank you have much for coming. Ginny Munger Kahn.

MS. KAHN:

It's Ginny Munger Kahn.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Okay.

MS. KAHN:

Munger is my maiden name, I refused to give it up.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Why not? Okay. I'm sure you're parents are happy.

MS. KAHN:

Exactly. My name is Ginny Munger Kahn. I'm the President of the Long Island Dog Owners Group. We are a community organization dedicated to promoting and supporting dog parks here on Long Island. And we and our supporters are very excited about IR 1361.

More than a year ago, we made it LI Dogs mission to make dog parks part of the fabric of life on Long Island, as common as going to the beach. And as a result of the initiative of Legislator Steve Stern and Jon Cooper, cosponsors of this bill, we are on our way to making that dream a reality for the 600,000 Suffolk County residents who own dogs and for millions of others for generations to come.

For too long Suffolk County has been viewed as hostile to dog owners. Until recently, dog owners here have had access to one off-leash area; a one-third of an acre dog run in West Hills County Park. Now, thanks to the efforts of Legislator Lou D'Amaro, we have a beautiful new dog park in West Hills. In fact, this past Saturday, we celebrated the opening of that new larger dog park with Legislator D'Amaro, Legislator Cooper, Deputy Parks Commissioner Tracey Bellone and their families. And you'll be interested to know that close to 100 dog owners showed up with their dogs to thank Legislator D'Amaro for his work on their behalf. So again, thank you, Lou, so much for making that

happen for us.

But one new dog park, no matter how big and beautiful, is not enough. Many of the this nation's fastest growing most desirable communities offer multiple opportunities for their citizens to enjoy off-leash recreation and social activities for their dogs. The reasons are simple; dog parks are good for people and their dogs. Certainly, well socialized, well exercised dogs make good canine citizens who are less likely to end up in shelters, saving heartache and tax payer dollars.

Dog parks also help prevent dogs who are infringing on other park users. But most importantly, as Legislator Stern has often noted, dog parks create strong communities of people who are dedicated to the parks and the communities in which these dog parks are located. It's no wonder that throughout Florida and North and South Carolina where many of our supporters are considering moving because of quality of life and cost of living issues, numerous communities offer multiple dog parks. And they are busily building more because of their success and popularity.

The Tampa website, for example, declares its goal is to become a leader in quality leash-free zones and a model for the rest of the state. Closer to home, New York City recently joined dog owners in declaring that its off-leash policies have made its parks safer while serving the needs of its dog-owning and non dog-owning citizens alike. The City offers almost 50 dog parks.

This bill will put Suffolk County in league with these other forward-thinking communities in serving the needs of its dog-owning and non dog-owning citizens. We want to thank Legislator Stern and Cooper so much for taking this groundbreaking step to improve the quality of life of thousands of Suffolk County residents. We look forward to working with the Legislators and with the Parks Department in identifying location for these new dog parks. We urge you to support this important bill.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Thank you. Thank you very much. Pamela Schmidlin. Hi, Pam.

MS. SCHMIDLIN:

Hello. Okay. I don't know how I top that, so basically I just want to thank you for all your hard work so far. West Hills is great. I enjoy using the park. I look forward to using Blydenburgh in the future and other parks, and hopefully make Long Island number one as far as dog parks in all park facilities. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Thank you. Doesn't anybody care about the cats?

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

They go where they want to.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

That concludes our public portion. Commissioner, did you want to come on up? And while I'm sitting here, let me say hello to Miles Borden, on of our trustee who is always interested and always here. Nice to see you again, Miles.

Commissioner, I just have two things I wanted to ask you about. One of the them was the last committee meeting we were at, we were speaking about the two forms of identification that needed to be shown when a Green Key Card is purchased. And I think at that time, we were just a little confused as to where the policy was that mandated this. You had one, and I think that Counsel had another. Did you want find anything more about that?

COMMISSIONER FOLEY:

Counsel was correct. And it really ends up being a Parks Department policy that we devised after

looking around to see how other people do it; the Town of Islip Parks Department, the Library Districts, things like that, what was an acceptable kind of socially accepted way to prove identification. And we adopted what we thought was, and I still think is, the least onerous. It does cause problems, and I think we can figure out ways to deal with those problems short of letting people get a discount they are not entitled to. We are still working on it though.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Does that mean that you're going to still ask for two forms of identification, or will that be rectified, or?

COMMISSIONER FOLEY:

I think we're still going to ask for two forms of identification, but I think we can find a way to accommodate somebody's outing day who didn't come prepared for that and deal with the identification later. That's the thought that's going on now. I haven't figures out exactly how we were going to do that, but that's the plan.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

I can't help thinking, though, again, even going on an airplane, they don't ask for two forms of identification. I just --

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

That's because you have a ticket.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

What?

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

You have your ticket.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Well, but there's no photo ID on it. When you go up to an airline counter they say, "Give me your license." You don't have to show anything. I don't know about -- you don't have to show anything, but one form. And we're talking about playing golf.

COMMISSIONER FOLEY:

I understand.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

I'm just a little concerned that that's a little onerous.

COMMISSIONER FOLEY:

If there wasn't the predominance of discounts; resident rates and non resident rates and nobody cared about that, I would feel better about relaxing this thing. But I think the Legislature and leaders in the past have said it's important for non Suffolk County residents to pay a bigger share in the fee, because they don't pay taxes. It's also important to make sure Suffolk residents get what they're entitled to. And again, I'm --

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

I agree with you on that you.

COMMISSIONER FOLEY:

I'm not fighting you on this. I just haven't figured out the answer that gives us both the assurance that we are doing the right thing by the people who are entitled to it and making it easy.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

No, I agree. I wouldn't want anybody to get a discount that wasn't entitled to it, but I just think that a photo ID, you look at a person, it's a photo ID. I mean, I know you can make fake photo IDs, but that seems like a lot of work to play golf. My concern also is that the season is now upon us. And I just -- well, you are the Commissioner, so it's your choice.

COMMISSIONER FOLEY:

We are working on it. We don't disagree with you. I don't disagree with you. But because of the history, we're concerned about, worried about, proper accountability and internal controls. This is part of that. We will figure it out.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Okay. I look forward to -- well, maybe I won't --

COMMISSIONER FOLEY:

You're okay.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

You'll be back, right?

COMMISSIONER FOLEY:

I'll be around for another month.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Okay. Well, just one other thing that I wanted to -- just one other thing, and I know this is not your fault, but I just bring it to your attention. In my district, we have Deepwells House, historic house, and -- I don't even know how to go about this in a very delicate way.

COMMISSIONER FOLEY:

Well, let me help you. I think I know what you're -- we are embarking on a new partnership with a new group there, a very, very good group, very interested, very concerned. One of their desires is to have a community meeting center, a place to do community events. Our predominant desire is to have a well cared for historic property, because it deserves being well cared for. And again, I don't want this to sound critical of the group, we have talked with them on three different occasions about proper housekeeping in the place, what our expectations are. And I think they'll get it.

But sometimes on your fourth conversation about the same thing, you have to get little more pushy about it. So I apologize if we were too pushy, but we're trying to get some early education going here. And then we'll all get along well and things will be done the way we expect them to and they way they need them to.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

As I said, I just have to address this. I know that the e-mail that I got was that they don't really know, I guess, all of the rules and regulations, and some can be worked out and others can't. So I just ask that maybe -- I know it's a good group, and I know we need to have groups like this take care of these homes, because without them, the homes fall into disrepair. So maybe this is just something that can be worked in a very positive manner.

COMMISSIONER FOLEY:

It will be.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER FOLEY:

You're welcome.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

I know Legislator Viloría-Fisher had something to discuss.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Quick question. Congratulations, by the way.

COMMISSIONER FOLEY:

Thank you very much.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Yes. And also congratulations on the campsites. The signup was very fast.

COMMISSIONER FOLEY:

Any campsite on a beach is going to go faster than one can imagine, and that's what happened.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

I know, because every time we tried to get on Hither Hills, it was --

COMMISSIONER FOLEY:

That's the classic example.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

I wanted to ask you just a couple things. We're going to be looking at 1361 with the dog parks. And one of the places that wasn't mentioned was Philadelphia. My daughter lives in Philadelphia, and we really enjoy going to the dog parks there. But when you set up the dog parks, are there dispensers for doggie bags for cleaning up?

COMMISSIONER FOLEY:

I think there isn't going to be one cookie-cutter dog park. I think it's going to be different every place we do one, depending on the terrain and the landscape and what's there and what other uses are going on. But the Long Island Dog Group, represented by the speakers earlier, has advised us on what amenities are necessary to make one successful. They include the stations for getting the bags, drinking fountains, benches located in right way, entry corrals, so to speak, where people can get leashes on and off without confronting other dogs, things like that. So we are talking their advise as much as we can to make this successful. And I do think it will be a good improvement to Suffolk County Parks over time as we achieve the goals set out in this legislation.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Have all of the detail been ironed out? I know that at Coindre Hall there was some problems that still had to be ironed out when I attended the last Parks Trustees meeting.

COMMISSIONER FOLEY:

Coindre Hall is going to take a bigger iron than most places. Those problems have not all been all ironed out to, so speak. But we'll continue to try to work on that.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. Thank you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER FOLEY:

I think what the most positive thing is to make more of these places available around the County where they're needed. And that -- that deals with the broad audience of Suffolk County residents, dog owners. And those are positive steps.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. Thank you, Commissioner.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Okay, Commissioner. You said that the plastic bags would be at some site at the dog park.

COMMISSIONER FOLEY:

Yes.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Those are paid for by the County, is that how that works or is there going to be --

COMMISSIONER FOLEY:

We paid for the first ones at the new West Hills dog run, but we've we talked to the group, and they have, you know, offered assistance with things like that where they can. They're a small group, just starting up without a big checkbook.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Just as a thought maybe for the group, I know they do it in other areas where they will have the dispensers, and they'll have it -- people actually pay for them in loving memory of -- sometimes they lose a dog, and it's loving memory of the dog, and it's paid for. So maybe that's an idea to keep their expenses down.

COMMISSIONER FOLEY:

Yes, it is. And they have been amenable to those kinds of things. This one we wanted to get up and running quickly, and the quickest way to do it was just for us to foot the bill, which isn't huge, by the way.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Presiding Officer Lindsay.

LEG. LINDSAY:

I just wanted to comment. Yesterday's newspaper article I read with really great sorrow, sorrow for us, happiness for that you're moving on to the State, and, I guess, a better and bigger position. But I just wanted to publicly put on the record, in your tenure here of a couple years, it's been a pleasure working with you, you have always been a professional, your calm demeanor has calmed me down many times, and we are going missing you. And thank you for your service to the County.

COMMISSIONER FOLEY:

Thank you. And I, given the opportunity, will say that I don't know if it's a better job, it's a bigger job. Leaving here is difficult, because I thoroughly enjoyed this position, still do and will for another month. And I think it bears stating that your guidance, each one of you, the importance you put on the public's recreation opportunities and protection of their open spaces has been a great assistance in me doing this job. The staff that's in the Parks Department is terrific. They are all in their own way dedicated to doing the right thing by the public. And it's a pleasure having been here and worked with you, and I hope our paths cross again. Thank you very much.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

That means you're not going to be here at the next committee?

COMMISSIONER FOLEY:

I'll probably at one more.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Okay. Commissioner, did you want to talk to us about any of the issues?

COMMISSIONER FOLEY:

I don't think I have any particular comments. There are only two IRs on there. 1361, I think you know how I feel about that. That's fine, it's a good thing. Some of the tabled ones I've commented on before. You know, if you have questions, I'll stay here and take those.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Okay. With that, we'll go to the agenda.

2517-06. Appropriating funds in connection with noise moderation and attenuation and other improvements at Trap and Skeet Range.

LEG. BROWNING:

Motion to table.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Motion to table by Legislator Browning.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Second.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Seconded by Legislator D'Amaro. All in favor? Opposed? 2715 is **TABLED (VOTE:5-0-0-0)**.

1015-07. Dedicating certain properties to the Suffolk County Nature Preserve.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Motion to table.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Motion to table by Legislator Viloria-Fisher, seconded by myself. All in favor?

LEG. ROMAINE:

Question.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Question by Legislator Romaine.

LEG. ROMAINE:

My question is simple one. Why are we tabling this? Is there a purpose for tabling this? Is there a flaw in the bill? Or is it not ready to be discussed or voted on?

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

I think the last I heard the sponsor was reworking it. Now, I haven't heard anything since. Commissioner?

COMMISSIONER FOLEY:

If I may? This is DPW land that was acquired for highway purposes, and I don't -- and I've said this before -- I don't have knowledge of whether they still have active plans for use of this or not. And I thought someone was going to go back and discover what the truth was about that.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Has the sponsor asked for this to be tabled?

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Well, you're telling us that it's DPW land that we can't -- land -- property, we can't do it?

COMMISSIONER FOLEY:

I don't know that you can't do it, but I believe --

LEG. ROMAINE:

I don't think there's a prohibition for us against doing it. It's a policy decision that -- within the realm of the Legislature. But I just wanted to know if the sponsor has requested this to be tabled.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

The sponsor hasn't requested either way. I haven't heard from him at all on it. How about we table it for this cycle, and then I'll talk to the sponsor, and we'll deal with in two or three weeks, whenever we come back?

LEG. ROMAINE:

Okay. I assume this has something to do with the flooding in his area?

COMMISSIONER FOLEY:

I don't think it does. I think it's another issue.

LEG. ROMAINE:

It's a separate issue? Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

We have a motion to table and second. All in favor?

LEG. D'AMARO:

Just on that also. I would recommend, if you're going to speak to the sponsor you also speak with DPW. Because it's my understanding that the these properties are included in some future plan or roadwork that they may have. So you may want to just get all the information as long as you're fact-finding anyway.

LEG. ROMAINE:

That would be great. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Thank you. All in favor? Opposed? 1015 is has been **TABLED (VOTE:5-0-0-0)**.

Introductory Resolutions, **1325, Authorizing the use of Smith Point County Park property by Mastic Beach Ambulance Company for "Help Us Save You Program."**

LEG. BROWNING:

Motion to approve.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Motion to approve by Legislator Browning.

LEG. ROMAINE:

Second.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Seconded by Legislator Romaine. All in favor? Opposed? 1325 is **APPROVED (VOTE:5-0-0-0)**.

1361. Authorizing the Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation to identify dog parks.

LEG. BROWNING:

I'll make a motion.

LEG. D'AMARO:

I'll make a motion to approve.

LEG. BROWNING:

I'll second.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Motion to approve by Legislator D'Amaro, seconded by Legislator Browning. On the motion, Legislator Stern, or do you want to quit while your ahead?

LEG. STERN:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Although I'm not on the committee, I did want to come down and be here specifically for, you know, for this resolution that I worked on with Legislator Cooper and with the help and leadership of Commissioner Foley and the County Executive.

This is good thing. And we're really looking forward to working with the department, with the County Executive, to make it a reality throughout Suffolk County and really build upon the great work of Legislator D'Amaro. He was instrumental in bringing a dog run to his district. And area residents are really enjoying it. It's just a wonderful thing for the community. So I urge everybody to jump on it. It's a great thing, great thing, for all Suffolk County residents.

LEG. BROWNING:

You know I will. Cosponsor.

LEG. STERN:

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Okay.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Cosponsor.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

We have a motion and a second. And does anybody wants to cosponsor? Cosponsor? The whole committee, maybe not, I don't know. Yes, the committee would like to cosponsor. All in favor? Opposed? 1361 has been **APPROVED (VOTE:5-0-0-0)**.

And do I have a motion to adjourn? I'll make that motion, seconded by Legislator Viloría-Fisher. All in favor? Opposed? We are adjourned.

(*THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 1:26 P.M.*)

{ } DENOTES BEING SPELLED PHONETICALLY