



**Town of Amherst
Amherst Central Park Guidance Task Force
MINUTES**

Thursday, January 7 | 3-5pm (via Zoom)

Attendees:

TASK FORCE MEMBERS		RESOURCES	
X	Kulpa, Brian	X	Pouli, Mary-Diana
X	Bruch Bucki, Debbie	X	Abel, Melissa
X	Dandes, Jonathan	X	Brown, Capt. Kevin
X	Kramer, Randall	X	Howard, Dan
X	Duquin, Richard	X	Rizzo, Dan
X	Bannon, Anthony		
X	Gardner, Tim	OTHER	
X	Edelman, Enid	X	Winship, Maggie
X	Snyder-Haas, Jennifer	X	McMahon, Joe
X	Hartrich, Nate	X	Kost, Ellen
X	Bushen Quinn	X	Szatkowski, Jeff
X	Alnutt, Mark	X	Yates, Julie
	O'Brien, Chris	X	Dover, Victor
		X	Groves, Amy
		X	Kohl, Joseph

I. Welcome - roll call

II. Process review and timeline for ACP Project

- a. Timeline (attachment A) reviewed by B Kulpa to provide understanding of the past planning efforts of the ACP project thus far
 - The environmental science of straightening out legal and financial transaction is still in front of us; we still have work to do
 - We will be briefing Town Board in an Executive Session on 1/19 on current state of the negotiation, and hopefully will head toward resolution in first quarter of 2021
 - The plan has been accepted by ourselves and the principal partners of Mensch and Uniland as a benchmark; this is the taking off point for what we are doing now
 - Back in June 2019, we were able to go through successful Home Rule Bill in Albany to alienate part of Audubon, part of the golf course and part of the

Northtown Center ball diamonds so we can involve them in future transactions with Mensch to create an offset for the acquisition of Westwood

- D Bucki – we did sign on again with Hancock, et al who represented us in 2015, and are familiar with WW issues; they got us connected with an engineering services from Rochester which was a good move going forward to plow ahead with how to approach these issues and land; 2017 was quite involved and an environmental study that was done of the whole area; we have the report we approved in 2017 of how to move forward
- B Kulpa – as Town Board changed over, the Youth & Recreation department completed a Parks survey and master plan that was subject to public survey; as it was being completed, we needed to get vision out there; we had media/papers to push the message and concept out publicly; early on, it was met with a little hesitation and question, but since then it has been as widely received by people; it was a matter of promoting through community meetings, which we had about 10 a year for the past 3 years plus big town-wide meetings that were published online and through media; we used those meetings to draw feedback in addition to stakeholder meetings
- T Bannon – what is the fine-tuning in the work ‘alienate’ with respect to Audubon?
- B Kulpa - under state law if you want to transfer parkland, you have to declare to NYS you want to sell it; then NYS Legislature has to allow you as a government to alienate it or declare that it is not parkland so you can transfer it

III. Dover Kohl presents park concept

- a. B Kulpa – Dover Kohl has been retained to do additional work for us; they will be with us with bringing the gun club into the mix; they have seen all your committee comments
- b. V Dover – this (past) has been a great focused example of the reality of collaborative planning and dealing with a wide variety of stakeholders with different perspectives and desires; found it fascinating to listen to all the interviews, comments, etc. and see how eager everyone is to work within, and adjust for, the requirements that other stakeholders brought; a good example of when a community sticks to it until they figure it out; we are looking forward to balancing all the ideas into the best possible blend
- c. A Groves/V Dover – [presented concept/plan PowerPoint]
 - Link to recording of meeting/presentation for details:
https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/play/hpzxOpfsd_txethOiTu3mU6vp98tnXt-q9lF5dBidPDjPvRYeV0HbKLVo08s9JPe6SMrclWSNh7imCg.xNehMvWPh6wOsLkn
- d. B Kulpa – let’s now provide your reaction to this and ideas for gun club
- e. M Alnutt – this is to UB’s advantage; brings more people to our front door with more youth sports opportunities; being able to have this vibrant type of community close is a great partnership with UB’s athletics; possibilities are endless; only concern is parking and traffic and how we deal with the circulation of that
- f. B Kulpa – I talked with Rep Higgins who said ‘you have never been able to access UB North Campus before, but now you are connecting it’; the idea that all K-12 schools in Amherst and local colleges use sports facilities, this is opportunity to celebrate youth athletics and college athletics by displaying throughout the complex, i.e., banners, etc.; with the Maplemere Road extension, we need the drop-off center on Amherst Manor – configured to handle the traffic; we should sign the complex at Amherst Manor and Maple and make

- the circulation pattern on the interior rather than a cross-through; also allows us to keep the ballfield in play for another spring
- g. V Dover – the amendment lets us rotate the parking garage 90 degrees so we can make the whole site more permeable for pedestrians moving around, allowing people to access more places they are going; this solution of rotating the garage gives us better traffic circulation
 - h. T Bannon – have kind of plumbing (infrastructure) to take care of electronic and digital needs; should consider having wifi throughout and electronic plumbing in areas in which we might want to use with out-of-building out lets for projecting, video/audio, etc.
 - i. B Kulpa – we are talking with Verizon about a town-wide network for wifi for public use; electronic media for the arts allows things to be done in all areas of the park night or day
 - j. B Kulpa – referring to the Westwood image, what are thoughts about moving people around and shifting the roadway away from the fairways homes toward the Par 3 course?
 - k. V Dover – we are now getting to things we meant to draw in these concepts, a good example is the forestation / tree line along the western edge which was always in our heads that we got to draw now; it's a park design project where you are doing, say the intersection of Maple and the park access roads - the street designs have to look in advance of various things; we look at the Westwood site as an opportunity to really give Maple Road an upgrade
 - l. J Snyder-Haas – what do you mean by forestation line? What does this mean?
 - m. V Dover – a great opportunity, strategically, to restrict extreme views as appropriate; we always thought more trees should be planted in a way to add to the sense of privacy and views from adjacent houses
 - n. J Snyder – I thought it was a beautiful natural park, but residents should not be shielded from it and not a line of demarcation; why are there roads on Westwood at all? I attended a lot of these meetings and no one said they wanted cars on Westwood; I don't see a purpose if this is all going to be natural. Why would you drive out there, park your car on a road, and then walk on a trail? Will there be parking out there? What is the purpose of the roads?
 - o. B Kulpa – like the Poet's Walk at NYC Central Park; a road that's closed with pedestrians to use but if you need to put a truck out there for repair, install something like temporary art installation, event or a food truck, you still have the infrastructure of a street; a street doesn't just have to be just vehicle, it could be blocked off 9 days out of 10 for just pedestrians, but it could be need for certain other purposes, i.e., maintenance, etc.
 - p. V Dover – on the diagram, the white line isn't meant to be a heavy thoroughfare; compare it to the drive that goes through Fairmont Park in Philly (Forbidden Drive), only used for special occasion; or for example, a call for a first responder; these do not have to be wide open streets encouraging drivers, but rather for deliveries, to support events, or other reason etc.
 - q. J Snyder-Haas - regarding special events [this is my main point of Westwood], look at the homes that surround it; it's not the place for special moments or public events where people are driving to them whether it's limited times of the year or otherwise; looking at Audubon where the 9-hole is, that's so much more accessible to the public; I'm confused why that wasn't looked at as an option; I did a proposal where I had the loop on Audubon closer to UB that could be a running/walking loop right off Maple; look at the long approach on N Forest all the way around and into the heart, that's not accessible; Audubon at Maple is right there with parking already; from a public accessibility and neighborhood standpoint, that's really the place to put this loop and other features; I

- don't see Westwood as compatible with this at all; I went to a lot of the meetings and no one even would want this ginormous loop of traffic on Westwood; it makes me shutter; such as beautiful and natural area, I can't imagine introducing vehicular traffic to it
- r. B Kulpa – it's not trafficked, but more of an access; bottom line is just to fundamentally move things like trash cans, etc, you need a pathway you can put a vehicle on
 - s. J Snyder-Haas - how did the golf course function all these years without vehicular roads running through them?
 - t. B Kulpa - they were driving right over the fairways
 - u. Capt Brown - from a public safety access, we need to have access back there – it's a very large parcel of land and we need to get back there on a daily basis to patrol to ensure no public safety issues; for some of the events like 5Ks, as part of our planning for traffic and control, we are constantly looking for areas to get them off the roadways so it doesn't obstruct traffic; having some larger pathways that we can use for those events are beneficial; those paths are very vital for the Police to patrol
 - v. J Snyder-Haas – on the security point with the road behind the homes, it's a security risk; people will go back there; I think a road behind homes is a security issue; don't understand the resistance of considering moving the more active elements to Audubon – more accessible and easier to patrol; don't know why we are not talking about with everything else; we need an 18-hole course, so why not put the running loop closer to UB; I like the eastern end of Audubon; a loop would add more sense and synergy; with the long approach for a 5K, you're going to get all the people from that circle all the way in there; would be a more intuitive design sense at Audubon; at least consider it and not taking it off the table
 - w. B Kulpa – what do others on the committee think?
 - x. N Hartrich – I like it; I think it's a good idea; you want a spot where people can walk around and feel safe and not have issues with vehicular traffic, but you have to have access for Police and food trucks; it looks much better than before from the summer design
 - y. R Kramer – I agree; as a suggestion - from someone who walks all over the country, you want to be able to have a walkway without vehicular traffic, but understand the need for access; any way that you can mark the trails? I can't tell the difference from where the cars drive into the clubhouse/theater area or the entire loop; if there was a way to mark it as 'no vehicle access' (other than what is needed) and not public access; others who live in the area will have the same question; so get out ahead of it and indicate it is meant to be a walking area
 - z. B Kulpa – Amy Groves, maybe change the shade of the pathway on the image?
 - aa. V Dover – there is just the small area reserved for golf in the NE corner of Westwood, not the 18-hole course as was discussed; given the Town wants to support golf, how is the Town looking at golf alternatives? Also, the changing nature of golf—dedicated golfers golf less often than they were 20-30 years ago; the # of golfers in the US dropped by a third in the last 15 years; important that we have an answer of where golf will go; related to the question about other activities bring people (i.e, a 5K), we received a note that said they would not want a 5K in the park, but we should hear from others to double check that with more of the group and see whether Westwood is a place where you do want people there or you do want people around on event days
 - bb. J. McMahon - operationally for these 5Ks and gatherings, there is a focus on Main Street in Williamsville around Town Hall, we want to find places where we don't have to block traffic, close streets and use our Police/Fire/Highway dept for this; these parks that have

long extended pathways can create a better environment for these events; the events are during daytime when it's light outside; I would think these events when scheduled properly during the day will satisfy the concerns of the community of not allowing that park to have access at night; since it's a public park, there is a closing time when the police can monitor and control it

- cc. M Winship – as a new mom, there are very few place where I can put the stroller in the car and get out an walk; when I see pavement there, I can do a big loop and get excited
- dd. B Kulpa - to answer the golf question, we've been working as a Town on a concept – we own 2 courses, this one and Oakwood – there is an existing course called Glen Oak to purchase or elaborate, but this year changed the fortunes of golf courses in the area; simultaneous to us wanting to think about a course, the BNHV came to us and said we are doing well, we've got museum buildings and artisans here, but we really need food service and a new center; we looked at Oakwood around it, and the Board really looked at this and do a shared building between the BNHV and the golf course – became a logical thing as it's on the heritage trail and canal way; it makes sense for us to do a course at Oakwood; we put out an RFP wondering if anyone would be interested in developing and operating a new course thinking we could get 1 response and we got 5, 3 of which are from the country's best golf companies; the reality is maybe a high-end estimate of 10% of our population plays golf of our 126,000 people; Audubon course sees about 600 rounds of golf a week - it's not the best use of land in the dead center of town; as a Board, we made a decision to put golf in the NE corner of the town where we have land availability and complimentary aspects to it, but keep golf in terms of a condensed 9-hole the schools can use for training, that people can still play at the center of town, along with the 'gamification' of golf
- ee. J Snyder-Haas – putting a 9-hole mainly for youth groups is even more exclusive; why put a 9-hole for an even more narrow slice of the population when you can just do a 18 for everybody
- ff. B Kulpa – it's a 9-hole for anybody, but youth orgs need direct access to 9-holes
- gg. J Snyder – if you have an 18 then anyone can go play 9; an 18 would serve the whole....
- hh. B Kulpa - We are going to have an 18, but we are not going to put it in the middle of the Town where a lot of people want to walk, hike, etc; the demand from Covid is people want more access to space; we have data that shows a massive increase in use of space at Nature View Park, we've seen massive increases in Amherst State Park, and we can tell that because we can track cell phone pings in those areas; the overwhelming use function is not golf, but we want to create a good opportunity for municipal golf on terms that don't exclude other people from using the facility
- ii. J Snyder-Haas – the expense/cost of doing Oakwood – you only have a 9 holes there – you would have to clear the land; are we going to do a cost analysis of the land, it would be expensive? At Westwood you already have the design; it's already there
- jj. B Kulpa – in order to put golf on Westwood we would have to do a higher-level remediation than if we left it a park with trails, and that's not cheap; that's part of what it comes down to - Westwood is a brownfield; if anyone else on the committee feels differently about this, we would look at this; I look to the committee to see if we should be dealing with Westwood as a golf course or should be continue down the path we are on?
- kk. J Snyder-Haas – I put a lot of the materials out; it wouldn't just be a golf course; I did envision a nature park on the side of the creek; I love the idea of the running loop, you don't want to walk through mud but rather asphalt; but a better placement of that would

- be on Audubon, even swinging the 9 to Westwood and the road and running loop on Audubon would seem to be a better fit
- ll. B Kulpa – the difference is we don't have to change 9 holes at Audubon; we can basically leave the majority of the holes in place and not have to reconfigure; again, does anyone on the committee feel differently about that?
 - mm. Q Bushen – I like the plans we have been working the past few months that I've seen so far; I would like to move forward on those plans
 - nn. N Hartrich – we did a town-wide survey in 2017 and it showed where golf ranked with everyone in the town, and it was very much lower than parks and recreation, and green space, and open space to go to; not sure if everyone looked at it but it gave a hierarchy of where everyone in Amherst sees things; Covid has proven that we need that; everyone is boxed in these days; more from the 2017 survey to now, there is more people who go to parks now; the people I represent in Morningside homeowners (1200 people) feel the same
 - oo. B Kulpa – we want to think about how the gun club, which has not been dealt with but represents a fifth of the overall land volume, is incorporated into this; my question is before Dover Kohl delves into this, is there anything you think would make sense and would want to incorporate into its usage?
 - pp. J Dandes – any indication of what the current owners' long-range plan is with the land?
 - qq. B Kulpa – it's not just student housing, but could be a component of it; they own land that is zoned general business which is generally a zoning function we've been trying to get rid of; they see it as valuable land within this park but they understand the need to make their property mesh with the park concept; they also gave us a cursory nod of entertaining leasing us space for the ball fields while we reconfigure things; they are flexible in looking for options now
 - rr. J Dandes – so is it safe to say there is a short-range plan in terms of use of the property versus something on a long-term basis?
 - ss. B Kulpa – they would be willing to give us access on short term; they value the land accordingly
 - tt. M Winship – the size of American Campus Housing is a huge real estate firm; we lucky to have a conversation open with them and hopefully be able to master plan this with them; end of the day, it's what they perceive the value of the property to be
 - uu. T Gardner – sent picture in the chat of an idea –Sports Force Park in Sandusky OH - multi-sport turf fields (screen shared); regarding the Amherst Recommission, a very productive sports facility busy all year round; they will partition off the fields for little league; this could save a lot of problems; if we consider something like this it could be lucrative for the Town
 - vv. B Kulpa – we talked about 8 softball facilities; I can see the flexibility being something of interest; it's nice how you enter this facility with single point of entry and gateway/threshold; the goal is to give kids something they can be excited and proud of
 - ww. D Bucki – point of clarification – if we were to acquire gun club, would that affect where you put the fieldhouse?
 - xx. B Kulpa – we won't acquire it, but if we may be able to get them to consider their placement of...if rezoning action...we may get them to add a green space that could be conjoined; I don't know the shape of this is; we have to let some of the development ideas play out
 - yy. D Bucki – when talking about the central lawn area, it reminds me of a university campus (Yale as an example); I like what I saw as far as placement of fieldhouse

- zz. V Dover – the gun club is so strategic; adds a quality of life to people on Maple; need to work on this; the band of development on either side of the law allows for development; the parks give you opportunities for grand open spaces; this is your chance to get your version of NY Central Park or Delaware Park; gun club land would make things more intimate, a nice chance to connect things in a way that is complimentary
- aaa. B Kulpa – would like to have everyone take this on as work – go back and think about the gun club and where it sits proximately to where we are doing private development, where we are doing park space, and Maple road; imagine the stretch of Maple re-greened

IV. Update – Gun Club

- a. Able to get American Campus Housing to the table
- b. Will be moving forward with involving them in planning process
- c. Dover Kohl will meet with American Campus Housing
- d. We will have opportunity for Task Force members to provide input about uses for that site
- e. Will be folding the Gun Club into master plan in 2021 for overall area
- f. *See oo. through aaa. above*

V. Update – Conservancy

- a. No update at this time; S Sliwa (Town Attorney) will be included in the next Task Force meeting to provide an update

VI. Action Items/next steps

- a. Next meeting: January 28, 3pm via Zoom

VII. Meeting adjourned

Attachment A

Town of Amherst | Amherst Central Park *Timeline*

2018	
January	State of the Town: Discussed vision for ACP
March	Meeting w/Mensch- agreed to suspend law suit
April	Community Meeting (Eggertsville)
April	Community Meeting (Williamsville)
May	Community Meeting (Snyder)
May	Community Meeting (Main-Transit)
May	Community Meeting (East Amherst)
May	Community Meeting (Ellicott Creek)
May	Community Meeting (Getzville)
May	Community Meeting (Audubon)
May	Community Meeting (North Amherst)
May	Community Meeting (Swormville)
August	Keep Westwood Green meeting/presentation
October	Meeting w/Keep Westwood Green leadership
November	Keep Westwood Green meeting/presentation
2019	
January	State of the Town: Discussed continued vision for ACP
March	Keep Westwood Green meeting/presentation
April	Meeting w/Mensch to discuss Town's vision
May	Keep Westwood Green meeting/presentation
June – August	Seven (7) Consultant-facilitated Focus Groups for Arts, Senior Housing, Sports, Golf, Town Square, Park Design, Maple Road
June	Community Meeting (Eggertsville)
July	Community Meeting (Snyder)
August	Community Meeting (Williamsville)
August	Community Meeting (Main-Transit)
August	Keep Westwood Green meeting/presentation
September	Community Meeting (open to any; sole focus ACP)
September	Meeting w/Mensch to present feedback from community
October	Community Meeting (North Amherst)
November	Community Meeting (Ellicott Creek)
November	Meeting w/Mensch: ACP Sports Facility
November	Keep Westwood Green meeting/presentation
December	Focus Group re: Sports Facility/Field House ideas
December	Community Meeting (North Bailey)
December	Meeting w/developers, Rec Commission reps re: ACP Sports/Rec facility
2020	
January	Community Meeting (East Amherst/Swormville)
January	State of the Town: Discussed continued vision for ACP
January	Meeting w/Uniland for discussion of 5 th rink
March	Supervisor's Focus Group (random residents)
March	Keep Westwood Green meeting/presentation
May	ACP Planning
June	Conceptual Plan meeting
June	Keep Westwood Green meeting/presentation

June	Inbrief meeting with Dover Kohl
July	Stakeholder meetings with Dover Kohl and ToA
July	Meeting with Labor
July	Keep Westwood Green meeting/presentation
July	Meeting w/Jon Dandes
July 30	Task Force kick-off meeting
July	Meeting with Town Attorney re: ACP Task Force
August	Meeting with Labor
August	Walking Tour of Westwood for Task Force
August 13	Task Force meeting
August	J Dandes & D Rizzo meeting re: project planning
August	Meeting re: Parcel Value
August 27	Task Force meeting
October	Conservancy discussion
October	Conservancy discussion (internal)
October	Youth & Recreation meeting re: past/current projects related to ACP
October 8	Task Force meeting
October	Planning Dept meeting re: past/current projects related to ACP
November	ACP Workshop w/Supervisor and Town Dept Heads
November	ACP Sports Schedules/Costs
November	J Dandes / Supervisor – update meeting
November 5	Task Force meeting
November	Sweet Home Central School re: financial district updates
December 3	Task Force meeting
December	Conservancy meeting w/Town Attorney
December	Timeline discussion
December	Task Force meeting