

Stuyvesant Greenway Committee II  
March 27, 2008  
Stuyvesant Town Hall

Attending: Gale Bury, Brian Chittenden, Peter Donahoe, Kent Keller, Tom Kilcer, Juanita Knott, Ron Knott, Kristina Kwacz, Mike Naegeli, Bill Vick

Absent: Charlene Leach, Bob Leach

Audience Member: Lee Jamison

Juanita Knott made the following correction to the minutes of the February 28, 2008 Greenway meeting:

Page 2, para 3, strike "... on a field where the Town Hall now sits" and replace with "in Stuyvesant and on other county fields".

Kent Keller made a motion to accept the minutes as corrected, which was seconded by Juanita. The motion passed will all in favor.

Chairman Ron Knott thanked Greenway Committee member Kristina Kwacz for facilitating the public information meeting on March 8<sup>th</sup>, and Juanita Knott, Peter Donahoe, and Mike Naegli for attending. The meeting was designed to solicit input from residents about what type of recreational opportunities interest them in Stuyvesant, as well as to provide information about the proposed Sharptown Road Park.

Following introductory remarks by Ron and Kristina, Kristina led a group exercise that invited the group to share what types of outdoor recreation they enjoy and where they pursue them within the town. Recreation Committee member Lee Jamison then narrated a Powerpoint presentation about the Sharptown Road Park, followed by questions from the audience fielded by Sean Cummings, Kazmo Jakiela, and Lee.

To conclude the meeting, a questionnaire was distributed asking participants to prioritize recreational opportunities that they would like to see pursued in Stuyvesant. Ron summarized the results as follows:

1) Would you support a recreation fee assessed on new subdivisions to fund recreational opportunities in the town?

65% YES      35% NO

2) Would you support spending Town funds to develop or enhance the recreational uses that you have indicated are most important, above?

48% NO, but apply for State and/or private grant funds  
35% YES, use local funds but also apply for State and/or private grant funds  
17% YES, use local tax funds even if grant moneys are not available

The prioritized public outdoor recreational opportunities of questionnaire respondents were:

1. Hiking, walking, nature trails
2. Cross country ski trails
3. Playgrounds
4. Baseball fields
5. Bike/roller blading path (paved)
6. Outdoor ice skating rink
7. Tennis & basketball courts
8. Soccer fields
9. Horse trails
10. Hunting

Discussion ensued concerning the Sharptown Road Park. Kent Keller inquired about liability concerns if hunting were to be permitted on the conservation lands of the park. Kristina explained that Columbia Land Conservancy (CLC) oversees a hunting program at the Greenport Conservation Area, which the organization manages for the Open Space Institute. Each year, prospective hunters at that site attend a mandatory safety meeting, which is followed by a lottery to fill a fixed number of hunting slots. The CLC is a resource for information should the Town wish to pursue this type of a program. Lee stated that she is seeking information from Philmont, whose public lands available for hunting are similar in size to the potential area in Stuyvesant.

Mike Naegeli expressed concern about releasing firearms in an area where children and families are recreating, and recommended that the Town Board not permit hunting in that area. Lee added that training, education, permits, and a controlled program could allow for hunters to benefit from use of the conserved area as well as provide a safe experience for the public.

In revisiting discussion of the proposed Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation (OPRHP) grant application at the public meeting, Mike noted that it was unclear to the public exactly how much grant money could be requested given confusion concerning the required 50% match which that grant requires. The appraised value of the land that the Asbornsen's donated for the park is \$104,000. OPRHP had not yet clarified whether the Town could apply for \$104,000 or \$208,000 since the State budget for 2008-2009 is still incomplete.

Ron expressed concern about the Town committing to a plan that could not be achieved within a specified budget. For example, if the Town were to state in a grant application that a soccer field was to be built, then the Town would be committed to construction of such a field. Tom Kilcer explained that grantors will often allow for flexibility in a project after funding is awarded. He added that Columbia County Soil and Water can address the water runoff issues.

Peter stated that at the March meeting, Councilwoman and Recreation Committee Chair Roz Gumaer asked fellow Board members for their thoughts about the Sharptown Road Park. Ron then presented a motion that the Town apply for funding to create one three-acre, multi-use playing field when the grant requirements become available. The board passed the subsequent vote, with Ms. Gumaer voting in the negative.

Ron added that the Town currently has a wonderful piece of conservation land which in time, can be improved with various amenities. Peter commented that the longer the Town Board waits to

apply for funding the more likely it is that it will be a liability to taxpayers, as grant funds become less available. Recreation Committee member Lee Jamison expressed dismay that Ron's motion was never discussed with that Committee in advance of the board meeting. Juanita observed that this was still forward motion in moving the project along.

Tom then proposed the following sequence of steps toward an informed pursuit of the OPRHP grant:

- 1) Wait for the State budget to be passed
- 2) Look at previous, successful grants that were submitted to OPRHP
- 3) Obtain the real grant application and clarify how much the Town can apply for
- 4) Utilize the questionnaire data as a tool to show support, as well as data about Little League activities in the county

Additional comments included the importance of providing restroom facilities at the site; whether Columbia County Soil and Water could shoot lines to determine slopes at the site (Tom will follow up); and that trail monitors be assigned to maintain and report on problems that occur. A final observation by the self-described fiscally-conservative Brian Chittenden was "If you build it, they will come" with regard to improvements to create a town park at the Sharptown Road site.

Kent commented that the committee sometimes engages in lengthy discussion on a topic without coming to conclusion. He inquired whether parliamentary procedures could be implemented so there would be a defined structure for the meeting. Ron explained that the committee works by consensus, discussing matters as needed.

In a final note, Ron stated that the new zoning laws that were adopted in 2001 included a requirement that anyone wishing to sell development rights must come before the planning board. He asked Greenway Committee members who were members of the Zoning Advisory Committee if they recalled why this requirement was added. The organization that sets up the PDR is meant to notify the town, but this does not always happen. Further, since a landowner can file a new easement with the county, there is no mechanism for the Town assessor to be made aware if the landowner has not apprised the Planning Board.

In a good news update, Albany Engineering, owned by Jim Beesha, has acquired Stuyvesant Falls hydropower plant, at long last. The Town has an agreement with Stuyvesant Falls Hydro Corporation (a subsidiary of Albany Engineering) so that firm may acquire, rehabilitate, and operate the plant.

Kent made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 p.m. It was seconded by Tom and passed with all in favor.

Next meeting: April 24, 2008 at 7:00 pm