

Puffer's Pond 2020 Committee
MINUTES
Thursday, March 4, 2010
Town Room, Town Hall
7:00 p.m.

Members Present: M. Sharma, J. Patulak, E. Jones, J. Pistrang, E. Shopper, E. Hamin, B. Angus, P. Muska, A. Hayden,

Staff: N. Malloy, D. Ziomek

Board/Committee Presentation Reports

Several Committee members attended other Board and Committee meetings to present an update on the work of the Puffer's Pond 2020 Committee. Committee members presented a short recap of the presentations.

E. Hamin and E. Shopper reported on their presentation to the Planning Board (PB).

- PB liked the table of options and appreciated the rigorous process of the Committee
- PB did not take a position on any of the options
- PB wondered whether CPA money could be used for improvements at the Pond
- PB wants bike access both ways on State Street
- PB supported the "mostly conservation" scenario more than the "mostly recreation" scenario
- PB likes the idea of parking meters on State Street
- PB wondered if the Committee has been coordinating with DPW. There was a discussion of the ripple effect of closing State Street, good idea to consult with DPW.

P. Muska and E. Jones reported on their presentation to the Conservation Commission (Con Com).

- Con Com also appreciated the table of options
- Con Com wanted more specificity from the Committee with regard to recommendations

M. Gage and E. Jones attended the Selectboard (SB).

- SB appreciated the process of the Committee.
- SB expressed some concerns about the cost of dredging.
- SB agreed that something needs to be done on State Street, and noted that they would need to approve any modifications to State Street. The process for approval of recommendations will likely be: from Puffer's Pond Committee to Con Com to DPW Committee to SB.

E. Jones will attend the next LSSE meeting on March 10th to present an update on the Committee's work.

The Committee discussed the article that appeared in the Hampshire Gazette and noted that while some points were missing, that the article did not contain any misrepresentations.

State Street Discussion

The Committee reviewed the conceptual drawings prepared by N. Malloy based on the "options table". A. Hayden provided a summary of the three concepts. The Committee had a lengthy discussion on the following issues:

- Pros/cons/logistics of full State Street closure
- Pros/cons/logistics of making State Street one-way
- Seasonal closure vs. year-round closure
- Parking
- Pedestrian and bicycle pathways

Key points from the discussion are summarized below.

Parking

- The amount of parking in the "current level/mostly conservation" strategy is less than for the "mostly recreation" strategy.
- Formal parking for the South Beach area would likely be provided on the north side of State Street to the east of the pond, just past the bridge over Cushman Brook. There are likely permitting constraints with a parking lot in this area if it is within the Riverfront Area. Formal parking may be better suited further to the east of the pond, or at the Ruxton gravel pit.
- Parking at Ruxton may be a challenge however because it is far from the pond, would need to relocate DPW.
- If there is a formal parking area, what happens to the rest of the cars on the street? Would they be ticketed or towed?
- The Committee agreed that the number of parking spaces will help to control the peak population.
- The issues of traffic/safety on State Street should be separated from the parking discussion. Decisions and design considerations for parking will be a much more time-consuming discussion. It would be better for the Committee to decide on the desired amount of parking before evaluating potential locations for parking.
- There is concern about accessibility if parking in proximity to the pond is reduced. The Committee agreed that it is not in favor of any scenario that involves no parking in the vicinity of State Street.
- Whatever recommendations the Committee advances, the parking will need to be formal and standardized.

State Street

- The Committee agrees that traffic on State Street should be limited, either by completely closing it off or making the road one-way.
- If State Street is closed, the State Street/Sand Hill Road intersection would likely improve. Need to consider implications to pedestrian traffic of closing road.
- If a one-way road is recommended, a west-to-east travel direction makes more sense for the State Street/Sand Hill Road intersection. However other considerations will affect east-to-west vs. west-to-east one-way discussion: safety, what side of road parking will be on, what spots will be taken first, if a driver misses a spot, how far around does the driver need to go to get back to available spots, etc.
- The Committee agreed that there likely is not room on State Street for one-way traffic, on-street parking, and a pedestrian pathway.
- The logistics of a one-way scenario and a drop off location were discussed. Does this really eliminate two-way traffic when a user is driving between the drop off and a parking lot? Does this require that a user drive all the way around the pond to reach a parking area? Is this practical?
- If there is no parking along State Street and it is one way, drivers may be compelled to speed. Committee should also consider recommending traffic calming measures.
- Is it possible to physically separate drivers and pedestrians by a barrier of some sort?

The Committee reached consensus on the following issues:

- State Street should either be one-way or blocked off. Two-way traffic should be eliminated. A west-to-east travel direction for a one-way road is preferred.
- Any recommendations must consider families and ADA issues. Any plan must include a drop-off area near the South Beach.
- Whatever recommendation is implemented, there must be clear signage and measures to minimize confusion.
- No parking should be located between Sand Hill Road and the bridge over Cushman Brook, except for accessible spaces.
- There is a need for approximately 60 to 80 parking spaces overall. This would likely entail 30 to 40 spaces at or near State Street, and approximately 30 to 40 spaces at the North Beach. The Committee agreed that it might be better to provide 50 parking spaces east of Cushman Brook and 30 parking spaces at North Beach.

Fees

- Various fee structures were discussed: annual pass for residents, daily parking pass. These passes would likely have different rates for residents and non-residents. The Committee wants a couple of free passes to be available for check-out at the library.
- Need to have further discussion about physical parking logistics and fees – how does one affect the other?

- The Committee does not like the idea of parking meters at the site. There is general approval of a parking ticket dispenser that could regulate parking either on the street or in a lot.
- Need to ensure that any revenue generated is dedicated to the Pond/Conservation Department and not deposited into the General Fund

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for Thursday, March 11th at 7 pm in the Glass Room at the Bangs Center. The meeting will be devoted to presentations from the UMass LARP Greenway Studio students. There are five groups; the presentations will be limited to 10 to 15 minutes each. The next regular Committee meeting is scheduled for April 1, 2010.