

**Mohegan Park Improvement and Development  
Committee**

**Meeting Minutes  
November 13, 2008**

Meeting called to order at 5:17 pm

**Present:** Brandon Hyde (Chair), Alderman Chris Coutu, Alderman Pete Desaulniers, Alderman Jon Jacaruso, Kerry Bilda. Also Joe Loyacano (NPW), Tim Smith (citizen).

**Excused:** Kevin Crowley

**Meeting Minutes:**

Minutes from September meeting accepted: K Bilda, J Jacaruso 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Finance Report:**

Report states there currently is \$65,602.03 in the Mohegan Park Development account. Financial report accepted: J Jacaruso, P Desaulniers 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**New Business:**

No new business to report.

**Old Business:**

Discussion held on the closing of Mohegan Park Road.

B Hyde stated UCONN students from the Landscape Arts program would probably be willing to donate time to develop designs for the section of road if it is closed permanently.

P Desaulniers stated he believes closing the road was right for safety reasons. Many people use the park and if the road is not closed for good then it should be closed seasonally.

K Bilda stated that the Norwich Technical High School will be opening soon on Mahan Drive. This will inevitably increase the traffic through the park. The park should not be used as a drive through and for safety reasons the road should be closed.

J Jacaruso stated that this committee is an "improvement committee" and that closing the road improves the park. Park center is peaceful when no traffic is going through the park. He also stated that closing the road does not limit access to the park.

**Break in discussion to allow Public Comment:**

Citizen Tim R Smith presented the committee with a handout (See attached).

Mr Smith discussed the MPIDC needing a mission statement and a vision. He also stated that in defense of closing Mohegan Park road permanently, when the Commission of the City Plan requested a plan to close the road, Mr Smith stated "The plan is to make Mohegan Park the official green space of Norwich".

**Old Business:**

Discussion switched to the feasibility of contacting UCONN to inquire about landscape design. P Desaulniers stated there should be no problems to look into it, as the service would be at no cost the city.

J Loyacano reminded the committee that the park is tough to maintain and to consider this while reviewing options.

J Jacaruso suggested low maintenance designs. The committee agreed this would be an important aspect of what will go into the space.

C Coutu brought up the issue that many Senior Citizens enjoy driving in Mohegan Park and that Mohegan Park road is the easiest to navigate. Therefore, he has concerns about closing the road.

Motion made to recommend to the City Council; "The permanent closing of Mohegan Park road." P Desaulniers, J Jacaruso 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Vote taken, 4-1 to close Mohegan Park road permanently.

(In favor, P Desaulniers, J Jacaruso, K Bilda, B Hyde; Opposed, C Coutu).

Motion made to accept meeting schedule for 2009. C Coutu, P Desaulniers 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Brief discussion held regarding the idea of a Mohegan Park calendar. This item will be placed on the agenda for the January meeting.

Meeting Adjourned 6:10 pm. J Jacarsuo, K Bilda 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Submitted,

  
Kerry Bilda

**BUSINESS RELATIVE TO THE DISCONTINUANCE OF A PORTION OF MOHEGAN PARK ROAD      Comments presented at Regular Council Meeting 10/06/08**

Current timelines call for closure June 1 through November 20, substantially six months of the year.

It is fact that while signage indicates park closure at sunset – the roads are open for thru traffic 24/7. (just confirmed that today with NPD.)

Four of the six months under consideration December thru March experience typical New England weather, including short daylight hours and early afternoon shadows.

Dec./Jan. Sunset is before 5 pm – not much benefit for rush hour traffic.

Feb./Mar. Sunset is before 6 pm.

In January sunrise is as late as 7:18 am and through all winter months well after 6 am.

How many streetlights along the stretch? Or for that matter the parks' roads as a whole?

Speed limit? IF GOING THE SPEED LIMIT 15 mph = 4 min/mile

(Even running in the park, its difficult to stay within its speed limit)

Rockwell, McKinley, Boswell, Norwich Av., Hunters, Harland all at least 25 mph = 2.4 min/mile

Long time residents of this community know that when one is asked “What's happening in the park” or “There was a fire in the park today” that the commenter is speaking of Mohegan Park. Mohegan Park is not “A” park it is “The” park.

However we see in print that:

Planning Commission: returns a negative recommendation because of “no plan” for area closed off.

Bulletin's own editorial board: no compelling reason for permanent closure. Soon, at this meeting under Reports of Committees you will get, hopefully, the substance i.e. data and facts for the Commission's negative recommendation – these data and facts must go beyond a lack of plan for this strip – as the closure stands alone AS the plan, the plan to preserve the park.

**Part II Comments distributed to the Mohegan Park Improvement and Development Advisory Committee, November 13, prior to Regular Council Meeting to be held 11/17/08**

Park perimeter will welcome new neighbors after winter break: Norwich Tech

NT maintains automotive curriculum, i.e. automotive shop. Where will cars be test driven?

NT participates in cross country and will bring additional running recreation to the park via daily training and periodic meets;

NT will yield additional yellow buses to the local roads;

NT brings a substantially younger population compared to former community college:

Safe to say average age of those old enough to drive at Tech is about 17 years old.

Average age of the current college population, according to the Fall 2008 Preliminary Enrollment Report is 27 years old. Not looking to stereotype BUT the community needs to be concerned with this population swap.

The road in question, a section of Mohegan Park Road beginning at the stop sign at the base of Wilderness Road, and junctioning with the other end of Wilderness Road at the back right corner of Spaulding Pond, is ½ mile, 289 feet, or .55 of a mile;

The alternate or required route around the pond is the entirety of Wilderness Road and is 1 mile, 581 feet in length, or 1.11 miles; an increase of ½ mile, 292 feet, or .56 of a mile. At the posted 15 mph speed limit = an extended drive of two minutes, 13 sec; if exceeding speed limit to 25 mph it is an extended drive of 1 minute, 20 sec.

Is this really too much to ask for the preservation of our only true park?

If one cannot navigate the ups and downs of this thruway route then one cannot possibly drive in most of Norwich.

Incidentals of seasonal opening/closing:

Time and funds expensed relative to signage prep and gate stabilization.

Reversing and reengaging the motorist's mindset.

In an October 22 Norwich Bulletin article titled "Norwich Wants to Keep Site Rural" a member of Norwich's Planning Commission noted that a tract of land proposed for development is "one of the most pristine areas left in the city." This comment from a member of a commission that unanimously sent a negative recommendation on our municipal park's road closure proposal defies logic. The land he was referring to is off Scotland Road, and not likely to ever be open to the general citizenry. While Mohegan Park is just a walk away from our inner city, and is the people's park – all the people. Something doesn't smell right here.

Three things certain to me from this exercise:

1) too much layering - MP Improvement and Development Advisory Committee, Planning Commission, Planning Director, City Council, NPD, Is there a public safety commission? and lets throw Norwich Bulletin in for good measure.

2) I better understand the mix of tenants in Business Park aka Industrial Park. Because of vacant sites, and a rush "to do something" we now have residential cluster housing, a nonprofit, a baseball stadium, and now a lack of marketable land suitable for business growth. All this I assume largely because there was no compelling reason to deny the non-business applicants since land was available and underutilized. TAKE THE LONG VIEW!

3) This city council would do well for themselves and this community to charge the MP Advisory Committee to propose a vision statement for Mohegan Park and a related mission statement for the Committee.

We've had proposals for a botanical garden, an amphitheater, a carousel, a chapel, relocation of dog pound, which sadly will relocate closer to the center "Been there for years and never been a problem."

Timothy R. Smith  
43 Beech Street  
Norwich