

**New Hartford Recreation**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, March 13, 2019**

**Call to Order:** 7:01 pm

**Members Present:** Joe Petrarca, Arnie Helt, Ed McCann, Jeremy Schaller, Greg O'Brien

**Members Absent:** Mark McCarthy, Linda Aquavia

**Others Present:** Recreation Director Christy Tellier, Pam Fitzgerald, Allison Murdock

Meeting was called to order at 7:01pm

**Opportunity For Public Comment:**

Allison Murdock introduced herself as the Chair of the New Hartford Conservation Commission since 1993. She has been overseeing the habitat and natural resources at Brodie Park since 2006, at which time she had provided the town a mowing plan. In 2007, a brochure about Brodie Park South was distributed with a trail map and listed permitted uses of the area. Ms. Murdock brought along maps to show the originally identified mowing area around the perimeter of the field. The group also developed the Frank Kearney Trail. The fields at Brodie South are a bird nesting habitat area and she would like to restore the nesting areas and mowing plan that was established in 2007.

Ms. Murdock stated that the football program killed the bird nesting area. Changes in town administration changed the mowing schedule of the fields between 2004 – 2013. She stated that she was told her proposed changes would be made, but they have not been. Ms. Murdock would like just one mowed trail around the outer most edge of the entire field area, leaving the rest as a meadow, only being mowed once per year in late fall.

Arnie stated he was opposed to her proposal. The area had been farm land back in the 1950's prior to the Brodie's purchasing the parcel. After the Brodie's purchased it and created Camp Berkshire, the area became a 9 hole golf course with manicured lawns and remained as such until 1986 when the process of the area becoming a town park began. Arnie added that there is a large meadow / field directly across the street at a private residence. In all his time at the park, he has never once saw a bobolink. The current mowing pattern leaves approximately 2 football fields of meadowed area, with the rest being cut for recreational use. Arnie stated that there is no history of it ever being a bird sanctuary. Ms. Murdock responded by saying birds had been there before 2006 when football destroyed the area, and the mowing plan has now been maintained.

Joe stated that the Commission is open to hearing her proposal and the matter would be considered and discussed. Ms. Murdock stated that it was her understanding that the mowing

schedule is implemented by the town. It was presented, voted on and accepted as policy and public works was overseeing the process.

Joe stated that there are other interests in the park besides the Conservation Commission. Many residents use the area for picnicking, hiking, and walking. Other groups have expressed interest in other ways to use the park, from occasional sports practices to building a dog park, among other things.

Ms. Murdock stated that the subsequent proposal she has put forth as a restoration plan was from 2012 and was previously accepted by the Board of Selectmen. She is asking that the mowing occur less frequently, and just the perimeter should be mowed. She recommended every other week mowing of just the perimeter, and she suggested it would help save time and fuel costs. The entire meadow should only be mowed annually in late October. Some nesting birds can have more than 1 fledgling. Joe asked what kind of birds might nest there, Ms. Murdock responded stating that bobolinks, eastern meadowlark, and redwing blackbirds are common for the area. Greg asked if they were migrating or nesting. Ms. Murdock stated that they nest from May – September/October, but they haven't been able to for the last couple years due to the encroachment on their nesting area.

Joe stated that the unmowed area has not changed much over time. Arnie asked what the minimum square foot per bird is. Ms. Murdock stated that in 2010, the birds were still nesting. Joe asked if the birds nest in just that immediate area of Brodie Park, or if the nest elsewhere as well. Ms. Murdock was unsure, adding that the area had been a habitat for them, but she didn't know where they are or where they go, and they must nest somewhere. Greg asked if the birds have not been spotted, and they moved to more favorable location, why should we radically change what we have been doing in the hopes they might return if they've already relocated? Ms. Fitzgerald asked why they left in the first place. Ms. Murdock stated that the town started mowing more. Ms. Fitzgerald asked when the last count was and Ms. Murdock responded that there was a watch done in 2013. She added that there is no point in mowing the meadow area and walkers can stay on the edge.

Ms. Murdock stated that Dan Legeyt had been in charge of implementing the mowing plan originally and the amount of birds is dependent on the area that is available. Arnie commented he felt there was enough room left for the birds. Joe stated that the parks are for all of the residents in town to enjoy, and the Recreation Commission is striving for a balance of inclusion and multiple use for all. Ms. Murdock stated that she did not want people to stay out, with Joe asking if she thought the space should only be used to observe birds. Ms. Murdock stated that people can still walk and hike on the trails and the perimeter. Jeremy asked if the area she was looking to modify was indicated on the map she provided. There is an area marked that could be mowed 2x per month, and the remaining areas should be left to grow. Ms. Murdock stated that she could compromise if the area was mowed just up to the center row of trees. Joe stated that he would familiarize himself with the study and the Rec Commission would consider her proposal.

Ms. Murdock out at 7:25.

Pam Fitzgerald was present on behalf of Brodie Park, Inc., clarifying that just the logo is @brodiepark. She wanted to update the commission on their events. Neighborhood Food Crawl is coming up in April. She provided one complimentary ticket per member. Ed responded saying he didn't think they would be allowed to accept free tickets. Christy to check into the matter. The food crawl has 4 restaurants participating. People purchase tickets and each restaurant provides a different item at their location, and the person would go restaurant to restaurant. Portabellos, BLT, Michel Angelos, and Parrot Delaney are participating. Ms. Fitzgerald stated that tickets will be on sale on the newly redone website for prepurchase, and at the restaurant the day of for an increased price.

Ms. Fitzgerald stated she saw the article about the Cub Scouts needing repairs on their cabin. She has reached out to Mary Coburn, but has yet to hear back. Arnie stated that representatives came to the last meeting to provide a plan, but weren't specifically asking for anything. Ms. Fitzgerald stated that she was willing to partner to raise funds, but needs someone to respond to her. Joe provided Billy Applewhite's information to Ms. Fitzgerald. Greg asked if the Cub Scouts were supposed to upkeep their own building. There was discussion explaining that the individual groups are responsible for their own buildings, but in this instance, it hadn't been done by the predecessors, and now there is a good deal of work to do.

Arnie asked if there was any communication with the old friends of Brodie. Ms. Fitzgerald stated there had not been and they decided not to pursue it because they were not communicating back with them. There has not been any communication between the 2 groups.

Discussion was had about parking during the events at the park – New Hartford Day, and other events. It was asked that one week prior to an event, to have a coordinator get in touch of the Parks Dept. to discuss parking. Joe stated that the Rec Commission should be included in the planning process. Ed stated that the rain last year did damage to the fields and people were unaware of the extent of the damage. It shouldn't be a big impact, but small adjustments to parking needed to be made. Ms. Fitzgerald stated that the Boy Scouts do the parking and they have been working to make it more efficient for the Scouts. Some of the adults make it difficult for the boys and they are trying to plan better to alleviate some of the issues.

**Correspondence:**

None

**Update on Old Business:**

Lights at Berkshire Hall parking lot have been adjusted so the timer is coming on correctly. Christy fixed the timer issue. However, the lights in the main lot do not appear to be working. It has been mentioned and will be addressed.

Dave Helt, Highway Superintendent and Arnie looked for the bear under the cabin. She does not appear to have wintered there this year.

Nurses cabin roof has been covered with tarps, and repairs need to be made to correct the leaks soon.

Bunny Day is coming up on April 13.

**Financials:**

A brief review of financials were given. Everything is in order. An explanation of the different reports was provided to Greg as a new commission member.

**New Business:**

Greg was introduced as the newest member of the Recreation Commission. He has been in town 13 years and is excited to be a part of the group.

**Approval of Minutes:**

Minutes were tabled.

Arnie made a motion to adjourn at 8:24 pm seconded by Greg. All in favor, motion passes.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Christy Tellier  
Recreation Director