

# Twin Brook Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

---

March 13, 2012

## **In Attendance:**

Iwona Tarling	John Leavitt
Teri Maloney-Kelly	Anne Witte
Jackie Stowell	Councilor Shirley Storey-King
Kay Fowler	Councilor Steve Moriarty
Christopher Bolduc	Peter Bingham
Laura Neleski	Councilor Tom Gruber (late arrival)

35 Members of the Public attending

## **Call to Order 6:30pm**

### **John Leavitt**

Introduction and welcome to all attendees. I'm happy to see the large crowd. I heard that people thought we might be banning dogs and we are not, so hopefully a few of you will be able to relax. The topic of dogs at the park has come up several times in the last year and we felt it was time to move the discussion along by looking for input from the public. We will probably not be taking an action on this issue tonight.

Councilor Storey-King clarified that the committee just makes recommendations to the town council – they do not set policies.

### **Motion to accept the minutes from October 4, 2011**

**Motion by Mr. Loring**

**Seconded by Ms. T Maloney-Kelly**

**Vote - Unanimous**

### **Old Business**

**Fees:** Christopher Bolduc recapped the history of the fee structure of the fees at Twin Brook. Mr. Bingham has put in a great deal of time researching this topic. Mr. Bingham handed out proposed fee structures. Non-Mass gathering events and Mass Gathering Events are the two types of events that would incur a fee for using the park. We factored in the amount of vehicle impact on the park and are adding a per vehicle charge to the old policy using a car counter. Fees also include field set up fees. Groups would get an estimate this year for what their new fee would be for the following year. Ms. Witte questioned the application process for Mass Gatherings and was told that the process isn't changing, just some of the fees. A short general discussion followed.

**Motion to Accept and Recommend this new fee structure to the Town Council by Kay Fowler**

**Seconded by Anne Witte**

**Vote - Unanimous**

### **New Business**

# Twin Brook Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

---

## Review of Twin Brook Dog Policy:

John Leavitt spoke to the issue of Twin Brook is being loved to death. The topic has become how we can take all these user groups that love Twin Brook and get everyone to play well together, so to speak. When the town set this up it was a great place residents to bring their dog to exercise. To me this meant that I could bring my neighbors black lab for a run. What is happening is that as towns nearby are restricting dogs more at their parks we are seeing an increase of dog usage by non-residents at Twin Brook, not that there is anything wrong with that but it is only the residents of Cumberland that are paying for the upkeep of the park. More people mean more pressures and wear and tear on the Park and of course more poop. We are also seeing more dog businesses operating in the park free of charge, and there has been discussion whether this is what we want in the park. Let us open the floor to the Public

Joyce Mongeau – I am a resident of Cumberland and several times a week I go to Twin Brook to walk my dog off lease. I love the park and I think the current policies are spot on. There are 10% that are not as responsible as the 90%. 1. Regarding the pet waste - one idea that I had was a spring cleanup day after the winter to help clean up the park after a long winter when maybe that 10% have been a bit lax. 2. Regarding crowding and overuse - I walk often and I just don't see much traffic; sometimes I even take my dog into Portland to socialize with other dogs because they are so much busier than at Twin Brook. 3. Regarding businesses - the dog trainers that I have encountered have been very responsible, even more so than some other dog owners. I wouldn't see any need to make changes there. An analogy would be: if you had a home daycare and you took your 6 little ones to the playground, would you charge them because they are a business but not the person who brought their own children to the park? I like that the meeting was posted on the kiosk. I would recommend to the council that we post the contact numbers to call (like animal control) on the kiosks. I love that on a sunny day I can just go across the street and walk my dog – regardless of the time of day. But I am conscious of other events at the park. Staff responded that there are several places that we post the events schedule like the Crier.

Ian Smith from Cumberland and I am a dog walker. I just wanted to say that the preponderance of dog walkers are very respectful of the park policies. I think the park policies are just fine. You can't legislate good manners. Better education and self-policing is the way to go. Stricter policies are just going to require more enforcement is going to be cumbersome and costly. I'd like to see the board put its energies into education. I would hate to see dog walkers become a marginalized community; we are part of the community. We gather every morning and walk and talk about the town, politics, our children. In place of the old town square being the town gathering spot it is now the Park. I hope nothing is done to marginalize our part of the community.

John Leavitt said Mr. Smith is right on about self-policing – ever bit helps

Karen Libby from Cumberland Center and has 2 labs and I am at Twin Brook 5 days a week. I have never had any problem at the park. I think we need to let people know that dogs are allowed off leash at the park. I ran into one person on the trail who was terribly scared of dogs and wanted me to keep my dogs away from her. I don't know why she was there if she was scared of dogs – maybe she didn't know that dogs are allowed. The dog walkers and trainers I see are more respectful than many dog walkers. I don't see much in the way of dog waste – at least not massive amounts. I wish that the Wilderness trails weren't such a mess – hard to use them at times. The dog walkers could spread out in the park more if we could walk there in the summer, which might alleviate some crowding issues. Mr. Leavitt explained why that area of the park is wet due to several ongoing issues that are being looked at.

Councilor Storey-King added that whether or not someone likes dogs, they are also entitled to use the park. Dogs should be under voice command so you could call your dog back. Mr. Leavitt said there are competing interests in the park use; dog lovers, people who are afraid of dogs, bikers, horse owners, runners, etc., and that is the rub - How to make it work for everyone.

## Twin Brook Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

---

Linda Collins and I live in Cumberland. I am a dog owner and soccer mom. Like others here I use the park very often and I not seen the problems that might lead to a discussion of change to policies. Could Mr. Leavitt share with us some of the information that has led to this topic being discussed? How frequently are there problems?

Mr. Leavitt – The issue of documentation is a hard one. What I think is happening is people don't necessarily report problems to us or the authorities or the park. You see someone you know at a store or at a church and they say 'by the way....'. Or you see someone and they say 'a friend said ....' That's how we hear about things. The documentation doesn't really exist. Chris Bolduc said he receives the occasional informal complaint but added that in his tenure with the town he only knows about two formal complaints. Complaints we get are informal – like a dog jumped on my car, or a dog put his paws on me and got me dirty. Mr. Leavitt said we really encourage people to report any issues.

Phyllis Chinlon and I moved here in 1988 and discovered Twin Brook and I can't tell you how many walks I have had in the park – over 500 walks with my husband and dogs and not once met any difficult or aggressive dog walkers. I do try to be aware of people who might not like dogs. I walk in many areas like the Falmouth dog park where there is much dog poop, I just don't see it like that here. I am certainly willing to do my part to keep the park in good shape for all as long as I can keep bring my dog to run.

My name is Sandy and I am from Yarmouth and I come to the park ever day with a group of 8 to 10 people and their dogs. We really respect the park. They all get along well together and we all know the dogs names – it is such a friendly place. Regarding the issue of dog poop on the trails – yes we occasionally see some but our group picks up whatever we see, no matter which dog it is from. We always try to leave the park a cleaner, better place than we found it. The park is a social center for us and our dogs. The people exercising their dogs are the ones who will have happy healthy dogs. People who ignore their dogs needs are the ones contributing to mean dogs who will end up causing problems or end up in shelters. We like to see Dog walkers and trainers– those are the best behaved dogs. Speaking about messes – we are picking up pet waste to such a degree that the trash pickup at the park is not keeping up with emptying the trash cans. They are full to overflowing before they are picked up. Over at Royal River we have an 'April Stools Day' where we all get together for a park cleanup day. We take care of the poop that was missed over the winter and get the park all ready for spring. Something like that could work at Twin Brook as well. Just broadcast out the date and people will show up to help. I walk all over but we appreciate this park so much; it is clean and friendly and so open. Please join us! Thank you for your work.

Gentleman: I walk 6 days a week. My dog once got stuck in a culvert and the guys that work for the park were so helpful! And they got my dog out. We are so appreciative of the park as a place where I can walk and my dog can walk that is not on the street, I don't like to walk on the street, it's not a safe place for me or my dog. The park is great and I appreciate it very much.

Yarmouth resident – I walk my dog twice a day, every day, at all times during the day. I live in Yarmouth but I love Twin Brook because it is clean and beautiful and it is not crowed or overrun. I don't see that much poop, especially compared to parks in the surrounding areas, but I love that there are poop bags available. It is wonderful that a culvert might go in to make better access to that side of the park. I am here because rumor at the park is that the park might start requiring a leash. The best part about the park is that dogs can run free and get some real exercise. It is a joy to see and be part of. It would just be a tragedy to change the policy. As far as I am concerned, putting the dogs on leashes would just ruin the park experience for so many people.

Councilor Storey-King offered other options Rines Forest, Town Forest and the Chebeague Island/ Cumberland Land Trust for walking as well.

# Twin Brook Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

---

Nancy Savage Marcus is a Cumberland resident and I walk my dog every day. I do see a lot of poop and I think the April Stools Day is a great idea. It would be a good way to give back to the park that offers so much to the community.

Dave Finnegan and I walk my dog every day and I want to be clear that I don't want to change the policies at all. However, I do think people should work on voice command. I have been jumped on by a dog I don't know while I was jogging. I gave the dog back to its owner firmly. That was 5 years ago and I haven't had another incident. But I don't want to get hurt while jogging due to an enthusiastic dog and would like for dog owners to be more responsible. I have adapted my running habits due to the dogs and would like the owner to use better voice control over their dogs. I have a friend who won't jog here due to the large amounts of dogs. Voice command is the key. Dog owners need to be respectful of people who might not care for dogs. I'd like to see more signage to remind users.

Randy Billmeir and I am a Yarmouth resident and I am part of the early morning walking group. We do walk every day and keep a close eye on the park. Yes poop stinks and we are trying to do our part plus some to keep it clean. The problem is much worse at other places we walk. When dogs have a smaller area to walk – the poop becomes more noticeable. The park is certainly not overused. That is not the problem. A great deal of dog walking is convenience. People might occasionally travel to Twin Brook to walk their dog, but if they are not close by to start with it will not become the place they walk every day. I do give a donation annually to the park for its upkeep. I appreciate the Park and all it offers.

Kate Silvers and I am a Cumberland resident and have walked my dogs at Twin Brook for many years and enjoy it very much. Yes, it does seem that Twin Brook has become more popular but I have never seen any problems resulting from this. Kate asked Kay Fowler if there were any problems at the farm and Kay replied that she had had two large problems (2 in 14 years). Dogs have to run, it is good for the dogs and good for their families. Trash bins need to be kept up with. As people use them more, could they be emptied more?

David Fitz and I live near Twin Brook, I taught my kids to ski there. I would really like to see the back trails improved. I have had two less than pleasant experiences at Twin Brook, once with a snowmobile and once with two German Shepherds. Nothing happened but it wasn't pleasant. I do think the signage at the park could be better.

Joyce Mongeau wanted to speak again to clarify a few points.

1. I would like to think that the committee would not make any recommendations for changing park policies until thinking hard and long on it and then only after reviewing hard data, not based on hearsay and speculation.
2. Iron Rangers are a good idea, but the signage should not have a Resident vs. Non-Resident feel to it.
3. Keeping communications open is also important. Maybe developing an email loop or a Facebook page where information could be easily shared would be an idea. Using the kiosks more would be good. Posting items on The Dog News.

Twin Brook is a great cross-generational gathering area where people should be encouraged to come with all their family including their dogs.

John Leavitt thanked all attending for their support and input. At 8:05 Mr. Leavitt announced that the discussion of the Dog policy has wound down and we would move on to the next topic on the agenda.

## **Twin Brook Biking Policy**

Mr. Bolduc said that the one biking group that had been using the park had been contacted and were willing to work with the town.

# Twin Brook Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

---

Ms. Witte said she was very nervous about biking, the damage the bikes could do to a trail and the speed they went through the park. There was general discussion about the speed of bikes on the same trails as dogs and children who might not be paying enough attention to be prepared to act when surprised by fast bikers.

Mr. Bolduc said that everyone was damaging the park last fall because the ground was so wet that it didn't take much to leave a mark. Currently bikes are only restricted during events or when the trails are not firm. The Parks department would try to use the Kiosks more, but all events are posted on line and in the weekly Crier.

## **Question from the public:**

Who decides who can use the Park to operate their business in?

General Discussion on what types of business and did they want to go through the Recreation Department or was the business like a dog walking business that just showed up and used the park within the policies and did not require a reserved spot.

## **Resident stickers:**

The question was asked if stickers for non-resident cars were the way to go.

Councilor Moriarty asked if it makes any sense to have stickers. The point was brought up if it takes \$10 to make \$5 was it really worth the effort? Reciprocity with neighboring towns is also a concern.

## **Timber Harvesting:**

No new developments at this time. Chris Bolduc will keep the group apprised of any developments as they occur.

## **New Business:**

Ian Parlin from Trail Monster Running group asked about the Park Hours and if exceptions could be made. Response was that changes to the Park hours would have to be suggested to the Town Council and the Council would have to vote on it. Consideration would be given to changing from winter hours to summer hours closer to the time change to make better use of the evening sunlight in the spring. General consensus was that the Committee did not want the Park to be open after dark and the town needed set hours to ensure gates were opened and closed and residents knew what to expect.

**Next Meeting:** May 8, 2012 at 6:30 in the Council Chambers

## **Motion to Adjourn at 9:15pm**

Made by Teri Maloney-Kelly

Seconded by Anne Witte

Vote - Unanimous

Meeting Adjourned at 9:15pm

## Twin Brook Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

---