



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

Thursday, February 11 | 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		
	Gardner, Tim	OTHER	
X	Edelman, Enid	X	Winship, Maggie
X	Snyder-Haas, Jennifer	X	McMahon, Joe
X	Hartrich, Nate	X	Kost, Ellen
	Bushen Quinn	X	Szatkowski, Jeff
X	Alnutt, Mark	X	Yates, Julie
	O'Brien, Chris	X	Kristy Kirisits

I. Welcome – roll call

II. Update – Mensch

- a. B Kulpa - Still in negotiation stage over land value with Mensch; Town Board has gone back and forth on proposals and counterproposals, and it has intensified in past two weeks; very close to having a consensus/agreement; I won't disclose all terms, but we do very well as the Town with respect to land value and costs; we are essentially looking at a value on acreage at Westwood of about \$41K per acre, which is a fairly low value for acreage in the Town; expect it will be well over \$200K per acre for our land at Northtown Center and Audubon; that's about where we hoped it would be – more closer to \$221K per acre; as far as value propositions go, things are looking good – we are working out other details but all going very well, albeit we still have work to do as a Board; I am hoping Councilwoman Bucki and I will be able to announce shortly that we have the rest of the stuff worked out; we need a little more time - a couple more weeks and I think we'll have something exciting; very confident we will get over finished line so we can start talking about the transformative work that is needed; the structure of the

deal will include turnover of Westwood as clean soil, will be remediated prior to Town taking ownership; we don't want to deal with brownfield contaminants ourselves

- b. J Dandes – Supervisor and his team have done great work to move Mensch and their principles so it looks like we are approaching announcement about a potential deal; what is timing of when we will have something concrete?
- c. B Kulpa – Councilwoman Bucki and I are due a phone call to make sure we are on same page, assuming we are for the town in Executive Session on Feb 22; if Board feels constructs are good, we will lead an informal NDA period and talk about it publicly ahead of a Board meeting in March; if not or no consensus, we will go through another round of attorney privileged conversations in March
- d. D Bucki – a lot of progress has been made; look forward to moving forward and making definitive plans
- e. B Kulpa – will hopefully see shovels in the ground this year for contaminant cleanup, as well as MusicalFare; if we feel good on Feb 22, will brief this group at next meeting
- f. J Dandes – are issues that are still outstanding are substantive?
- g. B Kulpa – there is a framework for an agreement that is pretty well hashed out; still some language and nuance, etc. needs to be worked out
- h. J Snyder-Haas – was more testing done to determine amount of contamination at this site, and how deep Mensch will go for remediation? And cost?
- i. B Kulpa – we've solidified contract with 3rd party engineer that will work for Town's environmental attorney; determination of depth of remediation will be driven by that engineering consultant and by Town; this is getting into the weeds but we still have things to work out; we are not limiting the remediation to only the places that have already been developed or already been identified as hot; so there is more scoping to work out there
- j. M Winship – per Stan Sliwa, report will be sent to us next week; NYS DEC will have to weight in and approved the plan; will be a third party to make sure all is good
- k. B Kulpa – the overall agreement says they are responsible to bring this to DEC guidelines for park use, building use for MusicalFare, and the type of uses we are going to have; the report and subsequent DEC components were looking to create attachments to overall agreement
- l. J Snyder-Haas – I looked at regulations for DEC and it said you have to consider surrounding uses and not just the property; a lot is residential, so it would be at least 2 feet
- m. B Kulpa – want to make sure we are cognizant of tree stands so if there is an area that may impair vegetation, we want to be judicial about that; it will ultimately be per DEC's guidance and we will make sure resident components are spelled out

III. Update – Conservancy

- a. D Rizzo – met with Stan Sliwa who wrote a resolution for Feb 22 Town Board meeting agenda for Board consideration; it will bring an outside attorney on board to work with the group to put together a conservancy
- b. B Kulpa – I also signed contract for outside council today so that is moving forward as well

- c. D Rizzo – it will be similar to Erie County’s model with Chestnut Ridge conservancy; Town of Amherst will still have control of park and what happens in park, but the conservancy will work in partnership to fundraise, come up with solutions, help with maintenance items and projects in the park; unlike city parks, the Town will still be overhanging authority and the conservancy will work with them collaboratively
- d. D Bucki – how big of an area will the conservancy have collaboration with us in, both sides of Maple?
- e. M Winship – as part of overall plan to finance this and in perpetuity, the conservancy is a piece of that; working with Town staff, and will present this to the town board shortly an overview, all funding sources
- f. R Kramer – services that would be necessary will be very different on one side of Maple than the other; Audubon side will have a lot more people, commercial use, athletic use, etc. – starts to feel like some of those services will need maintenance more than the Westwood side

IV. Update – Youth Sports

- a. J Dandes – Joe McMahon has, along with Maggie and Dan, have convened a number of sessions over the past month or so to really engage all the stakeholder groups we have access to at the moment
- b. M Winship – will be working with American Campus Communities (ACC) to finalize temporary agreement for softball fields, to add 3, so that we can have a full built-out facility for our softball league while we figure out how to build the final field; we have presented ACC with the concepts and presented them with an approximation of where those fields would go (about 8 acres); we think we could partner with our IDA to do some temporary tax abatement so we don’t have to pay a lease; the idea would be to start construction and have them available for use or 4 or 5 years while final fields are constructed; conversations with them are going well; hope to have something in writing by next meeting
- c. B Kulpa – with regards to Youth Sports, they are getting anxious to make sure they are locked in for the year; we are committed to making sure Amherst Girls Softball not only has a long-term permanent home but a playable facilities during park development in many phases including next season; we’ve assured D’Youville they will have opportunity to play this spring on their current home diamond, and if needed, an offsite 90’ diamond in 2022; they will ultimately have a place to call home in this facility in 2023 at the latest; we are looking forward to moving ahead with those projects; same with Football – an important undertaking and so is cheerleading group associated with it; they will be indoor for some of their spring flag football games at the NARC
- d. D Howard – regarding football, we’ve been speaking with people around NARC and at Jurek Post to see what arrangement we can have to continue to utilize the property the Town leases there now; conversations going well; we hope to move those forward
- e. J Dandes – Eric Guzdek had a successful meeting last night with Wlmsv Jr Football

V. Update – Gun Club

- a. J Dandes – Maggie briefed us on the interactions with ACC already; the response from ACC was outstanding, the willingness to work with us
- b. D Howard – had a good meeting and an opportunity to tie this area together and with the University
- c. E Kost – Dover Kohl has been retained to prepare some designs and sketches to move ahead with ACC; ACC is holding on to the gun club now, so they are open to hearing our needs and doing something that will help the Town out; we mentioned that it is a transformative project; a crucial part of what we end up doing; we did tell Dover Kohl we would like to see mixed use there, and are open to different types of residential – Dover Kohl is working out sketches now; another meeting with the group on Feb 24 to show ACC concepts and get ACCs feedback; hope to have something by end of March for this group to review
- d. B Kulpa- thought it was interesting that ACC acknowledge the project; the letter and forcefulness from our Town attorney got us to the table with them and optimistic we will get somewhere meaningful; the gravitational idea of this being the front door to the college/University and having that sort of pseudo-academic, commercial and living environment that so many great college campuses have we lack in Amherst, but are starting to creep toward that here

VI. Action Items/next steps

- a. B Kulpa – the Board is not allowed to vote on proposal at Feb 22 Board meeting as it will be part of Executive Session, but if enough consensus, we can talk about the adoption of agreement during public meeting, March 8
- b. D Bucki – ACC meeting was good brainstorming session to get ideas on table; could be a lot of collaboration with UB
- c. B Kulpa – we are going to need this committee to break up into small task groups to start taking on some elements of this approach; we will take a look at areas that need specific attention in the plan; will ask committee to work in specific formats with Town staff and consultant to work on pieces of the plan
- d. J Snyder-Haas – are we going to see revised designs from Dover Kohl regarding the road being for emergency and Town use only, having it more centered on property, and various park amenities? Are the breakout sessions going to be an opportunity to go over that?
- e. B Kulpa – we want to do deeper dives into those; certainly making sure the loop road is not for regular transport, but Town emergency services and function; ultimately, we do need to zero in on those component pieces; let's figure out how to break off some of these elements with the smaller groups
- f. Next meeting: February 25, 3pm via Zoom