

Minutes for the June 16, 2022, Gerald Park Association Annual Budget Meeting Held at the GPA Park

The meeting was called to order at 6:09pm. A quorum was established. Board of Directors members present were Lisa Catanese, Pam Cropley, Eric Miller, Raymond Perugini, John Petrovits, Kevin Ryan, Syd Seale, and Dave Sutherland. Laura Young, the GPA tax collector, was also present. About 40 GPA members were present, although some left as the evening went on.

Audience of Members: Speakers were asked to keep their comments to 3 minutes or less. Five GPA members spoke on various topics. The Board was not asked to take any actions, and no votes were taken.

Minutes: Minutes from the October 6, 2021, GPA Annual Meeting were approved with one change: Mary Ann Hanson requested that a bullet be added to separate her comments from those of John Petrovits. Motion by Eric Miller to approve the minutes with that change, seconded by Raymond Perugini, approved 22-1.

President's Report: Eric Miller thanked those present for attending. He also thanked the members who volunteered to help at the spring beach cleanup and the building of the new kayak rack and shed. Spaces on the kayak rack are still available. If interested, send an email to geraldparkcoventry@gmail.com.

Tax Collector's Report: Laura Young submitted a report showing a tax collection rate of 99.54%. Total taxes and fees collected from the 157 accounts within the GPA was \$12,515.08, with \$2,679.18 delinquent. That collection rate is excellent, and Laura was thanked for her good work.

Treasurer's Report: Dave Sutherland presented the current budget, which showed a balance of under \$100 in our checking account and \$17,405.09 in our Capital Improvement Fund.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Avery Shores Turnover:

- GPA members last year voted to proceed with a Writ of Mandamus, a legal filing which asserts that the Town of Coventry has exerted dominion and control over Avery Shores and it is therefore a town road, with the town is responsible for maintaining it.
- John Petrovits gave a detailed summary and history of this legal issue. A settlement conference is set for September, and a trial before a judge will be in October or November. The judge then has up to 90 days to render a decision.
- Mary Ann Hansen pointed out that the Town had offered to take over the road and questioned the costs of the attorney handling our case on behalf of the GPA.
- John Petrovits said that the Town's offer did not include taking over the drainage sewers, which direct water from the street to the lake. They would have remained the obligation of the GPA. Ben Emanuele pointed out that maintenance costs of these sewers could be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Beach & Beautification: Kelley Sutherland reported that the beautification of the park is done solely by volunteers. Linda Blakesley questioned why plantings were removed from the park. Kelley said she is hoping to put in a couple of trees to provide some shade, since some trees on a neighbor's property that had provided shade were removed.

Member Involvement Committee: The committee set dates for summer activities, including some full-moon kayak nights, a marshmallow roasting night, and a movie night. The annual GPA picnic will be held on Saturday, July 16 (rain date Sunday) from noon to 5pm. Activities are posted on the GPA website and Facebook page.

Environmental: Scott Gallo reported that the lake is in year 6 of a 10-year plan to destroy hydrilla, an invasive plant, and it's going well. The health of the lake is very good now. He also pointed out that there are new no-wake zones near the boat launch, and we have a new marine patrol officer who will be giving out citations to people who break lake rules, such as excessive speeding or paddleboarding without a vest near them.

Fuel Oil Cooperative: Ben Emanuele reported that he will start this up again for the fall heating season, but cautioned that he may not be able to get a good deal due to price increases as a result of the war in Ukraine.

Website: Lisa Catanese reminded everyone of the GPA website URL, GeraldParkCoventry.com, and mentioned some of the content that the website contains.

Welcome to GPA: Lisa Lowell coordinates giving small gift baskets to new GPA neighbors.

Bylaws subcommittee: On hold.

GPA taxes subcommittee: On hold.

NEW BUSINESS:

Paper Roads: Mary Ann Hansen gave a brief history of how the roads within the GPA became town roads. There are just two roads left that are owned by the GPA: Chase Avenue and Overholt.

Bill and Jackie Roy purchase a lot from Mary Ann and asked the GPA to pay for the cost of tree removal along Chase Avenue, which runs between their two properties. Bill said the cost of removing the trees along Chase Avenue would be \$2,500, or \$3,500 to also remove the stumps. To offset the burden on the GPA, he offered to pay the cost of the removal and suggested that we take those funds out of the GPA taxes that he would be owing each year until it is paid back.

Eight GPA members spoke on this topic. Some of the thoughts were:

- The GPA likely can't make that kind of deal with the taxes due to laws surrounding tax collection.
- The issue of the paper road goes beyond this one request. The roads are owned by 150+ households, and they place a burden on the GPA to maintain them.
- Some GPA members said Chase Avenue was torn up in some places as the Roys cleared their lot, although Mary Ann Hansen said this is not true and that she has before-and-after photos of the area.
- A committee would need to be formed to look into the larger issue of the paper roads. One option is to offer them to the abutting property owners.
- This issue was further discussed during the budget conversation later in the meeting.

GPA Board Vacancy: Teri Norman and Jackie Roy volunteered to serve out the vacant term, which expires this September. Teri was the first to offer, though, and was nominated by Eric Miller. Eric made a motion to accept Teri as a Board member, Raymond Perugini seconded, and she was approved unanimously. However, Jackie was thanked for her interest and invited to volunteer for the Board at the September Annual Meeting, when there will be three seats to fill.

Budget line items: Eric Miller went through each line item of the proposed budget for 2022-23. Key points:

- Because the cost of liability insurance went up considerably, the proposed budget for 2022-23 is \$6,000, up from \$4,200 two years ago. Pam Cropley is looking into lower-cost policies, although not many companies offer insurance for a beach association.
- Regarding expenses associated with the beach, the proposed budget for beach repairs was \$500, but several members suggested raising this to \$1,500 to cover the cost of drainage issues at the beach, to prevent the sand from eroding. No one objected to this.
- \$300 had been budgeted for Gerald Park Day, but a suggestion was made to bring this up to \$400 because of rising food costs. Linda Blakesley objected to this, stating that some people are struggling financially and perhaps we should cancel Gerald Park Day. Eric Miller made a motion to increase this line item to \$400, Raymond Perugini seconded, and it was approved 16-1.
- There was considerable discussion about the cost of the attorney representing the GPA in the Avery Shores turnover case. \$6,000 was budgeted for attorney's fees for 2022-23, and there was a past due balance from the attorney of \$7,837, for a total of \$13,837.
- Mary Ann Hanson said the Board should not have incurred this past due amount without calling a special meeting. Eric Miller pointed out that the GPA membership had voted to proceed with the Writ of Mandamus with the understanding that there would be attorney's fees associated with it. He and other speakers pointed out that the cost is minimal compared to what the cost would be of maintaining Avery Shores.
- John Petrovits said this attorney has been generous to the GPA, often speaking with him and not charging for this time. He also said the attorney doesn't believe this year's costs would go beyond the proposed line items of \$6,000, since the majority of the work in the case has already been done.
- Jim Cropley made a motion that the budget in the amount of \$30,477.59 be approved for 2022-23, and Raymond Perugini seconded it.
- Mary Ann Hansen then requested that \$3,500 be taken from the Capital Improvements budget to cover the cost of removing dead trees along Chase Avenue. Bill Roy made a motion for a friendly amendment, asking for a lower amount, \$2,500, to be taken from the Capital Improvement budget for this purpose. The friendly amendment was seconded by Mary Ann and a vote was taken. The amendment failed by a vote of 2-14.
- Discussion then ensued about the budget itself. Linda Blakesley stated again that families are struggling financially and she felt this budget was too high.
- A vote was then taken on Jim Cropley's motion to approve the \$30,477.59 budget. The motion passed by a vote of 14-2.

NEXT MEETING: The next meeting of the GPA Board of Directors will be held on Wednesday, June 29, at 6pm at the GPA Park, weather permitting; otherwise via Zoom.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:49pm.