

Town of Thomaston

Thomaston Green Park Ad-Hoc Committee

MEETING AGENDA

JANUARY 03, 2024 @ 6PM - Select Board Room at Thomaston Town Office

1. **Review & Discuss Notes about Recommendations**
2. **Discuss Proposed Budget Items for Thomaston Green Park**
3. **Schedule Legal Meeting - Set date for zoom meeting with Attorney Rob Levin**
4. **Meeting Minutes - December 14, 2023**
5. **Adjourn (7:30PM)**

Since Jared, the Recreation Director, is unable to attend our Thursday evening meeting, I interviewed him this morning to get his input. Here's a summary:

- His preferred location for a splash pad and tots playground is Thomaston Academy. Ample lawn space, ample parking; it would coordinate with the library children's programs, and the library could help maintain it; and it would address the lack of playground facilities on the east side of town. Both a splash pad and a tots playground are costly to build, probably north of \$100,000 each.
- The two playgrounds north of the town office—one outside the police station and one west of Thomaston Grammar School—are both owned by RSU 13 but are both ok for Thomaston parents/kids to use except on those limited times when the schools are actively using them. To the best of Jared's knowledge, they are both available most of the time. The one near the police station is elementary school – focused, the one outside TGS is middle school – focused.
- The property line between RSU 13 land and the town-owned land behind the business block runs right through the outfield of the nearest ballfield. The town owns the land to the east of the line, where the infield is, and RSU 13 owns the outfield. However, RSU 13 is maintaining the entire field.
- South of that, toward the business block, the outdoor basketball and tennis courts and skate park are town-owned and poorly maintained. However, the basketball court surface is in reasonably good shape. This is Jared's preferred location for outdoor basketball, pickleball, and other such activities for middle schoolers and teens. The horseshoe pitches are still nearby but rarely used.
- His preferred location for a community skating rink for all ages is the baseball field that's on your left as you drive out Watts Lane toward Thomaston Grammar School. There are lights, sound system, and concession booth there. Real ice is not a feasible surface, he says; he talked to folks in St. George, where their ice-skating rink was usable on only three days last winter thanks to climate change. The more feasible alternative is synthetic ice—one brand being Glice—which comes as tiles that lock together. Synthetic ice dulls skate blades faster than real ice, but the distributors provide skate sharpening equipment with the "ice." His cost estimate for a synthetic rink is \$20,000 to \$40,000, depending on area.
- There is another ballfield north of (i.e., in back of) Thomaston Grammar School. This is owned by RSU 13 but is not in use and has become overgrown. This would be his likely alternative location for middle-school soccer if he were asked to move the soccer pitch that is presently between the remnant prison wall and the gazebo. It would not be hard to resurrect the overgrown field, and the location might be slightly more convenient for him on a typical Saturday when he is dashing from one sports field to another. On the other hand, the soccer pitch on the Green has introduced our beautiful park to parents from surrounding towns who might otherwise never see it.
- Parking is tight when there's a soccer game on the Green. Cars park both sides of William King Street and on the grass (which Public Works tries to prevent). Four cars can park

nose-in in the two asphalt stubs that were build into William King Street for possible future roads to housing developments.

- He does not anticipate more Rec Department sports in the park but likes the idea of adult yoga, tai chi, etc. there.
- He would love to see water and electricity and restrooms for the park.
- He is very much in favor of our proposed perimeter ADA-accessible pathways around the park, and he likes the idea of a couple of exercise stations along the path.
- Jared's dream is to have a rec center in town. Right now he has to work around the RSU 13 sports schedules for access to the basketball courts, and that causes a lot of disruption for his youth league programs. He thinks the ideal location for a rec center would be on that half-acre back piece owned by Ka Chai or on the state-owned land just west of there, where the state garage is, bordering Ship Street.
- Jared does not use the town trails system currently. There has been some interest from RSU 13 in using the trails for cross-country running, but not sure how much.
- He has just hired a half-time assistant.
- Jared groaned when I asked him about enlarging the Recreation Department mission to be Parks & Recreation. Despite his new half-time assistant, he can't see how they could possibly handle the added responsibilities. He is against the idea.

AD HOC THOMASTON GREEN PARK COMMITTEE

12/14/23 Draft Minutes

Members present: Zel, Jon, Sandra, Jeff, Noreen, Jane, Alan, Kathleen, Julie, Linda, Kathy, Marla

Guests: Larry Lentz, Conservation Commission

Others: Pete Lammert, selectman; Chris Rector, selectman

Meeting convened at 6 pm.

This was the final fact-finding meeting where we concluded our first discussions about the Recreation Department and continued conversations about trails and Parks with Conservation Commission.

Recreation Department (Jared Porter Interview - presented by Jon Eaton):

Jon Presented his interior with Jared on December 12, 2023 which is attached in full. Discussion followed:

- There are concerns with adding Parks to the Recreation Department given the current workload of the Recreation Department Director; additional staff may be needed
- We discussed the role of "Parks Manager" to have a town employee manage the parks and also be able to apply for grants to keep the parks funded, schedule events, set fees, and review rules for park use. This could be a stipend position.
- Conservation Commission cannot take on role of parks. George's River Land Trust currently involved in trails with group of volunteers.

Other Items discussed:

- River loop recreation trail that connects St. Geroge River to town trails. Connecting the Thomaston Green to the River through Ship Street?
- How much money should be asked for this year to fund this Park? Discuss this at next meeting.
- Jon Eaton to reach out to another attorney for second legal opinion.

Items that need clarification:

- Could TIF money be spent on a new building (pavilion, bathrooms, etc)?
- When does the Comprehensive Plan have the next annual review?
- Additional site items will be added to the site map for early 2024.

The minutes of the meeting of 12/05/23 meeting were unanimously approved.

Meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Zel Bowman-Laberge