

March 16, 2015

Dear Councilor Spear:

As Chairman of the City of Portsmouth Recreation Chairman I wanted to communicate the feedback and general consensus of the board's last meeting regarding the upcoming meeting of the Sagamore Creek Land Committee meeting schedule for March 18th.

Per your letter I have suggested to the board members to attend the upcoming meeting and participate with input and discussion on possible recreational needs to accommodate the many different programs offered in the city. Unfortunately, I will not be able to attend due to my travel for my business.

As you know there is a demand for additional recreational fields in the city to enhance current programs. This was also documented on the 2009 Recreational Needs Study that consultants performed who were hired by the city to fully examine all facets of recreation the city has to offer.

While the Blue Ribbon committee continues to evaluate the possibilities of use on the Sagamore Creek land, I ask the committee to strongly consider the creation of two to three fields that could be used for multiple purposes to accommodate increasing demands of current and future planning. This may also help address concerns that were mentioned in past City Master Plans.

Being very familiar with this 66 acre parcel of land I know it could be feasible with very little impact to the area. As a matter of fact two to three fields would only take up only 6-7 acres which would only be 10% of the parcel. This will still be able to leave 90 % dedicated to conservation and trails. Access does not have to come from Jones Avenue but rather from the rear property of the High School adjacent to the tennis courts.

Our hope of the Recreation Board is that all forms of recreation are considered with your committee and fields are included in the plans. This parcel of land has been considered and discussed many times in the past and belongs to all of the citizens of Portsmouth which it should accommodate.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please let me know if I can assist in anyway or provide additional information for you and the committee.

Respectfully,

Carl F. Diemer

Chairman
City of Portsmouth Recreation Board

3/13/15

Dear Sagamore Creek committee members,

My name is Rus Wilson and I'm the Recreation Director for the City of Portsmouth and the Athletic Director for the Portsmouth School Department. I apologize for not be in attendance, but I have a prior commitment, along with 1,000 other PHS fans, at the state playoff semifinal basketball game at UNH.

My feelings on the disposition of the Sagamore Creek land should be well represented tonight by the School Board representative, the Recreation Board representative, and others in attendance.

Very succinctly, I believe the vast majority of the Sagamore creek land should be kept as open space/conservation land. However, if there is any possibility that a small area could be used for playing fields, it would be much appreciated by the community. We would be talking less that 10% of the total acreage, especially if we can open up the 10 acres of fenced in, land fill area. We would not need access from Jones Ave., vehicle or otherwise, as we have direct access from the PHS playing fields. Others will talk about the data that justifies the need for more playing space. This is a marvelous opportunity and I think there is plenty of acreage for all stakeholders to be heard.

Again, I apologize for not being in attendance and I would be more than willing to attend other meetings to discuss the many options available.

Rus Wilson
Recreation/Athletic Director

To: The Portsmouth Herald

Sagamore Creek Committee falls short on research.

The Mayor's Blue Ribbon Committee on the Sagamore Creek Land met over the past few months to review the recreational and conservation possibilities for the 66 acre Sagamore Creek parcel located behind the Portsmouth High School and off of Jones Avenue. The Recreation Board received a progress report by City Councilor and Chairman of the MBRC, Eric Spear. The Recreation Board found the committee's efforts fell far short of all viable options for the parcel and did not take into consideration the sentiments of the city of Portsmouth residents. The Recreation Board feels there was not enough in depth research conducted by the MBRC to effectively make decisions and recommendations on what recreation activities would be a good fit for the parcel.

The MBRC meetings were all held at 7:30am, other than the stakeholder meeting that included representatives of the Recreation Board, School Department, Sustainability Committee and Conservation Commission. The 7:30am meeting times precluded many Portsmouth residents from attending and voicing their ideas for the parcel. Attendance at the MBRC meetings were primarily comprised of residents from the Tidewatch Neighborhood, residents well known for opposing any improvements to the Sagamore Creek 66 acre parcel. The Tidewatch residents are certainly entitled to their opinion but were primarily the only public input the Committee received during their meetings.

The Committee Chairman presented a draft for "Vision and Guidelines" even before there was a scheduled input session to receive ideas and suggestions from the public. The Chairman also provided a news release to the Portsmouth Herald stating what the options for the land were going to be. The Committee did draft some good ideas related to passive recreation which can be satisfied with minimal alterations to the parcel. However, the Committee certainly did not go far enough to consider all of the Portsmouth community needs. The Recreation Board has an obligation to support any opportunities to improve city recreation, and the need is desperate for playing fields. The city has not added a recreational field to the city's inventory in over 35 years.

Another reason the MBRC did not recommend recreational fields was the feasibility and cost of development. How did the committee come to that decision when there were no estimates or costs provided by site development professionals? In previous use proposals by professional engineers, there were 5 fields that could be developed reasonably on the parcel. Developing fields elsewhere would cost much more when you consider a property would have to be purchased, presumably at a premium price, considering the limited inventory of land in Portsmouth.

There is 66 acres of land available at Sagamore Creek. The recommendation from the Recreation Board Chairman and the Recreation Department Director is to utilize 7-8 of the acres for 2 to 3 recreational fields for public use. This is only 12% of the total parcel, the remainder of which can be used for passive recreation and preserved for conservation purposes. City owned land belongs to all of the residents of Portsmouth and should be considered for all the different needs of those residents not just a small representation. We do not think it is fair to consider all of the 66 acres for conservation only. We believe the property should be enjoyed by all of Portsmouth residents.

Portsmouth has the Urban Forestry Center that already provides a lot of the activities that the MBRC Committee is recommending for Sagamore Creek. The Urban Forestry Center provides 182 acres of fields, forest and salt marsh, available to all Portsmouth residents.

The City of Portsmouth Recreation Board and Recreation Department Director recommend the city consider playing fields on a small portion of the 66 acre Sagamore Creek parcel to fulfill the need for additional fields in the city. It would be fair thing to do is share with everyone all the recreational opportunities the parcel has to offer and not keep it to a narrow scope of recreational and conversation purposes. If residents support playing fields at Sagamore Creek, please make an effort to come out and let your voice be heard. Please ask your friends and team families to attend the public input session of the Mayor's Blue Ribbon Committee on Sagamore Creek this Thursday, May 7th at 7:00 PM at the Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers at Portsmouth City Hall. We appreciate your support for playing fields in Portsmouth.

Portsmouth Recreation Board
Carl F. Diemer, Chairman
Nancy Clayburgh, School Board Member
Kory Sirmaian, Member
Todd Henley, Member

Mr Eric Spears,

I am contacting you to make a recommendation for Portsmouth recreation. There is a fast growing sport called Disc Golf. It's been around for quite some time in one form or another, but it's really started growing tremendously over the past 5 years or so. I've been playing the sport for about 6-7 years. When I first started playing, friends and I could very easily get a round in without seeing more than a few players here and there. These days it's impossible to get a round in on the weekend without having a full course. New courses are popping up all over the place. Today I would guess there are more than twice as many courses in New Hampshire and Maine than there was when I started. There is still so many people that have never even heard of the sport which leaves opportunity to build awareness and give Portsmouth residents something new to offer at the same time. It's great exercise and a sport that anyone young, old, big, small, ... can play and have fun.

Why Portsmouth? Because there is currently nothing offered in Portsmouth and I'm quite sure there is land and people capable of providing this sort of recreation. Also, there are lots of opportunities for local residents and students to put down their smart phones and web tablets long enough to get out and enjoy Portsmouth's environment. There is a public course in Dover NH at Bellamy Park. The course is constantly full of players and there has fairly recently (within the past year or so roughly) been opened a disc golf store on site. I've been told that the Dover High School uses the practice baskets at times during school hours for student, plus lots of students play on the course on their own time. It's a sport that the entire family can play so it's great for the local community. A good disc golf course would require anywhere from 15 - 25 acres of land. It has very little impact on the environment since there is little to no major excavation. The land, trees and terrain are what make up the course along with the addition of tee boxes and baskets.

There is very little cost involved in building a disc golf course and much less to maintain. Most courses are in the woods with a mixture of walking path (lots of trees) to open field shots. Minimal clearing if any would be required depending on the property used. There are 18 holes which would require a tee box for each one. This means 18 cement (or rubber) tee pads (roughly 4 feet by 8 feet) permanently installed. Of course the main elements to the course are the baskets. 18 quality steel disc golf baskets will need to be installed. This is generally done by mounting a steel shaft into a small hole in the ground (cemented in). The basket then slides into the shaft and lock in place. Some courses install alternate locations for the holes so the baskets can be moved (A and B) locations to mix things up from time to time or for certain events. A good course has tee signs for each hole which show the number of the hole and a basic map of the hole along with information such as the distance and the par for the hole. That's it. There are other things that make an even better course but are not require to get started. This would be things such as a lost and found drop-box, a stand or board of sorts that has the course map and information about the course, a practice basket location, seating (benches) at each hole, trash cans and recycle bins for each hole, etc... If the opportunity arose it would be nice to have a building that can be used as a pro-shop where players can buy or rent disc golf supplies, arrange local events, perhaps purchase snacks and drinks, and a bathroom.

Disc Golf is extremely affordable which is one thing that helps draw people into giving it a try and falling in love with the sport. Bellamy Park Disc Golf is free since it's a town park. Most places that are not a public park course charge green fees of \$5 per round or \$8 for the day, which is still very affordable for anyone wanting to get out and have some fun for the day.

The disc golf community is a great group of people. Most of the work that was done at Bellamy Park in Dover was done by volunteers. It would be a great opportunity for Portsmouth to get involved while the sport is just starting to explode. I am heavily involved with local sports from playing to refereeing in the NHSSC. I have a heavy dedication to the sport of disc golf. I can assure you that being as involved as I am with the Portsmouth sports and recreation community, a disc golf course would be heavily used by people not looking to have to travel outside of Portsmouth to play.

If this is something the town of Portsmouth wants to pursue I would love to help in any way possible. I feel as though I have a lot to offer when it comes to course design, and have contacts with people that have done the design for local courses.

Here are some links to some of the things I talked about in this message.

This is a link to a guide on how many acres should be used when building/designing a disc golf course. Having a course that falls in around the "Average (61) / Blue tee" range would be great. More on the Average to Scattered side than Corridor. Which is why having 15 - 25 acres would be perfect.

http://www.pdga.com/files/AcreageChart_0.pdf

This is a link to Bellamy Park Disc Golf in Dover, NH.

<http://bellamyparkdiscgolf.weebly.com/index.html>

I look forward to hearing from you.

Regards,
John White
cstm2ns@gmail.com
207-432-3158

Summary 2015 Seacoast Lacrosse

	Players
Rye & New Castle	102
Greenland	70
Newington	4
Portsmouth	210
Total	386

Total Teams	24
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Day of week	High School	Rye Rec	Lang Corner	Parsons Field	RJH	Dondero	Greenland Rec	Newington Old Town Hall
Sunday	8	4	4	4	3	2	8	
Monday	2	4	4	4	3	2	4	
Tuesday	2	4	4	4	3	2	4	2
Wednesday	2	4	4	4	3	2	4	
Thursday	2	4	4	4	3	2	4	2
Friday	2	4	4	4	3	2	4	2
Saturday	6	6	2	4	5		8	
Total per location	24	26	22	24	20	10	36	6
Percentage per location	14%	15%	13%	14%	12%	6%	21%	4%
Total number of hours	168							

Percentage per town	Rye	Portsmouth	Greenland	Newington
	55%	20%	21%	4%

Portsmouth Conservation Commission

Councilor Eric Spear, Chair
Members of the Blue Ribbon Committee on Sagamore Creek Land
1 Junkins Avenue,
Portsmouth, NH 03801

RE: Conservation Commission Input

May 5, 2015

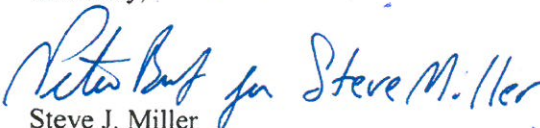
Dear Councilor Spear and Committee Members:

I would first like to thank the Committee for their thoughtful consideration of this property. As you know Allison Tanner represents the Conservation Commission on your committee and has been reporting back to us on your progress. As Chair and on behalf of the Conservation Commission I would like take this opportunity to provide comments on the status and future use of the Sagamore Creek Land. As the Committee knows the Conservation Commission included this property in its Public Undeveloped Land Assessment¹. This report noted the rare saltmarsh plant community, the large mature evergreen and broadleaf forest complex, extensive trail network and presence of vernal pools as well as the wetlands and stream that drain the High School property. The report offered management suggestions such as: maintaining the current walking access from the High School and Jones Avenue, protecting the property as wildlife habitat, and enhancing environmental education potential. The Conservation Commission supports these recommendations and believes the current uses on the site are consistent with these recommendations and the allowed use of the property. The Commission supports the Committee in its goal to maintain this site for passive recreation, and it is clear that the site is used in this fashion extensively year round by a wide diversity of citizens as well as the high school cross country team and environmental classes. While some improvements to the property may be warranted to allow for improved public access to and within the site, the Commission believes that any expansion of the paved areas, new buildings or facilities installed should be avoided or minimized to the greatest extent possible. As a truly passive site the Commission believes the best use of this site is being realized currently and there is a great benefit to have this type of site accessible to the community.

Specifically, the trail network provides access to the natural areas on the site and currently allow for opportunities to provide interpretation of some of the important natural features such as the salt marsh habitat, mature forest, and the vernal pools without the need for new trails. The Commission believes that the ongoing use of the site should continue and would most appropriately remain passive. The Commission supports removing the gate and some of the fencing to allow the public to utilize the landfill cap area for unorganized recreational activities such as kite flying, or sledding. The existing roadway to the landfill could also provide parallel parking for many vehicles with no increase in pavement.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further please do not hesitate to contact me at 294-0146 or Peter Britz, Portsmouth's Environmental Planner at 610-7215.

Sincerely,


Steve J. Miller
Chair Portsmouth Conservation Commission

¹ The Public Undeveloped Land Report can be found on-line on the City of Portsmouth website at this location:
http://www.planportsmouth.com/PULA_complete_final.pdf.