

MINUTES

WILLIAM PULLEN TRUSTEE MEETING THURSDAY, JANUARY 6, 2022 ONLINE VIA ZOOM 6:30 p.m.

Select Board present: Irene Hawes, Judith Brogden, Paul Gaudreau, Anita Brown (Chair), Bill Lombardi, Martha Johnston-Nash, and Josh White

Others present: Jay Feyler (Town Manager), Greg Grotton, Erik Amundsen, Joel Wentworth, Sr., Pat Hood, and others

1. **Call William Pullen Trustee Meeting to Order:** at 6:30 p.m. by Anita Brown.
2. **Discussion and vote on the purchase of Heald Highway Property:**

Anita invited Jay to present the packet he had distributed, which showed the property commonly known as Clark Field.

Jay said Erik Amundsen brought it to our attention that the property was going up for sale for \$150,000. The way to hold it is to put a Purchase & Sale Agreement on it, with the agreement that we would get our money back if not approved by the voters. He added it is the only property in Union where you could do that one-time Pullen project that has been 20+ years in the planning.

He answered questions, showing arrows on the map. The property is approximately 20 to 22 acres and needs a survey. Some questions are going around town about hazardous waste: the packet includes a letter from DEP, who the owner had come in and do testing; there are three pages of documents that pretty much tell you there is no contamination. He added that when they sold the building to Cars, they removed some soil with oil in it, but test pits showed no major contamination.

He said the B.M. Clark Foundation owns a small piece of property that Union Fair has been renting from them, leasing through the Union Fair Association.

Jay pointed out flood zones on the map, adding he does not recall seeing major flooding on this property. You can put a ballfield in the flood zone. You can also put up a building but would have to get flood insurance. He thinks the soil is more clay, but not anything we would be building a foundation on so not a worry. Oldtimers say a lot of fill was brought in for the old airfield.

He said if the Pullen Committee wants to explore this further – purchase the property, do some surveying, bring it to town meeting as the town would have to actually accept the

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property. If the town does not accept it, what happens? Right now, someone would buy it tomorrow morning if the committee does not do this tonight. A ways down the road, after the June town meeting, there is an opportunity that the same company may work with the Town of Union for a small piece of the property and help build this to reduce the total cost. This can be decided on after a survey is done.

He said there are lots of grants for recreational purposes, but it would still probably be three to five years before you could really start anything.

He added there are no DEP, Army Corps of Engineers, or Town of Union code issues with this property.

Judy asked about access: from 17 or fairgrounds? Jay said something could be worked out with Cars, but the main entrance on 17 where they do race parking is the entrance that comes with the property.

Paul asked about ROW for Union Fair. Jay said it would still be there.

Jay said there would be work with an engineer, architect. It depends on what people want – multipurpose field and track to walk around, larger skating rink, dog park, separate pickle ball court? The property would be developed by the citizens of Union and what their desires are depending on how much has to be funded over the years.

Paul asked if the river posed any problems. Jay said no; there is a generous flood map, and he has never seen it flood on that side.

Irene had a couple of people ask her about the property we already have for sports, and asked Jay to explain why we haven't been able to fix the courts due to some problem during covid.

Jay explained the recreational properties the town has: tennis/basketball courts, Little League field out back, Ayer Park. We have a lot in Ayer Park and are doing more this summer; we have a caretaker there during summer. The ball field is one of the best in Knox County: Pat Hood and crew have been doing a great job. Tennis and basketball courts do have some cracks in them; we have been trying to fix this for two years. The only company Jay is aware of is Vermont Tennis, and even schools have been unable to get them to do anything lately. They are short-handed like everybody else. We keep contacting them and hope they can take care of the cracks next year. The Public Works crew is always cleaning up there. There is a lot of basketball use, and PW is there two to three times a week picking up trash, also put in LED lights.

Josh said this is great, seems good proximity to other things in the area. His only thought was this seems a really good deal on a very large piece of property. If a family business is giving us a deal and for some reason the community doesn't want it – anything over should go to those giving us a deal.

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Jay didn't know if this price were just for town. Erik said it sort of was – if marketing the property as a realtor, he would ask a lot more than that. It is a valuable piece of property. Erik added the ROW can be altered to fit everyone's needs, to make it even better for the Fair if they like. Lots can be done, benefitting all parties. Then Erik was off to the school board meeting.

Bill asked about ROW's. Jay pointed out on the map, thinks Fair and B.M. Clark Foundation are the same ROW. Bill wanted to make sure just one ROW, Jay said correct.

Jody, President of the B.M. Clark Foundation, pointed out their property on the map, 2.7 acres. He thought the deeded ROW is to B.M. Clark but used by the fair. Jay said one document listed both Fair and Foundation. Jody doesn't think it is a problem sharing ROW in any case.

Martha liked the idea of a recreational area, easily accessed, with some water access but not sure about protected areas. She heard from people about the difficulty of having it right on Route 17 – kids chasing balls, etc. would be an issue. This was in an industrial area and is prime commercial property. She brought up the issue of limited property in town for businesses, including good tax dollars from a good commercial property. She voiced concern about businesses over the years burying not just chemicals but trash, solid waste. Another concern was the amount of money it would take between survey and other efforts. She took issue with Jay's comment that this is the only suitable property in Union for this, mentioning the Hannan property with beautiful fields on Cole Road. She added Union has lots of property in hay fields which are not going to be hay fields forever, and felt the idea that we're not going to find anything else a misnomer.

Jay addressed the trash concern, pointing out fill areas on the map, ran metal detectors, found pins. Talking with DEP he did not think these soils had been disturbed, did not think anything buried in there as the land fit the natural contours. Wherever it may have been possible they did test holes. Regarding Route 17 proximity, he said up the road we have a school even closer to Route 17. He does not think it's an issue at all. He added obviously we would have fencing on fields, track, etc. Any property you take will be off the tax rolls. You want recreational property in the vicinity of town. He added we looked at those hayfields, but the price was astronomical compared to this.

Bill acknowledged Martha's comment about taking a prime piece of real estate off the tax rolls. He noted shortcomings in the report he was shown, and thought it an overstatement to say no environmental issues.

Josh said this is a much more desirable location as far as the center of town. You could easily walk through town to a different ballfield. He agreed with Jay not a lot of dumping on the piece of property we are buying. As Martha said maybe they dumped stuff; he does construction and finds stuff buried all the time – either rotten or metal which he takes to the redemption center. He doesn't think this is a problem.

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Josh had a question: is there a long-term plan to put more money in the fund?

Discussion followed about how William Pullen set up this fund in his will. There is approximately \$1.4 million in the hands of Bank of Boston, now Bank of America, which the town cannot touch. The town splits the interest annually in three ways: scholarships, small projects (community groups can ask for money mostly for kids), and saving all these years to do a big project.

Pat Hood spoke as being very involved with the current baseball field. His son has outgrown Little League, and he knows kids ready for intermediate or majors field where baselines are longer so they get used to that next step. There is an opportunity here to look long term. It could be used for different tax purposes but we are investing in our kids – not just today but those just starting T-ball. This is an exciting opportunity – the field could be a hub for surrounding communities.

Paul urged building for the larger area, not just kids today, per Pat's comments. If we're the only Babe Ruth field in the Midcoast area, that brings people to town.

Bill thanked Josh for his earlier point. If this goes forward and the town doesn't vote for it, this money goes to another source whether back to the original owner or their choice to donate to a charity. He was told \$450,000 when asked what was in Pullen fund; he is getting a very different number tonight. That was one of his concerns – how much of the reserve fund was going to one individual project; it makes a real difference if there's somewhere north of a million in that account.

Anita replied Jay was referring to the annual thing where we do the percentages.

Irene said we are so fortunate that the Pullen brothers loved their community and loved their school. We've been really lucky and should use the money wisely which is what we're trying to do now.

Judith clarified she thinks the Bank of America balance is in the balance sheet that's in the Town Report every year.

She also asked about title work, recording fees, attorney fees; she has been out of commercial lending for over six years and thinks the survey cost might be north of \$5,000.

Jay said he got an estimate from Landmark – this is not a gigantic complicated piece of property. Our town attorney agreed to help on closing and probably won't charge us anything. Nominal fee for recording, under \$50.

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Motion to spend the \$150,000 for the Clark property and the extra \$5,000 to survey it by:
Josh White
2nd by: Irene Hawes
5-2 (Johnston-Nash, Lombardi opposed)
Motion passes.

Paul Gaudreau said he would support an amended motion on Josh's point about returning excess sales funds (if voters turn the property down) to the previous owner or a nonprofit.

3. Adjourn:

Motion by: Judith Brogden
2nd by: Josh White
7-0

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sherry Abaldo
Secretary