

Observer Corps
Plymouth Area League of Women Voters
COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

Background: HEDGES POND RECREATION AREA

2007 Fall Annual Town Meeting Article 16: *Hedges Pond Recreation Area*

Acquired land for preservation and recreation in Cedarville. Includes a 30-acre pond surrounded by 133 acres of woodland, beach and campground and provides a needed recreation area for southern Plymouth. **OS** (open space). \$3,150,000. (Currently, in the summer, the Recreation Department runs a day camp on 42 acres more or less, which includes an environmental education program.)

2008 Spring Special Town Meeting Article 14: *Hedges Pond Recreation Area*

Survey, consultant fees and expenses incurred in the preparation of a master plan. **RE** (recreation) \$30,000.

2010 Spring Special Town Meeting, Article 13 C: *Hedges Pond Addition*

Acquired land directly south of Hedges Pond Recreation Area providing an opportunity to create walking trails from Hedges Pond to the Elmer Raymond ball fields. It was sold to the town at one-half its assessed value. 14 acres. **OS** \$64,000.

2010 Fall Annual Town Meeting: Article 15: *Hedges Pond Preserve*:

Creation of a Town Day Camp and public park at Hedges Pond. Included are basketball and tennis courts, a universal playing field, restrooms, a public beach abutting a 30-acre pond, and environmental education programs. **RE** \$975,000.

2016 Annual Town Meeting, Article 16 E: *Recreational Area and Preserve*.

The CPC recommended to the Spring Town Meeting the acquisition of 7.8 acres of land off Hedges Pond Road to increase the size of Hedges Pond Recreational Area & Preserve. The motion passed. **RE** \$45,000.

January 26, 2023, 6PM, Center for the Arts, North Street (in person and Zoom)

Present: In person: Bill Keohan, Chair; Joan Bartlett, Vice Chair; Allen Hemberger, Clerk; Karen Buechs, Member at Large; Randy Parker, Conservation Committee Rep. and John Mahoney, Select Board Liaison. Via Zoom: Birgitta Kuehn, Planning Board Rep. Absent: Mike Tubin, Historic Commission and Russ Shirley, Housing Authority. Town Manager, Derek Brindisi was also on Zoom. In person Barry DeBlasio, Recreation Director.

Mr. Keohan had invited Mr. DeBlasio to the meeting after hearing that the Great Hall at Hedges Pond Recreational Area was to be demolished and a possible Pavilion constructed there.

Mr. DeBlasio stated that the Select Board requested that the Recreation Department investigate the possibility of extending the half-day summer camp at Hedges Pond to a full day camp. **(Goals and Priorities** of the Select Board FY 23/ Ensure a Safe and Healthy Community/: Develop Plan for Full Day

Summer Camp). Currently, the half-day summer camp is funded by a revolving fund established by the Recreation Dept in 2012. Since the campers would need a place to shelter from sun or inclement weather, a pavilion was proposed. The Recreation Department request for a pavilion was submitted to the Capital Improvements Committee as part of Article 9 of the 2023 Annual Spring Town Meeting. Subsequently the Capital Improvements Committee **did not** recommend this request for Spring Special Town Meeting. (Pavilion estimates: Labor and Material - \$150,000, FY 24; Demolition of the Great Hall- \$50,000; Equipment - \$150,000; Total Expense - \$350,000). Life span of a pavilion 15 to 20 years.

Mr. DeBlasio also said the Great Hall needs to be brought up to 21st century building codes. Mr. Keohan reminded Mr. DeBlasio that CPA Funds had stabilized the Great Hall, and the CPC continued to spend funds over the years on other amenities, like bathrooms, tennis and basketball courts, etc. Mr. DeBlasio reminded Mr. Keohan of the email he sent April 8, 2022 to Keohan regarding the intent to take down 4 of the cabins at the back of camp as recommended by Inspectional Services and Recreation. In the email he had asked Keohan if they could meet at the site, but they never managed to arrange a date to meet and look at the condition of the 4 cabins.

Mr. Brindisi interjected that he wants better communication between the CPC and Town. He asked what the goals are for Hedges Pond Recreation Area. How much oversight does the CPC still have over this property? He said he did not expect answers at this time, but said he was voicing some of his concerns about a lack of a plan.

A discussion followed among members of the CPC. They voiced their concerns that Mr. Mahoney, Liaison from the Select Board, had not contacted the CPC immediately after the Select Board discussion of the demolition of the Great Hall. They were upset that they learned of the proposed demolition of the Great Hall from other sources. The discussion became very heated, and Mr. Mahoney adamantly felt he was not remiss by not bringing this information to the committee immediately. This rancor eventually led to Ms. Bartlett making a motion to request that the Select Board replace Mr. Mahoney with another Select Board member to be liaison to the CPC. After much discussion Ms. Bartlett withdrew her motion. Mr. Brindisi witnessed this via Zoom. He did not comment on the acrimonious discussion.

Mr. Keohan requested that Mr. Brindisi contact Town Counsel regarding the progress on Articles 9 A, B, C and D passed at the 2022 Fall Annual Town Meeting. Mr. Keohan said that when the CPC hired its own lawyer/counsel, they were kept abreast of what was happening on the articles. Mr. Brindisi said he would contact Town Counsel and pass on Mr. Keohan's concerns.

Mr. Mahoney said he wanted the CPC to find a date to hold another "summit," as he referred to the meeting of the CPC and various town officials held on January 12, 2023. Mr. Keohan replied it was not a "summit" and he did not like the terminology. Mr. Keohan said it was a CPC meeting with invited Town Officials.

January 31, 2023, 6 PM, Select Board Meeting, Zoom

In attendance via Zoom: Betty Cavacco, Chair, Dickie Quintal, Vice Chair, Charlie Bletzer, Harry Helm, John Mahoney and Derek Brindisi, Town Manager.

The report here will only deal with the discussion of Article 9 on the Spring Annual Town Warrant and in particular the Recreation Department's request for \$350,000 for a pavilion at Hedges Pond Recreation Area.

Lynne Barrett, Finance Director reviewed Article 9, FY24 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN REQUESTS PRIORITIZED BY THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS COMMITTEE (CIC) ON 1/28/22. All of this information is on the town website. (Listening to Ms. Barrett's discussion at the 1/31/23 recorded meeting is very informative and provides an understanding how departments prioritize their requests.)

As mentioned above, the CIC did **not** recommend the request of the Recreation Department go to the Spring Annual Town Meeting. *Recreation: Hedges Pond Pavilion: \$350,000 with intent to write a CPC application.* The item would have been buried if not for the Community Preservation Committee becoming aware of the proposal indirectly. Mr. Bletzer, asked why was the pavilion being proposed. Mr. Brindisi answered that to meet the Select Board's goal of a full-day summer camp, the Recreation Department proposed a pavilion to provide shelter for the campers. Mr. Bletzer replied that it sounded like a good idea, but why not go to the CPC for funds? Mr. Brindisi replied that the Recreation Department decided to use the revolving account for \$100,000 and apply for State funding for the balance. The CPC became aware that the request for funding for a pavilion required the demolition of the Great Hall at Hedges Pond and became very concerned. Mr. Brindisi felt that a Demolition Delay would probably be imposed on the Great Hall.

Select Board Chair, Betty Cavacco, said she was vehemently opposed to the demolition of the Great Hall at Hedges Pond Recreation Area. The plan, she said, has always been to restore it. She said she is not against a pavilion, but it would not provide shelter from wind, cold and rain for the campers. When she was liaison to the CPC from the Select Board, the plan was always there to restore the Great Hall. She stated that when she is no longer on the Select Board she wants to be involved with the Hedges Pond Recreation Area and work to see the Great Hall saved and restored. She feels strongly this is about resources for families, and also that a restored Great Hall could be a revenue resource. She said a pavilion could be constructed at another site at Hedges Pond, but not at the site of the Great Hall.

Mr. Brindisi referred to the January 12, 2023 meeting of the Community Preservation Committee and some Town Officials where collaboration and better communication with the CPC had been the main topic of discussion. Note: it was after this 1/12/23 meeting the CPC had a brief meeting and discussed their dismay with not being made aware of the plan to demolish the Great Hall for a pavilion by Messrs. DeBlasio, Brindisi or Mahoney.

Mr. Brindisi feels that around \$3,000,000 will be needed to renovate the Great Hall. The Community Preservation Committee will not have funds available for about two years. The CPC already has Stephens Field Project and Jenny Pond Dredging Project to pay for. Mr. Brindisi suggested that the CPC be approached about funding a study and master plan for Hedges Pond Area. (Note above: In 2008 Article 14: Hedges Pond Recreation Area/Survey, consultant fees and expenses incurred in preparation of a master plan. RE \$30,000). Hopefully this plan will be reviewed before another one is created. There has even been discussion of a dog park at the site.

Mr. Brindisi has concerns about spending so much money on this building and perhaps end up with problems like the Town has assumed with the Simes House, and asked the purpose of the Great Hall. Ms. Cavacco said the topic of Hedges Pond Recreation Area and the future of the Great Hall needs to be

put on the Select Board agenda and have community input. Mr. Quintal said he just has concerns about what it will cost to renovate the Great Hall. Didn't we vote to do this in 2007 Town Meeting? What happens to projects after they are passed at Town Meeting? Mr. Brindisi reminded everyone including those watching, that there would be a site walk on Thursday, February 2, 2023, at 2:30 P.M. at Hedges Pond Recreation Area. Select Board Member Harry Helm, was concerned that this was in violation of the open meeting law. He felt if a quorum of CPC members and Select Board members attended it would be a problem. Mr. Brindisi said it would not, that site visits are done all the time on various committees. Mr. Brindisi said as a caution committee members should ask questions and defer from discussions among themselves.

Public Comment: Lee Pulis, Past President of the Herring Pond Watershed Association. Mr. Pulis also lives in South Plymouth. He said he had concerns about a full day camp because now with a half-day camp the gates are closed until noon restricting public access. What would happen with an all-day camp? He feels the Great Hall is an important part of a camp. He recalled that the Herring Pond Watershed Association donated \$5000 toward the restoration of the Great Hall. He felt that \$3 million was a very high estimate. He also felt that the community could get involved with the restoration of this building in the manner of Habitat for Humanity.

February 2, 2023, 2:30 PM

Walk about at Hedges Pond Recreation Area to look at interior and exterior of the Great Hall and the cabins slated for demolition.

Community Preservation Committee

Bill Keohan, Chair; Joan Bartlett, Vice Chair

Town Officials

Derek Brindisi, Town Manager; Charlie Bletzer, Select Board; Barry DeBlasio, Director of Community Resources; Nick Faiella, Park and Forestry Superintendent; Neil Foley, Fire Chief; David Gould, Director of Marine and Environmental Affairs; Nick Mayo, Director of Inspectional Services; Anne Slusser-Huff, Recreation Director; Pat Adlemann, Precinct 12 Town Meeting Rep; Kevin Canty, Chair of Advisory and Finance; Ginny Davis, Precinct 4 Town Meeting Rep; Frank Mand, Planning Board; Lisa O'Neill, Historic Commission; Ed Russell, Precinct 16 Town Meeting Rep.

There were a few other town employees that I could not identify and around 15 town residents. I apologize for any people not mentioned that I missed in my summary.

The residents and town staff toured the Great Hall and looked at the 4 cabins slated for demolition.

Mr. Brindisi reassured the audience gathered at the Hedges Pond Recreation site that there would be a public hearing concerning the future of Hedges Pond Recreation Area and the future of the buildings on the site. A study needs to be conducted to see if a full day camp should be located at Hedges Pond Area or in the West Plymouth Area. He predicted a full day camp could be 2 or 3 years out.

The Town wants to demolish immediately 4 cabins that are deemed dangerous. Mr. Keohan said there were plans to rehabilitate them. The renovations to the cabins was never done, and they fell into further

disrepair. Inspectional Services now deems then a hazard. Mr. Brindisi said that if approved, the use of CPC funds could be used to do a study and master plan for Hedges Pond Recreation Area.

Agenda for Select Board Meeting for February 7, 2023

Hedges Pond listed for Public Comment was postponed to another time not yet determined.