

Board of Trustees
Suffolk County Department of Parks
Recreation and Conservation
Minutes of March 15, 2007
at Deepwells Farm, St. James

**BOARD MEMBERS
PRESENT:**

Aurelio Colina	Vice Chairman, Town of Southampton
Miles Borden	Trustee, Town of Smithtown
Gil Cardillo	Trustee, Town of Riverhead
Gregory Dawson	Trustee, Town of Islip
John Fritz	Trustee, Town of Babylon
Scott Hilary	Trustee, Town of Southold
Gary Olsen	Trustee, Town of Brookhaven
Terrence Pearsall	Member of the Board
Todd Stebbins	Member of the Board
Richard F. White, Jr.	Trustee, Town of East Hampton

ABSENT:

Ray Corwin	Chairman, Member At Large
Alexander McKay	Trustee, Town of Huntington
Vacant	Trustee, Town of Shelter Island

**PARKS
DEPARTMENT:**

Ronald F. Foley	Commissioner
Tracey Bellone	Deputy Commissioner
William Sickles	Senior Parks Superintendent
Tom Hroncich	Marketing Specialist
Nick Gibbons	Senior Environmental Analyst
Richard Martin	Director of Historic Services
Ann Rothenberg	Assistant to the Commissioner

GUESTS:

Lauretta Fischer	Principal Environmental Analyst, Planning Department
Jessica Kalmbacher	Planning Department
Pat Zielenski	Director, Real Property Acquisition & Mgmt.
Janet Longo	Asst. to Commissioner, Dept. of Env. & Energy
Basia Braddish	County Attorney's Office
Legislator Vivian Viloria-Fisher	Deputy Presiding Officer, Vice Chair of Parks and Recreation, Suffolk County Legislature

Bert Seiden

President, Ketchum Inn Foundation

Announcement is made that Chairman Corwin will not be able to attend the meeting. Trustee White opened the meeting and recognized Legislator Vivian Vilorio-Fisher.

PUBLIC PORTION

Mr. Richard Robbins: I'm speaking on behalf of myself, but I am also a member of L.I. Dog and we promote off-leash recreation for our dogs. We feel the police enforcement has been unfair and selective. Most people that have been ticketed have been elderly and infirm. One man, who is in his 70's and has cancer, was throwing the ball to his dog. It's very sad that he got a ticket. Another person has multiple sclerosis, got out of his car; his chocolate lab was right by him. He was trying to gather his stuff and a Park Policeman ticketed him. I think it's unfair. People who get ticketed shouldn't just be the elderly and infirm. I don't think sleigh riders, which is an illegal activity in Coindre Hall, should get tickets, but there have been dozens and dozens of sleigh riders and none of them have ever gotten a ticket. We are incredible caretakers of the park. All over the country there are areas where you can exercise your dog off leash. Long Island is so far behind the rest of the country and Canada. We need to be progressive and have a legacy for the future.

Ginny Munger Kahn: I am a representative of the Long Island Dog Owners Group. I'm here to report that we are making very good progress in coming up with a solution at Coindre Hall. We do not yet have a specific proposal – we still need a couple of meetings with the neighbors. In February we met with two of our local legislators about clarifying the laws governing access to Suffolk Parks by dog owners. We have asked that as part of that legislative process, they consider creation of designated off-leash dog areas. In addition, we have met with our supporters and gotten their feedback of which alternatives at Coindre Hall they would be willing to support. We now need to take those alternatives to the neighbors and see which ones will be best for them and for us at the same time. We are very cognizant of the fact that there are places where off-leash and even on-leash activities are inappropriate, such as sensitive environmental areas, playgrounds, golf courses or other such locations. We are confident in the near future we will have substantial progress to report and we will let you know as soon as we have our proposal.

Trustee White: Thank you very much. The Vice Chairman has just arrived and now is in charge of the meeting.

Vice Chairman Colina resumes meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 15th, 2007 MINUTES

Page 2 – Fourth paragraph – adjust work change to read chance.

A motion to accept the minutes as amended was made by Trustee White and seconded by Trustee Fritz. The minutes were unanimously approved

by a vote of 10-0-0.

PRESENTATION BY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND REAL ESTATE

Lauretta Fischer: There are two proposed acquisitions and I'd also like to introduce a new addition to our Planning Department, Jessica Kalmbacher.

Havens Ketcham Cultural Center

Acquisition of the Mahfar property - 5 acres in Center Moriches, Town of Brookhaven. We're looking to acquire this as use for a cultural center. Bert Seides is here from the Ketcham Inn Foundation. This has been his project for over 10 years to try to create a cultural center. This parcel is part of an historic district in Center Moriches. His ideas are outlined in the overview for this site that is being handed out. The main theme of this site is to enhance the historical, environmental, archeological, and cultural characteristics of this area by creating a cultural center to educate, inform, and provide experiences to enrich our understanding of its rich history. This is proposed under the Save Open Space, Farmland Preservation and Hamlet Parks Fund – Hamlet Parks Component. We will be in partnership with the Ketchum Inn Foundation to do this work.

Bert Seides presented the property history to the Trustees.

A motion to approve the proposed acquisition was made by Trustee Olsen and seconded by Trustee Borden. Unanimously approved by a vote of 10-0-0.

Tuthill Point Estates Property

Acquisition of 26.56 acres in East Moriches, Town of Brookhaven. We are proposing to acquire this under the Suffolk County Multifaceted Land Preservation Program – Land Preservation Partnership Program wherein the Town of Brookhaven and Suffolk County will be partners in this acquisition. On the maps we distributed the area outlined in red is the proposed acquisition that the County will be making and the area outlined in purple is that portion of the property that the Town of Brookhaven will be acquiring. This program was set up in two components; a passive recreation part and a passive/active recreation part.

Commissioner: When this was being considered for acquisition we asked to leave the waterfront area unrestricted by preservation dollars so that we would have the option, at a minimum, of having a boat launch there. We think there are some active waterfront potential uses here. There's a house on the property which we should keep so we can have some oversight on the property. The town will take care of the preserve areas.

A motion to approve the proposed acquisition was made by Trustee Olsen and seconded by Trustee Fritz. Unanimously approved by a vote of 10-0-0.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Foley: Last month I offered, for your consideration....

Resolution 1100-2007 – Extending Certain Benefits to Suffolk County Auxiliary

Police Officers -

This resolution was proposed to extend benefits to Suffolk County Auxiliary Police Officers similar to those enjoyed by senior citizens as far as parks fees go, except in the case of golf. You have before you the Budget Review Office's financial impact assessment and it puts the cost of this, for just the Parks fees and Civil Service test fees, at about \$10,000. The Parks piece alone would be something less than \$10,000. You chose to table this last month until you saw this fiscal analysis.

A motion to approve the resolution was made by Trustee White and seconded by Trustee Hilary. Approved by a vote of 9-0-1 with one abstention, Trustee Stebbins.

Pricing at Trap and Skeet

Last month someone asked a question about how pricing occurs at Trap and Skeet (specifically) and why there wasn't a differential rate for non-residents vs. residents. It's a concessioned, licensed facility and just like all concessioned facilities, we don't require that kind of differentiation in their pricing. We require them to come to us at the beginning of each year with a price proposal for the year. We review that as to fairness and appropriateness and either approve that or ask them to change things if we think there is something wrong. A hot dog or a wedding will cost you the same in a county park, no matter where you are from. Using this concessioned facility costs you the same no matter where you are from. That's the basic premise behind that.

Reservation System

We added three parks to our camping reservation system this past Monday. They are Meschutt, Cupsogue and Shinnecock East. Meschutt has 10 campsites; Cupsogue has 22, Shinnecock East 103 campsites. At Shinnecock East they are all outer beach type campsites so one has to have a 4-wheel drive, self contained vehicle. Our goal was to be as fair as we could to everybody by spreading the opportunities across a whole spectrum of users. That is rubbing some people the wrong way. People have called and said "I've camped at that park that only has 10 campsites for the last 15 years and now I can't get in." Well, that was kind of our point. The same, small selection of people had a lock on these places because they could call their friends and tell them when they were leaving and their friends could come on. It was a very tight knit group of people who used a park that was paid for by the entire county. Now people from anywhere in the county can sit at their computer or make a phone call to obtain a reservation and plan their summer vacation season. We're listening to all the complaints that come in and will catalog them. At the end of the season we will review them to see if anything needs to be adjusted.

Golf Courses open tomorrow.

State Grant Program

The County Executive announced a State Grant Program; a large portion of which is coming to Suffolk County Parks. It's divided up roughly in this fashion: expanding canoe and kayak launch sites (we got about \$200,000 for that); a major planning effort for the properties we own at the western end of the Peconic

Bay which include the Flanders Men's Club, the Smithers Property, Hubbard County Park, Sears Bellows – a conglomeration of individual acquisitions that totals almost 5,000 acres. The State Assembly Majority is giving us \$500,000 to do a bio diversity inventory of that entire assemblage of properties and develop the management plans that our own Nature Preserve Handbook calls for. Whatever money is left in that grant that we don't use for planning we can use for implementation of the plan.

Southaven Stables - \$400,000 for that – this may grow outside of Southaven. We've got our own \$450,000 that the Legislature and the County Executive put aside for us, plus this \$400,000, to, in some fashion, find a way to address the needs of the equestrian community. I don't know if that's going to be at Southaven, where there are a lot of environmental considerations, or somewhere else. We're going to look at the whole issue.

Reservation System - \$125,000 to enhance our reservation system that went in last year. We think the place for that money is in cameras and security gates and things like that where we have control points that need better scrutiny.

West Sayville County Park Greenhouse - \$400,000 to renovate. It's an original and disappearing piece of architecture that's historically important in the county.

Upgrade Electricity - \$300,000 to upgrade the electricity both in the Meadowedge Clubhouse and the Long Island Maritime Museum. The planning and design are done - we just needed the money to move the project forward.

Unleashed Dogs/Parks Police

I have to, with all due respect to people who are advocating for unleashed dogs, dispute the characterization of Park Police as harsh, unfair and selective. They are very, very professional. They do things that they have to do because the laws of Suffolk County are what they are. They don't always like it, but they are not harsh, they are not unfair, they are not discriminatory – they are doing their job and I think we need to not only mention that, but highlight the fact that they are doing a very good job. They are protecting the parks, the land and the other people who use parks. They don't make the laws but we are here to enforce the laws that are given to us and make the parks safe and enjoyable for people to use.

Cupsogue Boardwalk

We are working on that – it's going to be a long, drawn out process. We talked to DPW yesterday to begin to take our rough preliminary drawing and turn it into a biddable spec. Nick Gibbons will talk to DEC about the necessary permits – we will need an Army Corps permit.

Beach Nourishment Project at Smith Point

We have commenced the beach nourishment project at Smith Point. We did get all the permits. Four and a half million dollars worth of sand is being pumped on the beach at both the eastern section and in front of the pavilion.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Vice Chairman Colina: I do not have a specific report for this month, but regarding

the statement Chairman Corwin made (in last month's minutes on page 3 relating to the unleashed dog issue) - I think that the Chairman did an outstanding job of summarizing the situation and clearly spelling out where the Trustees stand and that we fully support our Commissioner because he is simply trying to do what the law says we are to do. Until the law is changed, we're going to enforce the laws as best we can and support the Commissioner on this issue.

OLD BUSINESS/NEW BUSINESS

Trustee Fritz: I would like to commend all the personnel involved in the piping plover protection program for their efforts. Part of the problem with the successful nesting seems to be unleashed dogs.

Vice Chairman Colina: Is there a time frame set for the RFP at Indian Island?

Commissioner Foley: We're hoping to make it available for pickup on April 5 with a return date of May 24. I don't think we are firm on that calendar yet.

Vice Chairman Colina: I was officially reappointed as Vice Chairman on February 6th. I'd like to thank the Commissioner and Town Supervisor Patrick Heaney for their support.

Tom Hroncich: I'd like to remind everyone Earth Day is April 22nd. Emily Lauri and the Parks Department have put together a really nice program at Indian Island County Park. We'll have canoe launching, scavenger hunt, musical performances and other activities. I'm still lining up sponsors for the event.

Commissioner Foley: The reservation system has great capacity for expansion, but every change we want to make takes a lot of program time. One of the changes we made that seems to bother people the most is that we don't allow check-ins on Saturday or Sunday at these parks. We did that because of the extensive traffic backups, namely at Cupsogue and some at Shinnecock. Saturdays and Sundays were a huge traffic problem at Cupsogue. This was one way to ease that. There are some more things to do at Cupsogue which depend on a partnership with the village to ease that traffic. The ball is in their court right now to get a DEC permit to change the way the traffic flows. We're ready to go with our portion of the project.

DATE AND LOCATION OF NEXT MEETING

The next Board of Trustees meeting will be held on Thursday, April 19, 2007 at 1:00 PM at West Hills County Park Visitor Center, Melville, NY. Lunch will be served at 12:00 noon.

The motion to adjourn was made by Trustee White and seconded by Trustee Fritz. Motion approved unanimously by a vote 10-0-0.

Minutes submitted by Ann Rothenberg.