

GIANTS NECK BEACH ASSOCIATION
BOARD of GOVERNORS REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2024, 6:30 pm
HELEN LENA CLUBHOUSE
31 WEST PATTAGANSETT RD Niantic CT

Minutes

Present: Ernie Annibale, Lisa Doggart, Paul Formica, Mary Ann Hennehan, Lou Piscatelli, Gerry Van Noordennen, Louise Wilcox

Absent: Chip Brienza

1- Call to Order

Paul Formica called the meeting to order at 6:35 pm.

2- President's Report/ appointments

Steve Spano resigned from the Zoning Board of Appeals, and Paul re-appointed Steve Spano to the Zoning Commission. Paul appointed Tony Jacuzzi to the Zoning Commission

The BOG is considering the lease renewal for driveway access at 216 Giants Neck Road.

Paul received correspondence from Phyllis Berger about Angelo Bettera's application to the town wetlands committee to clear the pond of lily pads to make space for kids to fish. The application has not been approved. Gary Goeshel of the Town suggests resubmitting the application as a regular permitted activity. Gerry van Noordennen will follow up with Gary to obtain the permit.

Paul reported that he is ready to start scanning archives. He questioned whether the project should be done in a particular order. Louise suggested starting with the banker boxes. Gerry recommends doing the loose paper first.

Lou stated, for the record, his wish to dispel any notion that the board is active outside of the meetings. He wants to make it clear that no decisions are being made behind closed doors.

3- Treasurer's Report

Louise Wilcox reported that there is approximately \$325,000 in the accounts. Property tax revenue has been collected.

The Dock Committee has reimbursed the BOG the dock fees. Nothing unusual in operating expenses.

Louise asked John Wohler, treasurer of the dock committee, which line-item ramp expenses come from (dock, grounds, or beach). John said that in the past, the costs have been shared.

Recently, the ramp was damaged, and both posts had to be replaced. The dock committee has paid for it and hopes the BOG will reimburse half of it. Louise stated that the BOG doesn't have a budget for that, so the BOG will have to consider how to cover that half.

There was a suggestion to have our insurer contact their insurer. There is a police report. Paul offered to contact the family involved with the damage.

Gerry suggested buying a 50-foot extension cord from petty cash.

There was a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report. The motion passed unanimously.

Discussion Item Re Dock Committee

Paul noticed a newspaper notification that the DEEP was doing work on the GNB dock. He asked John Wohler to explain.

John said that John Heninger had been the chair of the dock committee, but he resigned in September. John Wohler and Dean Fiscus are the only two officers at this time. John is acting as chair. The committee work included seeking permits.

The dock committee is considering the long waitlist for dock slips. GNBA member Eric Davison brought his expertise to a dock committee meeting. The committee decided to reach out to DOCKO for a recommendation. DOCKO performed a survey of the area. Eric checked the grasses to ensure no eel grass might cause a permitting issue. DOCKO put together a permit application to DEEP for a dingy dock out to the pilings. The committee got the permit to retain, replace, or use the five old pilings north of the pier.

On the current dock, there are catwalks on either side, which makes it easier to get on the boats. Because they are considered essential equipment, we decided to get a further permit to improve the existing catwalk and draw a perimeter around the existing dock to allow us to do what we want on the inside, then start getting bids. The committee was concerned about the dock area surveys being outdated.

The committee planned to come to the BOG with all the information gathered, including whether their project was feasible as determined by the fact-finding process, which included permitting. The committee took it upon themselves to get these permits.

Paul asked about a fee structure for the permit slips. John responded that it was \$200 per year for the slip. It's always been enough for general operating expenses. They will see the proposals to see if they can fund a dingy dock. There are 42 dock slips, not including the private dock at the end of West Pattagansett Road.

Jim Beaulieu said he had never heard of a permit being applied for before notifying the BOG. Ernie Annibale replied that no contractor had been assigned yet. The committee is in its due diligence phase.

Mike Heenehan said he received a legal notice in the mail. He questioned who signed the permit and when it was supposed to be signed by the Board. There hasn't been any public comment, and having a permit already is the wrong way to do it.

Lou said he was also curious about how the BOG signature was on the document.

Mark Berger said that the committee is in an exploratory process to see if they can get permits for what they might propose to do. Once approved, they would present the proposed project to the BOG.

Paul reiterated that John Wohler said they would come to the board first in the future.

4- Approval of Minutes BOG meetings of 9/4/24 and 10/2/24

Gerry Van Noordennen motioned to approve the September 4, 2024 BOG meeting minutes. Lisa Doggart seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Gerry Van Noordennen moved to approve the October 2, 2024, BOG meeting minutes with amendments. Lisa Doggart seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

5- Discussion items - possible action

There was discussion of the possibility of paying per play to use the court as a way to fund court maintenance.

Lou said it is fair for people who use the court to chip in to pay to maintain it. Lou used the analogy of using the clubhouse and felt the same principle should apply to using the courts. Lou does not feel people who don't use the court should be charged for its upkeep.

Ernie said that Lou makes a convincing argument. However, Ernie believes most of the community approved the new court because it's good for the community. He would agree that users should contribute yearly but not pay for play. Ernie thinks users paying a more significant share for maintenance has some merit.

Gerry takes the opposite view, given that all community members were charged a special assessment to redo the court. All community members own the court, the clubhouse, the playground, and the boat launch. Gerry would like to continue the discussion of locks on the court to prevent damage.

Paul wants to ensure that the BOG listens to all ideas brought to the board and that meetings are open and transparent. The community will know if the BOG plans to vote on an idea.

MaryAnn thinks the community already pays for the maintenance of the common areas and doesn't think maintenance of the court should be isolated.

Ernie said the majority does not agree with pay-to-play and asked if that consensus ended the discussion.

Mark Berger stated that the community wasn't aware of the maintenance required when they were sold the court renovations. He feels it's beyond belief that the community wouldn't charge people to use something that only a few people use. He feels the discussion shouldn't be about whether to charge; rather, it should be about how much should be charged.

Mike Heenehan thinks it's an amenity available for people who want to use it. Mike has no problem paying the nominal fee every 10-15 years.

Trip Hartigan stated his opposition to pay-for-play.

Louise reminded people of the budget process that would determine the cost of maintaining the court. She feels that the court is all-inclusive. It's a community asset, and the GNBA has the financial resources to sustain it.

Page Heslin objects to pay-for-play. She said the maintenance of the playground is the most analogous comparison. The GNBA puts mulch down regularly, which is a significant expense for something that only a few people use. Concerning anticipated expenses, Page said that the BOG did get estimates of expected maintenance costs, which stated that the expenses were directly related to abuse by the court. To impact the cost of resurfacing the court, the GNBA should look at who is damaging the court. She said there was a past membership model for the red clay court. There was a considerable outcry, so it was opened up to the whole community, and the BOG started taking the cost. The new court was never sold to the community as a cost-free alternative.

Mark Berger thinks there should be a vote of the members. Louise said the community can vote on the budget if they want to—the membership votes on each project in the proposed budget.

Trip Hartigan also responded that the court committee did discuss a membership model at a meeting several months ago. However, it was rejected because the committee didn't want to do it.

Gerry commented about locks. There have been past discussions about locking up the court at the end of the day. The board felt it had merit, and it was pushed back to the court committee to tell us something more concrete about what we should do and vote on. Gerry thinks locking the court may have merit, but the court committee needs to reconvene and provide a recommendation to the BOG.

ACTION ITEM: The court committee will discuss locking the court.

Mark asked about the idea of opening the court with a code. Russ Moore said the court committee discontinued Skedda for the winter to save money.

Maryellen Donegan expressed her disagreement with the pay-to-pay plan and asked if the discussion of pay-to-pay is being tabled for another meeting or if we are putting it to rest. She also disagrees with the pay-to-play option.

Paul stated the discussion was over for the evening and that there was no indication that the topic would be brought to another board meeting.

Discussion Item: Zoning Regulations

Paul said the BOG must hold a public hearing whenever any ordinance or zoning regulation is considered. Paul wondered whether the law also required the BOG to have a meeting.

Gerry shared that the zoning commission held a public hearing, and the BOG weighed in on the final draft of the regulations. Changes were made per the BOG's comments. Gerry thinks the BOG has met its legal requirements to allow the zoning commission to make the final vote.

Discussion Item: Meeting with Giants Neck Heights

Paul said there is a meeting on the GNHA on Thursday night at their clubhouse. Louise agreed to attend as a GNBA representative, and Paul may join her.

Louse and Paul will report back at the next BOG meeting.

6- Committee Reports

Goose Management Committee

Gerry said the committee has been active, including two meetings in October. The group has listened to various experts. Nancy Minnock walked the pond's perimeter and the common areas and offered good suggestions. The committee has devised a list of things to minimize the goose burden on the beach and the grass in common areas. The committee will provide those suggestions to the BOG by mid-January.

The only expense-related idea is revising the landscaping to replace blue grass with flight turf grass (which geese don't like) and adding goose netting, which is already in the budget.

Mary Jean Agostini said that she and Lisa Doggart have been actively observing the geese, and the committee will present their data. There are 4-5 distinct groups who come in and out of GNB: five swans, lots of mallards and herons, and seagulls. She thinks there's a resident group of 11 but can't be sure. When the geese leave the pond, they go to the water in front of the right of way or to Black Point.

Lisa Doggart said Matt has offered to write grants to help pay for some of these items. Matching grants are available from Connecticut Sustainable Agriculture, Penny Heller at the Conservation Commission, but they need a body to sanction them.

Gerry offered to write the letter on behalf of the board for matching funds. At the January meeting, he will let BOG know the potential costs.

Beach Committee

Mike Heenehan said it was a successful beach cleaning season. It was such a labor-intensive process that the Giving Garden can't do it anymore. Mike talked to the GNH chairperson, who recommended considering Sandy Sweepers as the new cleaning service. Mike said Sandy Sweepers would cost a bit more money. He does have a proposed agreement in hand. Sandy Sweepers has beach cleaning equipment and 40 full-time employees.

ACTION ITEM: Mike will prepare a detailed Sandy Sweepers beach cleaning contract proposal for the next board meeting.

Pond Committee

Jim Beaulieu said a contractor took down the downed tree in the water, bringing sophisticated equipment that could be in and out in a few hours. To control costs, the pond committee will address another fallen tree next year. Their permit application for the erosion control project was initially rejected but ultimately approved by the Wetlands Commission after providing additional documentation.

7- Public Comments

There were no further public comments.

8- Board Comments

The BOG did not comment further.

9- Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:27 pm. The next meeting will be at the East Lyme Public Library.

Respectfully submitted,

Annah Perch
Acting Recording Secretary

Next BOG Meeting Wednesday, Dec 4, 2024 - East Lyme Public Library