



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

Thursday, March 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
n/a	Bannon, Anthony		
n/a	Gardner, Tim	OTHER	
X	Edelman, Enid	n/a	Winship, Maggie
X	Snyder-Haas, Jennifer	n/a	McMahon, Joe
X	Hartrich, Nate	X	Kost, Ellen
X	Bushen Quinn	n/a	Szatkowski, Jeff
n/a	Alnutt, Mark	X	Yates, Julie
n/a	O'Brien, Chris	X	Kristy Kirsits
		X	Joe Popiolowski (for AM Karen McMahon)

I. Welcome – roll call

II. Update – Mensch (B Kulpa)

- On 3/8/21 the Town Board voted unanimously to an agreement of baseline terms with Mensch from which to start negotiating a sales agreement allowing Mensch to transfer land from Westwood to the Town, parts of Audubon to Mensch, and some other assets; reached agreement of principle terms with many details to work out yet
- Baseline is the Town is buying Westwood at \$45,000 per acre and it will be remediated fully before purchase can take place or before transfer; Town selling 38 acres of Audubon to Mensch at \$221,000 per acre as is, which includes some subsurface problems (i.e., soil condition); ultimately buying back 8 acres once field house is constructed

- Big piece is a baseline of agreement that we would agree to retain Mensch or one of its affiliates as construction management (not contractor) for the Town to help oversee parts of the park construction, and provide that service of which the first \$717,000 is owed to us as in-kind contribution; we keep, without being part of this agreement, the \$2.6 million +/- that we currently have in pocket from UBMD land as a basis for setting up a trust fund for the park
- Mensch agrees to enter all their properties into a PIF (Pilot Increment Finance) district – PILOT (payment in lieu of tax); we are taking all their tax money from the new development (about \$200 million in private sector development) and reinvesting it into the park's trust (improvements and construction); we are able to bond against that PIF because it's a schedule of payments and that creates the seed for helping us do park improvements that are needed
- From there, we will start the hard work of putting together sales contract; going to need a tight set of numbers; currently building sophisticated cost estimate, and also working with consultant (UrbanVantage) and IDA to ensure PIF is calibrated to current conditions for redevelopment so we can get cost estimates and PIF to align; need to get hard numbers for estimates and further details
- We have not locked into any specific programmatic element in terms of times and locations other than identifying that 38 acres including location of fieldhouse and MusicalFare, which is acknowledged in term agreement because they will be supplying construction management efforts for MusicalFare's box
- J Dandes – Next step to begin discussion of negotiations with Mensch on specifics of contract; how does that impact this committee's ongoing conversation relative to programmatic elements? Can we proceed with some of these things with the assumption the contract will be successful?
- B Kulpa – Now we have established land use patterns based on July's MOU and an established baseline on cost valuation for transaction; now the key for the Town is going to be that the estimates are focused in on programming pieces; will need to work on other aspects, i.e., community center, clubhouse, with a strong arts overlay; will want to commence with doing some concept design around that; people want to get involved in these projects – now is the time to break this up into program elements about what we want developed and where; we will start to zero in with new golf management group and figure out how we want golf to be in the Town
- Regarding fieldhouse, had stakeholder meetings about this; driven by two groups who emerged as interested parties, 1) local 3 school districts need reliable indoor athletic complexes in the Town, 2) local colleges needing indoor facilities; a need for turf field access and indoor track facilities; will want to work with Visit Buffalo Niagara on this; really need to work with softball – this group needs to be able to shift and rely on facilities while changes take place; Wlmsv Jr Football agreed to NARC facility; we are working with Jurek Post to expand fields and current bond action this year to rebuild new concession and storage; progress is moving ahead with these last items

- J Snyder-Haas – Disappointed resolution wasn't reviewed with task force before Board voted; seems remediation costs were part of this deal but didn't see details about levels of testing
- J Dandes – Supervisor and Town have been absolutely transparent with this committee and with resolution
- B Kulpa – We have our own Council retained for environmental issues specifically; Hancock Estabrook has been working with their environmental engineer who has the auditing and added to baseline study that Mensch completed many years ago, and they found a lot of the presumptions to apply – that there was testing done and you can draw conclusions across breadth of property; about a \$9.2 million minimum cleanup that was proposed then; Hancock Estabrook is looking to see if that number can narrow; a report during due diligence period Mensch created their own study about Audubon
- J Dandes – That entire remediation process as a statutory requirement is transparent and available to the public
- B Kulpa – Both courses are brownfields; without a change of use, DEC is not shutting us down but any more intense use than golf requires a deeper remediation; will need to deal with soil remediation and also storm water movement on site – will be variable and depend on constant dialogue with attorneys and DEC; happy to share info as we have it
- J Snyder-Haas – No new soil samples or testing have occurred since those already done years ago?
- B Kulpa - There have been audit tests

III. Update – Conservancy

- B Kulpa - Town has retained outside counsel to work with the Town in exploring how a conservancy can be setup outside the Town but with ties directly into the Town
- D Rizzo – Will be partnership with the Town as 501(C)3; will be able to fundraise and collect funds for Town to use in park itself; just received from attorney a draft document that hasn't been reviewed yet; will set meeting for next week to begin reviewing; hope to have update for next Task Force meeting

IV. Community Updates

- a. Community – N Hartrich (President of Morningside Homeowners Association; Member of Keep Westwood Green; member of LWRP Committee)
 - Been talking with residents this past year about their wishes for the park/site; include: bike path connectivity, having safe bike path connected through Town, walkability up North Forest to Main Street is a big desire, and ability to safely cross at both Maple and Sheridan; concern that ring trail in ACP is only used by pedestrians and emergency vehicles; also want transparency, but people that are technologically disadvantaged feel out of the loop due to Covid restrictions; with renormalization that may not be issue any longer; residents are extremely excited - tired of property closed off and want to enjoy it; people want to know when they can get on the property

- J Syder-Haas – I am on Fairways and more directly affected, and closer to property than Morningside neighborhood; want to hear from all residents of Amherst not just adjacent properties; not sure location is best, whether it's going to be on Westwood or Audubon; at 3/8 Board meeting, residents were upset about softball fields, they were ripped up for UBMD
- B Kulpa – The work on the fields was Town decommissioning of the fields, if temporary fields are needed; if more fields are needed we may have to undo the decommissioning; that work was not done by UBMD contractors, rather this was intended Town reuse of components; what was 'ripped up' was chain link was taken off the fence posts, and bleachers and fences were stored; nothing was bulldozed and knocked through fields - that is incorrect; UBMD has yet to be on site for construction

b. Golf – D Duquin

- About 1 year in with Golf Task Force; originally goal was to get vision of future golf in the Town; in the past month and a half, hired management company Indigo (division of Troon or Billy Casper Golf) to manager golf courses (3 year contract), to make golf work this year and help us to look into future; looking at idea of rates, reaching out to all leagues and saying there will be golf in Amherst at Audubon in 2021; Troon is biggest golf management company in country, they will have expertise to help us look at future golf in the Town; we reached out to all league members and asked them what they would want improved in golf; responses will be communicated to Indigo; will also help us build new golf course; several suggestions of keeping Audubon as 18 if it were reformatted, so we will look at footprint of Audubon 9 and see if it could be an 18; consideration of upgrading the par 3; facilities are great, but programs are also important
- B Kulpa – The ideas are to condense it, build 9 with reverse tee boxes and play 18, or setting up 4 tracks of 3 holes (looping); the out-of-the box thinking is what we are looking for
- R Kramer – I went to Hilton Head SC recently and played a 9 hole course with 2 sets of tees; high-end par 3's are becoming very desirable for golfers; would be nothing like it in WNY; something worth looking at
- J Dandes – An industry trend is par 3 courses
- D Duquin – Good opportunity for youth programs, seniors, etc. and have good programs; we need to work on tees and greens there
- B Kulpa – there is a pent up demand for this in WNY; if we can offer all this in one place, we can appeal to a broad collection of people
- D Duquin – Golf Task Force is trying to get up and running this year and make golf experience much better than the past couple of years; will continue to look at what we can do in the future and how it can be part of the park
- N Hartrich – Telling residents we can have a golf destination; with great golfers come out of our facility
- J Snyder-Haas – Happy about par 3, a regional asset if improved and utilized; do hope Town is committed to a quality 18 hole course; is Oakwood a dead issue?

- B Kulpa – Audubon is getting reformatted somehow, what is the best way to do that; Oakwood has wetlands that need to be mitigated, but not insurmountable; don't know what golf season will bring and don't know what condition Oakwood is in; we have a wide open opportunity with this company (Indigo); confident this group will help us sculpt the future – we are focusing on Audubon, but the overall package of golf in Amherst got brighter
- B Kulpa – Regarding Dover Kohl, they are trying to help us with conversations with American Campus gun club; but Dover Kohl are looking to us to see where we want to go next

V. Other:

- a. Next steps timeline
 - Nothing to report at this time
- b. Upcoming meetings (monthly; 2nd Thursday @ 3pm) effective immediate
 - April 8
 - May 13
 - June 10
 - July 8
 - August 12
 - September 9
 - October 14
 - ~~November 11~~ (NOTE: will be on Nov 4 instead due to holiday)
 - December 9

Meeting adjourned