

Commentary

What’s This About More Playing Fields?

The facts are pretty clear. First, Amherst Recreation currently uses Cemetery Fields for a variety of athletic programs. Second, the Cemetery Trustees told the Recreation Commission that they were ending the lease in 2014. Third, the Cemetery Trustees indicated that they may need the property as early as 2012. And, fourth, to support our recreation program, we need to replace those fields. In one six-month period in 2009, 1,600 children played soccer, lacrosse, and baseball on Cemetery Fields for a total of approximately 1900 hours. Where will they go? Over the last year, the Open Space Advisory Commission spent considerable time trying to negotiate the purchase of land from Ben Brewster. An agreement was presented to the Board of Selectmen but they declined to sign it because they felt the property was overpriced. And, if what we were buying was just 57 acres of land that floods, they might be right. But, with this purchase the town gets 57 acres of land, with 4 developed playing fields, a fully productive community garden, and extensive river frontage. After asking the Selectmen to reconsider their decision and receiving the same answer, we decided to bring the question directly to you.

Article 24 proposes a \$625,000 bond to purchase the land with its improvements. To judge if that is a fair price, let's compare the cost of purchasing and developing the Bean Fields. The purchase price for that 9.07 acre parcel was \$300,000 with an additional \$450,000 spent developing two and a half flat fields and a 60-foot baseball diamond. For less money, we propose to acquire a parcel more than 6 times larger, with 4 existing playing fields, with the Garden, and with the potential for developing more active and passive recreation space in the future, should that be necessary. Brewster Fields also provides space to replace the 60-foot diamond and playground we'll lose when Cemetery Fields reverts to the Trustees.

From experience we know that land acquisition and field/playground development generally take a minimum of three years if all aspects align: purchase of property that is suitable, available funding, and construction. The availability of these fields will not take three years. The four fields currently on the property are game-ready. We will need to develop areas for the playground and the baseball diamond. No additional funds were requested to do this because we're committed to completing those jobs with monies raised through user fees, fundraising, grant applications, and with the sweat equity of recreation participants. We will pursue the suggestion made at the Deliberative Session that we look at current use monies that may be available. We have been successful using this combination of funding sources in the past.

I'd like to try and address some of the questions being raised about this purchase. First, does the land flood? Yes, it does. So does the land at Cemetery Fields. The fields at Upper Wilkins and in front of Souhegan become so wet during springtime that athletes are required to stay off them for periods of time. Putting playing fields in the flood plain is actually a perfect use for the property. You can't build on it, but you can play on it. Flooding allows the fields time to rest and provides them with

nutrients. Do we need to make sure we stay off the fields when they are excessively wet? Sure we do; just like we do on every other field in town. But does flooding wreck the property? No, not at all.

Second, it is true that the Board of Selectmen hadn't seen the current purchase and sales agreement. However, they had seen the prior Agreement for the same amount of money but seeking more concessions. We did not state, nor did we mean to imply, that because there's a purchase and sales agreement on the property, it's a done deal. The Agreement in place clearly relates back to the upcoming vote and nullifies any deal should the Article not pass. The purchase and sales agreement merely ties the seller to a price and a single concession – that the Garden remain for at least three years.

Third, Article 24 didn't name the property being purchased as Brewster Fields because we were trying to "put something over" on the voters or because we jumped at this parcel at the last minute without a great deal of thought. Neither is farther from the truth. The Article didn't mention Brewster Fields because at the deadline for submitting petition articles, the Purchase and Sales Agreement hadn't been signed. If a signed Purchase and Sales Agreement hadn't been obtained on this property, the Article's petitioners would have requested that the Article be zeroed out, in effect killing it.

Fourth, we acknowledge that a formal appraisal has not been conducted on the property. However, we remind residents that an appraisal would look at the raw value of the land and not the value of its use. When evaluating this property, both the Open Space Committee and the Recreation Commission took into consideration the fact that this tract is not raw land but currently has in place four usable, full-size playing fields and that it is highly suitable for future development of additional passive recreation amenities. In addition, after extensive investigation we believe that there is no other property in Amherst that could be acquired and developed to the same extent at comparable or lower cost.

Amherst has a strong tradition of providing a hearty New England lifestyle. We encourage our residents to stay active and stay healthy. We start our children out with a deep commitment to movement and activity and we reinforce this commitment by providing strong athletic and recreation programs in our schools and in our town. Whether you have children participating in field or gym sports, whether you run or cross-country ski over our roads and through our forests, or whether you're just seeking a place to walk quietly with nature, the land at Brewster Fields offers places to do all those things.

Please learn more about Article 24 and the proposed land purchase by visiting <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Brewster-Fields-Land-Purchase/321839666819>. We're sure that after your questions are answered, you'll vote Yes on Article 24 and support the purchase of this property.

Addie Hutchison
Chair, Amherst Recreation Commission

Endorsement Letter for Peterman and Infanti

To the editor:

Amherst citizens are fortunate to have several qualified candidates from which to choose for selectmen this year. After careful consideration, I am going to vote for Marilyn Peterman and George Infanti.

Marilyn Peterman has volunteered for the town during the entire thirty years that we have been friends, first as a member of the Planning Board, then as Selectmen, and currently as a member of the Souhegan finance committee and the Planning Board. In addition to serving on numerous study committees and being involved in many town events, she is our long time representative to the Nashua Regional Planning Commission. Marilyn is a tireless worker who possesses a valuable institutional knowledge of our town which will serve us well in these challenging times.

George Infanti has a unique understanding of the job of selectman, having served in that capacity for three different towns. George is knowledgeable, accessible and committed to making Amherst function well. As a local small business owner, he understands the economic challenges faced by taxpayers in these tough economic times and is diligent in balancing their needs with those of the town. When you cast your ballot on March 9th, please join me in voting for Marilyn Peterman and George Infanti.

Cynthia Dokmo
Amherst

Peterman Is Skillful in Bringing People Together

To the editor:

Over the nearly two decades we have lived in Amherst, we have gradually come to know Marilyn Peterman. We completely agree with the many letters of support she has received in recent editions of local papers. Her many years of service give her an experience background and record of success which make her election a no brainer. Marilyn understands how to establish priorities from demands that exceed any expectation of being accommodated. We believe that the issues Marilyn supports reflect a valid consensus of our residents. Too, she is skillful in bringing people together.

We recently hosted a group of our neighbors who came to listen to and question Marilyn. She is an excellent listener; she is tireless and concise in addressing questions and concerns. When she does not have an answer, she will say so. She will find that answer and get back to the questioner. She convinced us that she is fabulously qualified to again serve as our town selectman. Marilyn is dedicated to the betterment of our community and is ready on day one to pick up the large load that is the shared burden of our Board.

And one more thing that is so important. Marilyn has the time to give to this position, and she is able to attend the many meetings required to effectively serve on the Board of Selectmen. We vigorously support her candidacy.

Pete and Nan Stearns
Amherst

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Obituaries

Ruth Kathleen (Schmidt) McKinstry

May 21, 1923 ~ February 21, 2010

AMHERST -- Ruth McKinstry, 86, passed away peacefully on Sunday, February 21, 2010 at Bel Air Nursing Home in Goffstown, NH. Ruth was born in Webster, Massachusetts to William and Mary Schmidt. She was a graduate of Edward Little High School and the Auburn Maine School of Commerce. In 1944, she met Norman McKinstry, a British Navy pilot stationed in Maine. Ruth and Norm married in September of 1946 and began their life together in Auburn, Maine where their two daughters, Pamela and Sheila, were born.

The family moved to Massachusetts in the early 1950's, eventually settling in Lunenburg, MA where they raised their girls. In 1971, Ruth and Norm moved to Cape Cod where the couple owned and operated the Sesuit Harbor Motel in East Dennis for 28 years. They retired to their home in Brewster and then moved to Amherst in 2007 to be close to their daughter, Sheila.

Besides raising a family, managing the household, and eventually running the motel, Ruth worked as a legal secretary over the years. Later, during her retirement time on the Cape, she did volunteer work at the Natural History Museum. Ruth was an avid gardener, loved to read, was

a loyal Patriots (Tom Brady mostly) fan, and never met a dog she did not love. She was also an accomplished quilt maker and was chosen to exhibit one of her masterpieces at the New England Quilt Museum in Lowell, MA. Ruth was a member of the Amherst Garden Club and a dedicated exercise buff at Parkhurst Place.

Ruth's greatest love was her family. She and Norm celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary with them in September of 2007. She will be especially missed by her grandchildren, Kelly and Meredith, whom she adored.

Loving family members include her husband of 63 years, Norman of Amherst, NH; daughter Sheila Steele and husband Bill of Amherst NH; daughter and Pamela Sullivan and husband David of Carmel Valley, CA; and Granddaughters Kelly Steele of Charlestown, MA and Meredith (Ditty) Bannon and husband Chad of Denver, CO.

A private celebration of Ruth's life will be held at a later date. Memorial donations may be made to The Animal Rescue League of NH at 545 Route 101, Bedford, NH 03110 or Home Health & Hospice Care at 22 Prospect Street, Nashua, NH, 03060.



Alfred E. McGinnis, Sr.

AMHERST -- Alfred E. "Al" McGinnis, Sr., 73, longtime resident of Amherst, NH, died February 24, 2010 at his home. He was born in Pittsburgh, PA on June 24, 1936.

Mr. McGinnis had been employed by Hitchiner Manufacturing Company, Milford for many years.

He was a U.S. Army veteran. Mr. McGinnis enjoyed cooking and especially liked watching the Food Network.

Family members include his wife of 23 years, Janet D. (Grant) McGinnis of Amherst, NH; a daughter, Au-

drey J. McGinnis of Amherst, NH; four sons, William McGinnis of Milford, NH, Alfred E. McGinnis, Jr. and Donald R. McGinnis, both of Amherst, NH and Michael McGinnis of Littleton, NH.

There are no visiting hours. Funeral services will be held on Saturday, February 27th at 10:30 am in the Smith & Heald Funeral Home, 63 Elm Street, Milford, NH, followed by cremation. To leave an online condolence, please go to www.smith-heald.com

Forest View Cemetery Is Coming to Amherst

To the editor:

Amherst's Meadow View Cemetery is approaching its capacity over the next several years for two, four and six lot internments, and other town cemeteries have very few, if any, spaces remaining. The other cemeteries are Cricket Corner, Chestnut Hill, and behind Town Hall. As a result, the time for action on Forest View Cemetery is now.

Forest View Cemetery will occupy the land where Cemetery Fields currently exist on Merrimack Road in Amherst. This land was acquired by the Amherst Cemetery Trustees in 1993 for use as a future cemetery. Funds for the purchase of this land came from the income earned on Cemetery Trust funds over many years. The Trustees may not spend principal; only income may be spent pursuant to various Probate Court orders, supervised by the NH Attorney General's office. RSA 289:2 requires every municipality to provide one or more suitable cemeteries for the internment of deceased people within its boundaries. Until the need was manifest for additional burial space the Selectmen and Cemetery Trustees entered into an agreement in 1998 for the use of this land for playing fields. Further, a Superior Court Order of May 3, 1999 to the Town of Amherst requires that the recreational use of Cemetery Fields will terminate September 1, 2014 and that the NH Attorney General retains authority to exercise control over the Cemetery Trustees. The order states "...no further action for the same cause." So this land is for eventual Cemetery use only, and the Cemetery Trustees have no independent authority for any other use of this land. Consequently, the Cemetery Trustees are actively planning for the return of this land to its original intended purpose.

Initial landscape design has been completed for construction in stages, and it is now time for an engineering design based on the landscape layout that can produce a specification that would allow contractors to bid on actual construction. However, at present sufficient funds do not exist in the current Forest View Capital Reserve Fund for this engineering next step. Therefore, the Cemetery Trustees have placed a \$15,000 warrant article in the proposed Town Budget to be voted on at the March 9, 2010 Town Meeting election day. These funds would assist in the prudent progress of what is a Town obligation...that of providing for public cemeteries for town residents.

The eventual total cost of phased construction will not be known until the engineering design is completed and bids are returned from contractors. Should this year's Warrant Article not succeed the need for Forest View will not go away and eventually the Selectmen will be required to provide funding from elsewhere in a future town budget.

We hope this information proves useful as we approach March 9, 2010.

Respectfully,
Peter Bergin, Chair
Marie Grella
Bill Belvin
Amherst Cemetery Trustees

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