

MEETING MINUTES  
PARKS COMMISSIONERS (VIA ZOOM)  
GREAT BARRINGTON, MA 01230  
THURSDAY, MARCH 3, 2022  
5:15 PM.

PRESENT:

KAREN SMITH, CHAIR

PAUL GIBBONS

STEPHEN BANNON

THOMAS NORTON

TERRANCE CHAMBERLAND

WILLIAM MEIER

NOT PRESENT:

ILANA SIEGAL

SRIDEVI REDDY

\*\*\*ALL VOTES ARE ROLL CALL\*\*\*

1. CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:15 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A. Minutes of December 20, 2021 (Roll Call Vote)

MOTION: Stephen Bannon to approve as written.

SECOND: Tom Norton

<u>ROLL CALL VOTE:</u>	Paul Gibbons	Yes
	Stephen Bannon	Yes
	Terry Chamberland	Yes
	William Meier	Yes
	Karen Smith	Yes
	Tom Norton	Yes

MOTION PASSED 6-0

3. PARKS USAGE REQUESTS:

A. Berkshire International Film Festival to use the Town Hall Park on June 1 through June 6 (Wednesday through Monday) from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. The opening night event is 6/2 from 5:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Also 6/3 -6/5 TBD. (Discussion/Roll Call Vote)

MOTION: Stephen Bannon to approve on the condition that BIFF return on March 21, 2022 with further information.

SECOND: Paul Gibbons

<u>ROLL CALL VOTE:</u>	Paul Gibbons	Yes
	Stephen Bannon	Yes
	Terry Chamberland	Yes
	William Meier	Yes
	Karen Smith	Yes
	Tom Norton	Yes

MOTION PASSED 6-0

- B. GB Girls Softball to use Olympian Meadows senior field and junior fields from April 1 to August 15, 2022, Monday through Friday, 4:00 p.m. to dark. Saturday and Sunday 8:00 a.m. to dark. (Discussion/Roll Call Vote) Ellyn Dupont was present to explain the request. She noted that the junior field is used 3 nights M-F varied days. Bill Meier asked if the junior field could be used for soccer. It was noted that the junior field is not used on weekends. The senior field will be used for practice and makeup games.

MOTION: Stephen Bannon to approve excluding the junior field on Saturdays and Sundays.

SECOND: Paul Gibbons

ROLL CALL VOTE:

Paul Gibbons	Yes
Stephen Bannon	Yes
Terry Chamberland	Yes
William Meier	Yes
Karen Smith	Yes
Tom Norton	Yes

MOTION PASSED 6-0

- C. Railroad Street Youth Project, 60 Bridge Street, to hold the Annual Culinary Apprenticeship Dinner at Memorial Field on Saturday, May 21, 2022 from 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. The event will be served by TIPS certified bartenders. (Discussion/Roll Call Vote) Tiffany Riva and Amanda Timpane were available to discuss their request. It was explained that they would like to do this on the outfield. This was previously done at Crissey Farm. It has been done since 2007. The invitation will include parents/adults. Karen suggested allowing this to happen until the town hall park is made appropriate to accommodate large tents. It was noted that the tent needs to be removed by 1:00 p.m. on Sunday May 22.

MOTION: Stephen Bannon to approve with the provision that the tent be removed by 1:00 p.m. on Sunday the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

SECOND: Tom Norton

ROLL CALL VOTE:

Paul Gibbons	No
Stephen Bannon	Yes
Terry Chamberland	Yes
William Meier	Yes
Karen Smith	Yes
Tom Norton	Yes

MOTION PASSED 5-1

- D. Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, to use Memorial Field on Saturday July 30, 2022 from 9:00 a.m. to 9 p.m. for the annual gala. The tent will be set up July 29<sup>th</sup> and Removed Sunday July 31, 2022. (Discussion/Roll Call Vote) Janis Martinson, Diane Wortis and Oscar Halling were available for questions. It was noted that the tent company charges more if they have to take a tent down on the weekend. They are willing to cover the costs. It was noted Mahaiwe tent is the only company that can accommodate a large tent.

MOTION: Stephen Bannon to approve the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center to use Memorial Field from Saturday July 30<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. for the gala with the provision that the tent will be removed by 1:00 p.m. on Sunday July 31.

SECOND: Tom Norton

ROLL CALL VOTE:

Paul Gibbons	No
Tom Norton	Yes
Stephen Bannon	Yes
Terry Chamberland	Yes
William Meier	Yes
Karen Smith	Yes

MOTION PASSED 5-1

- E. Pick Enroll, Inc. to use the Housatonic Community Center beginning April 1, 2022 to October 31, 2022, Tuesday/Thursday 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. and Wednesday from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. for Basketball practice. (Discussion/Roll Call Vote) Matt Chamberland was present to explain the request. (Terry Chamberland recused himself from the vote). He noted they are organized travel teams of middle school and high school age kids. He said there is a fee to play that covers the tournament fees.

MOTION: Stephen Bannon to approve the request.

SECOND: Tom Norton

<u>ROLL CALL VOTE:</u>	Tom Norton	Yes
	William Meier	Yes
	Paul Gibbons	Yes
	Karen Smith	Yes
	Stephen Bannon	Yes
	Terry Chamberland	recused himself

MOTION PASSED 5-0-1

4. PARKS CARE AND MAINTENANCE:

A. Updates from Sean VanDeusen, DPW Superintendent - Karen read a memo from Sean. Tighe and Bond will send out a survey on the proposed upgrade of Dewey Park and Grove Street Park. The input will be at a public meeting in June. A draft Parks Usage Request Form and proposed fees will be presented in a few months. Karen suggested we do a highbred meeting in June. The capital will be discussed on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March. DPW has reached out to a dozen different communities to look at a procedure on fees associated with Parks Usage Requests. It is proposed that prior to applying for a Parks Usage Request, that people go through the DPW and Police Department first prior to bringing their request before Parks or Board of Health.

- Dewey School Update
- Memorial Field Update
- Budget update and capital
- Tighe and Bond Park assessment - continuation

5. NEW BUSINESS:

- A. AED for Parks – Steve Bannon – Stephen said he would follow up on this.
- B. Lake Mansfield Task Force update – Bill Meier said there will be another meeting of the Task Force in two weeks. Work on the design for the parking spaces and the park is being done.
- C. Renaming of gazebo for David Grover – recommendation to Select Board and Committee for Celebration – Karen noted they will be meeting on March 11, 2022. The tentative celebration date is July 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- D. Robert Slonaker – East Mountain Trails – A proposed trail system for East Mountain and Quarry Street was submitted. (This is attached to these minutes). The Town Manager will look into who has control of the property. Tom Norton said he would be the liaison and report back on March 21.  
<https://tighebond.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/c558c7ba73c24325983cccd9a4327285>
- F. Policy going forward regarding Memorial Field – Memorial Field on hold for now. Great Barrington Little League has submitted a Parks Usage Request for Olympian Meadows. There will be a list of task responsibilities for the Town and the league.

6. OLD BUSINESS:

- A. Berkshire South - Jenise said she would talk to Sean in regard to the paperwork for the summer program. She also noted that there is a concern of getting enough lifeguards certified. There is a class in March and again in May.
- B. Railroad Street – Ice Report – The ice rink was moved to the high school. Karen said sometimes the ice wasn't taken care of well. They are in the process of hiring people for the summer. Railroad Street used to have a lifeguard apprenticeship
- C. Tighe and Bond – dollar value/long term replacement and initial design of Grove Street Park and Dewey Park. Status update
- D. Charging for use of town spaces/rental policy when money is being charged - Tabled

7. CITIZENS SPEAK:

Chair will recognize individuals at this time who wish to speak - none.

8. COMMISSIONERS SPEAK:

Bill Meier said he would like to have a Lake Mansfield Celebration Day. He will submit the proposal on 3/21.

Tom Norton said he would like parks to try and figure out where to have a soccer field.

Paul Gibbons said he is concerned about the cost of the projects for Memorial Field and Olympian Meadows.

Also, he would like to return to in person meetings.

9. NEXT MEETING

Monday, March 21, 2022

10. ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION: Paul Gibbons to adjourn.

SECOND: Tom Norton

<u>ROLL CALL VOTE:</u>	Paul Gibbons	Yes
	Tom Norton	Yes
	Stephen Bannon	Yes
	Terry Chamberland	Yes
	William Meier	Yes
	Karen Smith	Yes

MOTION PASSED 6-0

The meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Carolyn Wichmann*

Carolyn Wichmann, Recording Secretary

## **Proposed Trail System for East Mountain**

East Mountain on Quarry Street in Great Barrington is a forested tract well suited to trail development for various recreational uses, including but not limited to, mountain biking trails. The specific parcel ID #'s under consideration are 113/020.0-0000-0131.0 and 113/014.0-0000-0304.0. The former consists of 34+/- acres adjacent to Quarry St. and the latter consists of just under 5 acres and is known as Park Street Park. Both are zoned as R-1-B and/or R2. There is an attached a map with approximate parcel borders and an existing path highlighted below. Aside from the open space of Park Street Park, the rest is forested with of mix of evergreen and deciduous trees. The topography is hilly and well suited for mountain biking and hiking. In fact, the existing unofficial East Rock Trail traverses this parcel from its trail head on Quarry Street highlighted on map. The existing highlighted trail entry is accessed from Park Street by the fire hydrant and is also highlighted.

The existing path has been laid out with minimal effort and impact. Basically, just raking the leaves and sticks from the forest floor and removing fallen dead branches to create the routing of it. Hand tools consisting of a rake and a small hand saw are the only tools used so far. This project started back in 2020 while finding myself with ample time and a desire to venture outdoors. Initially I would just hike and then later ride my bike into the woods and wander about looking for a way to connect with the existing East Rock Trail. After some exploration I started raking away the leaves and fallen branches to make the riding easier and the current trail is the result of this.

The initial intention is to improve the existing path into a proper trail and then build loops off it. This improvement of the existing path and expansion of the loop trails would be done via a volunteer effort in coordination with the Berkshire Chapter of the New England Mountain Bike Association, <https://www.nemba.org/> and the local bike shop, Berkshire Bike and Board. The intention is to keep the construction and maintenance of the trails at no cost to town of GB. Proper trail building etiquette and procedures would be followed.

Based on usage once developed, future expansion could be achieved by using contiguous parcels owned by the GB Fire District further to the south along Quarry St. It is possible to connect with East Mountain State Forest via GBFD lands for a potential of over 1400 acres of terrain available for future expansion. (Map attached) There are various grants and funds, both state and federal, available for recreational trail building to assist if it is needed at that point.

Potential issues that would need to be considered are liability, surveys, trail head trash collection and parking space development.

Town legal counsel may need to be consulted as to liability. Does this use fall under all the other park and open space coverage the Town has?

I have been utilizing an app called LandGlide that shows public record property lines to make sure the current path is only on town land. It is foreseeable that a proper survey may need to be done to appease adjacent property owners.

As with any public trailhead, trash collection can be a problem. Signage can remind trail users, and group peer pressure can help with policing, but inevitably refuse can develop. The trail use community may need to deal with this directly.

Parking is very limited on Park and Quarry Streets. Possible parking areas are Dewey Park lot where the Courthouse is located on the corner of Anderson and Gilmore. This lot is busy on Mondays and Thursdays usually till shortly after noon, but the rest of the week it is very open. I have also sent inquiry to St Peters regarding using their community center lot at the corner of East and Cottage but have not heard back. The potential need for signage (and funding of), advising against taking up resident parking space by bikers and hikers is worth considering.

The benefit of developing a trail network would add to the local community more recreational space that is easier to access and create an additional draw for visitors to spend their recreational dollars in GB. There are other communities around the country that have used trail networks to achieve this, and I have provided links to a couple of such stories.

Jayrn Pierson from Berkshire Bike and Board told me this; *"Over the last couple of years more and more people have realized how important it is to get outside and to be active outside. One way that many people have taken to the outdoors is through bicycles, and more specifically, mountain bikes. Riding a bike through the woods is not only great for adults, but kids seem to take to it incredibly well, as it is both challenging and exciting. Our local bike shop Berkshire Bike and Board has seen double digit sales growth for the last three years consecutively in its mountain bike categories. The challenging part for them is after they sell the bikes, where they point riders to go for a place to ride."*

<https://www.singletracks.com/mtb-trails/6-ways-mountain-bikes-winning-big-changing-world>

<https://mtbatlantic.com/blog/singletracks-impact-on-community-quality-of-life-and-economic-development/>

<https://smokymountainnews.com/archives/item/24985-trails-are-just-good-for-communities>

<https://news.jrn.msu.edu/2021/04/mountain-biking-sees-popularity-increase-during-pandemic/>

<https://www.startribune.com/growth-in-states-new-mountain-biking-trails-goes-for-a-different-mix/600087370/>

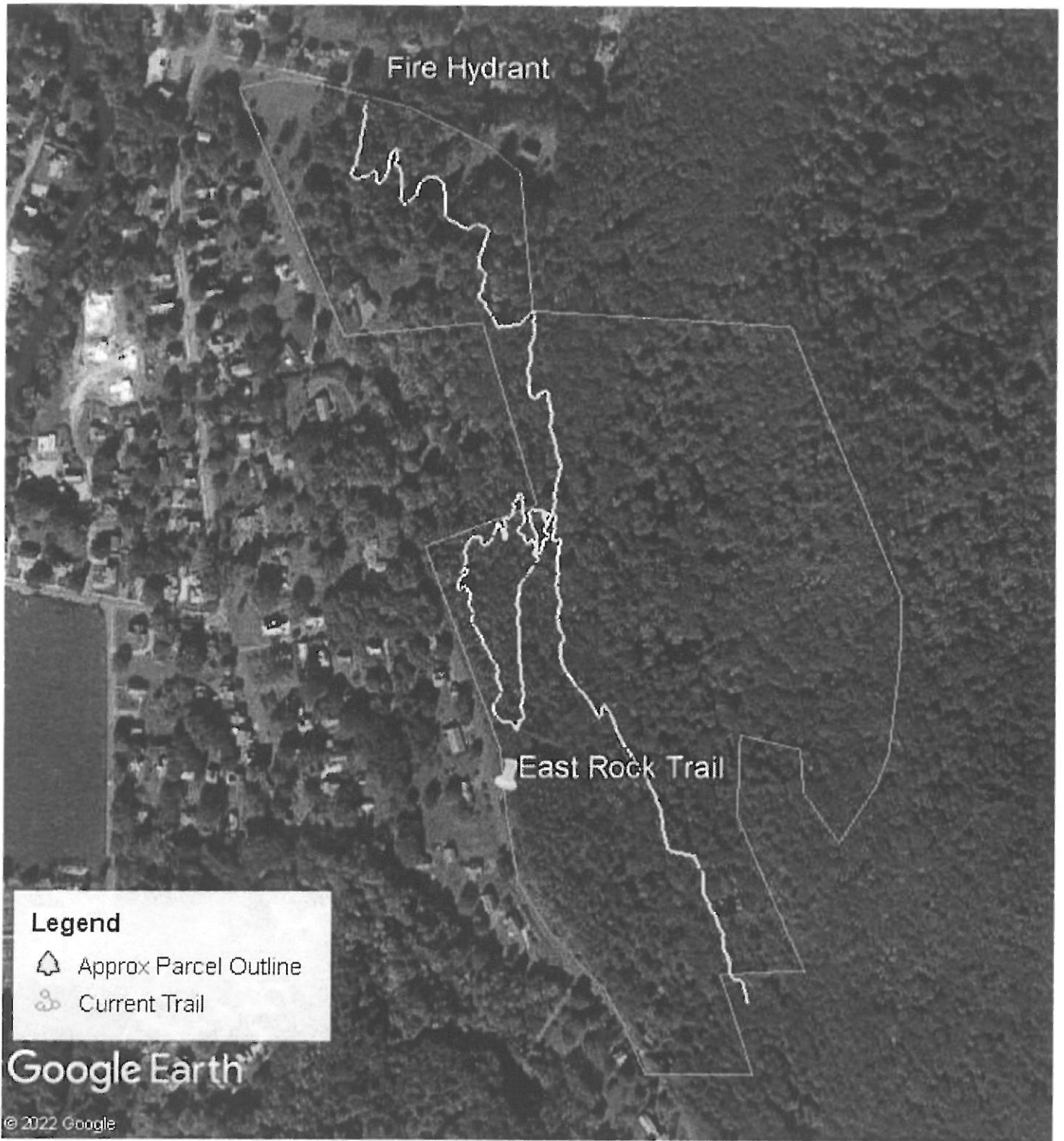
<https://www.velonews.com/news/tending-to-the-growth-of-mountain-biking/>

<https://headwaterseconomics.org/trail/104-or-mtn-bike-tourism-oakridge/>

Why the Parks Commission? At this point all I am looking for is an "okay, go ahead and make some trails" blessing. Would this involve designating the 34-acre lot an official park? After the trails are improved and some riders have ridden on them, we can see where it goes from there. I'm not sure how many other folks in town Government need to be involved for this first phase but at some point, I would like to learn more about the GBFD lands and how to repeat the process there. If that proves to be popular then the same process would start with the State DCR. The hope being, that in a few years Great Barrington could have a great network of recreational trails, easily accessible from town, that benefits the residents and nearby community. Of course, there are many questions to still be answered, but consider this a first volley in a constructive discussion on how to take advantage, in a responsible way, of our excellent natural resources.

Thank you,

Rob Slonaker, 12 Gilmore Ave GB



Fire Hydrant

East Rock Trail

**Legend**



Approx Parcel Outline



Current Trail

Google Earth

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