

**TOWN OF LA POINTE
SPECIAL TOWN MEETING
FRIDAY, JUNE 10, 2011
AT TOWN HALL AT 5:00 PM**

Called to order at 5:04 PM

Board members present: Beth Fischlowitz, Jim Patterson, Greg Nelson, Ham Ross, Larry Whalen

Members of the public present: Sign up sheets attached

A written request was received by the Clerk of the Town of La Pointe requesting a Special Town Meeting for the purpose of discussing and possibly taking action concerning the use, possible improvements and expansion of the town park located on Big Bay Road.

The petition having been signed by a number of electors equal to not less than 10% of the votes cast in the Town for governor at the last general election, and pursuant to Wisconsin Statute 60.12, that meeting shall occur at the above stated date, time and location.

Greg Nelson gave a brief history of the Big Bay Town Park CUP from the perspective of the Town Board as follows: these improvements have been considered for years. There were many complaints last year, and so the Board began figuring out a plan—which included delineation, engineering, etc. Town Foreman Sowl was ready to apply for grants, but to do that, the Town had to have a plan. The Town began the preliminary planning when the Zoning Administrator informed them that a Conditional Use Permit [CUP] would be required. The Town was just trying to create a plan for grant funding, and the improvements will depend on funding.

Beth Fischlowitz said that she considers herself a “major champion of the Town Park.” It is the Town’s biggest & best asset—the crown jewel of the Apostle islands. As an owner, the Town has an obligation to care for it. Some upgrades are necessary and worth doing. The Park currently takes in \$20,000 a year; it could be taking in \$50,000 a year: the loss of revenue, in her opinion, is largely due to the lack of a reservation system. She emphasized that there has never been any implication that the Town Board would do anything that isn’t paid for by grants.

Ham Ross stated that he believes in “minimalism” when it comes to the Town Park. “The Town Park needs a few small repairs.” He stated that the Town is not in the hotel business; that some improvements are needed, but that it doesn’t need to be turned into a commercial venture. And he definitely opposes the “RV Park.”

Jim Patterson reminded everyone that there have already been two public hearings on this topic, but he felt that hearing a few more people is a good idea. He stated that the Town Park needs improvements, and in that regard he wanted to hear from the townspeople.

Larry Whalen stated that the plan grew out of a need for flush toilets and showers and that that was all that was ever discussed.

Greg Nelson stated that Larry Whalen is wrong: RV sites were clearly discussed at a Town Board meeting. He further stated that the mound system for the toilets has to go on the west side of Highway H; therefore, the RV sites might as well go there as well.

Larry Whalen acknowledged that there was discussion regarding the RV sites.

Lois Carlson read a letter [on file] supporting the upgrades and reservation system. “In view of the current economy, it would be foolish for the Town not to improve this revenue stream.” She encouraged the Town to support business.

Burke Henry asked about the engineering costs and how that’s been paid for.

Keith Sowl responded that \$15,000 has been spent so far.

Henry asked what the funding source was.

Keith Sowl responded that the cost had been budgeted.

Henry pointed out that the Town Board had voted for the budget. He then asked if the Park is negative—in other words, do the taxpayers cover the lost revenue.

Greg Nelson responded that the parks make money.

Burke Henry stated that the cost of the improvements should not come out of property taxes or borrowing: the payback could extend over 15-20 years and would have to be paid back with property taxes. He supports improvements.

Ted Pallas pointed out that Big Bay State Park has 60 camp sites and spends \$4500 on garbage removal. The Town needs to look at those expenses as well.

Beth Fischlowitz stated that people who bring RV's to the Island will spend money in Town, & Island businesses will make money. Also, the survey regarding Big Bay Town Park that was conducted last summer was no secret.

Robin Trinko-Russell stated that the Town Board shouldn't just look at revenue from the tourists; Islanders use the Park too. She read a letter [on file] the main points of which are as follows: the Park is an outstanding attraction and an important source of lodging which provides jobs and therefore tax dollars. The recent loss of lodging on the Island makes the RV sites key to the upgrade plan. The national ratio of RV to primitive campers is not reflected at Big Bay Town Park. She spoke of the current unprofessional way in which the rental of campsites is handled, which is not good in attracting return visitors.

Mike Starck read from a letter [on file] in which he stated that he favors the Town Plan Commission recommendation. He further stated that *the CEDS* list shows 10.7 million dollars in upgrades around Town. These documents exist because the Town has to have a plan.

Keith Sowl read from a letter [on file] in which he stated that he disagrees with the perceived fears of the impact of improvements to Big Bay Town Park. He also pointed out that the "RV sites" merely mean that the sites are RV compatible. He disagrees with the TPC recommendation.

Tim Eldred congratulated the TPC on its responsiveness to the community. He is opposed to the CUP & the Big Bay Town Park Master Plan. He feels that the Park does need improvements, but that the public's only opportunity for input has been reactive in nature: there has been no chance for proactive involvement from the public. He feels that with active participation from the public the plan would have been better received. He drew upon comparisons to the Comprehensive Plan & the current Harbor project, where input from the public was/is pursued. He stated that the dollars spent so far will not have been a waste if the Town includes the public in future planning.

Gwen Smith-Patterson stated that the Park must remain free of charge.

Greg Nelson stated that he questions why the Town must issue itself a CUP. He pointed out that a decision has to be made tonight (6/10/11) as the Town Board has 21 days to respond to the TPC, and the 21 days are up. He also stated that when the Town initiated the feasibility study & engineering, they were just trying to provide more information to the Town.

Robin Trinko-Russell pointed out that people want to use the Park for free, yet they don't want to pay the taxes to support it.

Greg Nelson pointed out that the TPC gave the Town a CUP for improvements that could have been done without a CUP. Any conditions can be put into a CUP.

Keith Sowl gave a history of the Park: the beach was purchased in 1942 and a highway was laid to the beach. Owning only the beach proved to be inadequate; so in 1956 there was a petition for a Special Town Meeting for the purpose of purchasing Lot 4 for recreational purposes. He further stated that the "process might have been better, but to say there's been no planning & input is absurd."

Tim Eldred asked if the improvements can still be done if the CUP is denied.

Greg Nelson answered yes, but to do that would limit the grants.

Judi Patterson stated that the money has been spent and that the Town Board has to look at the big picture.

Marjie Frederickson pointed out the danger of heavy pedestrian traffic due to people from the RV sites crossing the road to get to the beach.

Linda Fuller reiterated the safety issue. She also said that there has been plenty of opportunity for public input.

Arnie Nelson stated that he would like to see RV's come to the Island: they're quiet & they spend money in town. He pointed out that the current economy has been hard on Islanders and that the Town Board needs to do whatever it can to provide commerce.

Paul Brummer stated that he wishes the Town Board would listen to the Town Plan Commission.

Charley Brummer asked the Town Board to take into account the comments made at the two public hearings held by the TPC.

Madeleine Karwoski stated that the Island needs jobs—anything to help tourism. She also stated that the Chamber of Commerce would favor a reservation system.

Dick Hardie favors flush toilets. He stated that the improvements to the park can be done correctly: start small. He also pointed out that tourism is "what we do."

Evan Erickson added that RV campers are quiet & respectful. Right now the park is uncontrolled, noisy & dirty. He added that the current RV sites are too small.

Dick Hardie added that the parking situation at the park has to be remedied. He suggested angle parking.

Carey Baxter pointed out that currently not all sites are filled; he asked how the Town intends to fill more.

Greg Nelson responded that that's why we need a reservation system.

Motion by Keith Sowl/second by Mike Starck to recommend to the Town Board to amend the TPC decision to include everything in the Big Bay Town Park Master Plan and issue a CUP for same.

Margretta Kusch asked if the reservation system can be implemented regardless of the CUP.

Burke Henry pointed out that Master Plan does not have anything about how the Plan is to be paid for and that needs to be addressed.

Mike Starck asked if that wouldn't come out in the budget cycle.

Burke Henry responded that there should be some guidance given to the Town Board in this regard.

Greg Nelson said that he would have no problem with language being added regarding funding.

Keith Sowl asked that the CUP be approved for a campground on Town property no larger than the footprint of the current park.

Sara Owen said that she does not favor anything on the west side of County H.

Burke Henry/Keith Sowl added to the motion: funding for the Big Bay Town Park Master Plan is to be done with the most significantly from sources other than the tax levy."

Ayes: 26 Naves: 16 Abstain: 2 Motion carries.

Motion to adjourn. Mike Starck/Ham Ross. Motion carries unanimously.

Adjourned at 6:32 PM

Approved as submitted on 4/16/13

Patty Hobin, Town Clerk