

Town of Jay Parks & Open Space Committee Meeting
Wednesday, June 19, 2024, 5 p.m. via Zoom

Present: Olivia Dwyer, Knut Sauer, Grace Potthast, Paul Benway

Opening Comments:

- Olivia noted 6/19 is a federal holiday (Juneteenth) and town offices are closed. Asked committee members to remind her not to schedule meetings for religious or federal holidays.
- April meeting minutes approved.

Introduction of new committee member Grace Potthast:

- Grace teaches middle and high school art at Chazy Central Rural School. Also has experience in environmental education and outdoor recreation.
- Has lived in hamlet of Jay for 30 years.
- Chaired the committee and wrote the grant to create the Children's Playground at Douglas Memorial Park.
- Emphasized importance of planning for 10-20 years ahead with parks projects to ensure projects will withstand heavy use and natural events like floods; Children's Playground is a good example of this.
- Noted that she brings a preservationist point of view and preference for minimal development to Jay's parks and open spaces, meaning that she does not want to see over development of parks areas and wants to preserve natural environment in Jay's public spaces.

Department report from Paul Benway:

- Paul expects to undergo shoulder surgery this summer. To plan ahead for parks maintenance while he is recovering, the Town of Jay intends to hire Nicholas Nelson as a summer laborer. Paul said that Nicholas is very interested in working for the town and is known to be a hard worker. Paul will work on training Nicholas to cut brush, clean trails, trim trees, mow, and do ballpark maintenance so he is prepared to do these tasks when Paul can't. Paul said one laborer will be enough support for parks maintenance this summer.
- Circus is coming to The Gove June 22–23.
- Baseball and softball has started in The Grove. Paul said fields are in great shape after he and Supervisor Matt Stanley worked to get clay out on the fields, put in new grass seed, and put lines down.
- Paul purchased four new picnic tables to replace tables falling apart. They have been picked up and he will stain this week or next. Tables will be placed at Jay Village Green. Paul said that in the future, it would be good to buy plastic composite picnic tables. They are much more expensive than wood tables (\$700+ compared to about \$150) but they will last longer. The new tables will be carved with the Town of Jay logo to indicate ownership.

Old Business:

Spring volunteer cleanup days

- Upper Jay (4/27/24)
 - More than 20 volunteers helped with cleanup at Wells Memorial Library
 - Adirondack Mountain Coffee Cafe and Sugar House Creaming donated food & beverage
- Au Sable Forks (4/27/24)
 - One volunteer joined Olivia in Henry's Trail cleanup (trash removal)
- Jay (5/18/24)
 - More than 20 volunteers helped with cleanup at Douglas Memorial Park
 - Rotary donated food & beverage

Upper Jay parking lot development on 9N FEMA property:

- Knut provided status update: still waiting on approval from FEMA to place EV chargers at proposed location and then from DEC to relocate EV chargers from proposed location at the Adirondack Mountain Coffee Cafe to the 9N FEMA property.
- Knut said that property cleanup (brush and tree removal) could begin before approvals. Noted that the community should get involved to determine if a more natural look or manicured lawn is preferred.
- Discussion of Upper Jay info sign, which has been received and is in storage at the Community Center. Knut is meeting with Supervisor Stanley on Friday, 6/21/24, as well as Wally Walters, who has volunteered to build the panel that will hold the info sign. Olivia suggested this group consider a temporary installation of the info sign at the park at the intersection of Springfield and 9N because this is a high traffic zone for drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists so the sign will be visible and more likely for people to stop and view it. This may not be the case if it's installed at the 9N FEMA property before the parking lot and EV chargers are there, meaning there wouldn't be a reason for people to stop and look at the sign.

Au Sable Forks veterans memorial:

- Overgrown shrubs removed.
- Volunteer Tom Murphy has taken over maintenance and care for the memorial. He is a veteran and a former Town of Jay Highway Superintendent and is very committed to helping with the memorial.
- There was a disagreement about Tom's installation of planter beds and Supervisor Stanley's preference for professional landscaping that would be maintained through an annual contract with a landscaping company. Committee discussed the importance of keeping volunteers engaged and allowing them to be involved in planning and decision-making for parks. Also discussed difficulty of finding a landscaping firm available to do this work in June, when many are already booked for the season.
- **Committee recommendations:**
 - Invite Tom Murphy to complete installation of planting beds so the memorial looks complete for the time being.

- Work with Tom, committee members, and Supervisor Stanley in summer 2024 to determine landscaping plans and next steps for 2025 budget planning and a 2025 work plan whether that work is done by volunteers, town employees, or contracted out.

Update on naming opportunity for Upper Jay park:

- Olivia has asked neighbors and library volunteers who have known this park since it was created. No one remembers it ever having a name.
- Olivia will ask Town Historian Sharron Hewston if there is anything on record.
- Olivia will reach out to Marlene Prescott's family to see if they have talked more together about this opportunity.

New Business:

JEMS concert series at Jay Village Green:

- For 2024, JEMS has reduced their concert series from weekly to monthly for a total of three concerts this summer.
- This was changed as a result of budget constraints, difficulty finding available musicians, and a change of focus by JEMS to community events in their building such as movie nights and dance parties.
- Olivia noted that 2022 community survey about Jay parks showed that the Village Green is the most visit town park and the JEMS concerts is the most frequently attended event in town parks.
- Olivia in conversation with JEMS about their interest/capacity in returning to weekly concerts in 2024 and options for doing so, including changing the night from Saturday to a less competitive night and/or asking the town for funding from the occupancy tax.

Douglas Memorial Park tennis/basketball court upgrades:

- Olivia shared updates from Supervisor Stanley on funding source and timing of grant awards:
 - Town of Jay applied for a \$125,000 grant from the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York (dasny.org), which provides construction, financing, and allied services which serve the public good of New York State.
 - Supervisor Stanley sourced a quote from Fuller Excavating in Plattsburgh to create a budget for the grant application.
 - The grant application will go through state legislature committees. No clear timeline on when grant awards will be announced. Optimistic that because Jay's Assemblymember Billy Jones is a member of the majority party the grant will be approved and funds will be received soon after.
 - If/when the grant is awarded, there will be terms that will inform the town's bid process.
- Discussion proposed upgrades in Fuller quote:
 - Concerns about impact of 24/7 lighting on residents living near the park and wildlife in the area.

- 24/7 lighting not guaranteed to reduce instances of drug use and vandalism in the park. Town could put up signs about park hours and when the area is closed for use, but the town does not have a means to enforce this.
- The town should consider how an enlarged footprint for the courts would impact river health and flood prevention.
- Need to plan for long-term maintenance in terms of work and costs.
- With regards to surface, current asphalt surface gets too hot to use during summer daytime hours. Recommend looking at other surfaces that would allow more use.
- Discussion of an “open house” community event at Douglas Memorial Park this fall to get community feedback on plans.
 - Could use tape, flags, or field paint to mark out planned footprint of new courts.

Discussion of Children’s Playground:

- Paul and Grace discussed replacement basin for children’s water play area.
 - Original basin came from a company that is now out of business.
 - Can’t use a trough designed for animals because these are 12 inches deep and it’s not safe for kids.
- Sand surface in play area was a durable and cost-effective (donation by Ben Straight) solution when playground created. Now may be time to look at replacement surface as there are gravel and rocks mixed into the sand in years since.
- For 2025 volunteer day, need to aerate ground around the water play area so it doesn’t get water-logged.

Followup for next meeting:

- Knut will send info about allowed uses on FEMA properties to committee members.
- Paul will continue looking for replacement basin at Children’s Playground.