

PETERBOROUGH

Town looks to add spaces

Select board weighs three options for future of downtown parking

By Dave Anderson
Monadnock Ledger-Transcript

PETERBOROUGH — Is Peterborough a good town to park in? That’s a question town officials will be asking at a public hearing on downtown parking on Monday at the Town Hall, where they’ll discuss ways to provide additional parking spaces, both long-term and short-term, and get input from residents.

Town Administrator Pam Brenner said Wednesday that the effort was spurred by feedback from meetings held last fall, when the Select Board discussed changing the time limits for various downtown parking spaces. Although no changes

were made, Brenner said residents clearly sent a message that the town should look into ways to provide additional parking. So on Monday, residents will be presented with three alternatives that officials have been researching.

“We were hearing that we needed to broaden our options,” Brenner said. “We’re not making recommendations. We tried to work on several possible scenarios.”

The first option, known as NowPark, will be about using current parking spaces — the municipal lots on Depot Street and on Summer Street and the long-term parking spaces along the Contoocook River near the Toadstool Bookshop — in different ways. Brenner said that

could involve changes in time limits, a different configuration of the lots, partnerships with owners of private parking spaces, possible shuttle services for long-term parkers from outlying parking areas, or even leaving things as they are.

A second choice, called NewBuild, will focus on the potential for building a parking garage somewhere in the downtown area. Several possible sites have been identified, including the Depot Street municipal lot and the land on Vine Street that is now used for parking by Divine Mercy Parish and could go on the market when the church moves to its new building off Route 101. Other possibilities could be the Guernsey Green

land behind the Town Hall or space behind 45 Main Street across from the Town Hall, both on land that’s now privately owned.

The third alternative, known as NewPark, will describe two possible locations for additional parking lots. One site is the land behind the GAR Hall on Grove Street, which the Select Board has agreed to sell to businessmen Cy Gregg and Stan Fry, with the sale contingent on the town building a parking lot behind the building. Another possible site would be the Summer Street fire station, if the Fire Department were to move to a different location.

Those attending Monday’s meeting, which will be from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Town Hall, will



Staff photo by Dave Anderson

A pile of plowed snow covered a couple of parking spaces at the corner of the municipal lot on Depot Street, but the rest of the public parking lot quickly filled up Wednesday.

break into three groups, to hear 15-minute presentations on each of the three options, including information on how much they would cost. They’ll have a chance to offer feedback at the end of each session and also at a combined question-and-answer session at the

end of the meeting.

Additional information about the three alternatives will be going up on the town’s website today. Brenner said feedback from the meeting may be used to plan a proposal that could go to voters at Town Meeting in May.

ANTRIM

Tobacco banned from all parks

By Lindsey Arceci
Monadnock Ledger-Transcript

ANTRIM — The Select Board agreed upon a new town rule on Tuesday which bans the use of tobacco products at all town parks as well as the town beach and boat launch.

If there is no cigarette smoking in town parks then it will be easier for police to detect if individuals are smoking other things, like illicit substances, Parks and Recreation Commission Chair Joan Gorga said at Tuesday’s Select Board meeting. Instead of bringing numerous young people to court, Police Chief Scott Lester said Tuesday, police would be able to issue a notice of trespass, which could last 24 hours or potentially up to 60 days, if repeat offenses occurred.

Discussion focused on how to inform the public of the prohibited use of tobacco and as well as clarify what the intended purposes are for the parks and beach.

“We can’t list everything we’re trying to address,” Lester said at the meeting.

With the new rule approved, the Parks and Recreation Commission will now be responsible for constructing covered signs and find a way to address the permitted and not permitted uses for these areas of town before the rule takes effect.

“It’s really all geared to trying to limit the drug use at Memorial Park,” Gorga said in an interview Wednesday. “We’re trying to find a positive way of addressing what’s been going on at the park without laws.”

In regards to banning tobacco at the town beach and boat launch, Gorga said the Parks and Recreation Department has jurisdiction of the town land, but not the bodies of water.

JAFFREY

Fireworks return in 2014

Security concerns move festival to Cheshire Fairgrounds

By Hayden James
Monadnock Ledger-Transcript

Atlas Pyro Vision Productions announced that the Jaffrey Festival of Fireworks will return in 2014, albeit with a new name and location. The new Monadnock Festival of Fireworks, to be held at the Cheshire Fairgrounds in Swanzey, will be a carbon copy of the original festival, a 20-year tradition for Jaffrey that was discontinued in 2012 after a bomb threat sent to officials named the festival as a target.

The threatening letter was sent to the Jaffrey Police Department, Chamber of Commerce and the Keene Sentinel, and prompted Police Chief William Oswalt to call in county, state and federal agencies for an investigation. During a brief phone interview with Oswalt on Monday, he said investigators are no closer to finding a suspect.

The Chamber, Atlas and the Silver Ranch Airpark were offering reward money for information, but that also didn’t turn up any leads.

Atlas vice president Matt Shea said that after eight months of planning and an offer by Cheshire Fairgrounds to house the event, they’re bringing it all together for fall 2014.

He said that the Jaffrey Airpark, where the original festival started and was held for 20 years, was too large for their security concerns, and the cost of having additional officers on hand would have made ticket prices too expensive.

“Having an event at a one-day venue was not the way to go,” said Shea. “The venue was just too big for security.”

Atlas received an outpouring of support from clients and community members to bring the festival back — some clients, said Shea, even offered new event locations but at the end of the day they didn’t match because they weren’t located in the Monadnock community, were too small, or were not secure.

The new location at Cheshire Fairgrounds addresses all of the security and price concerns, he said, but presents new challenges for parking, as it will only be able to park 1,400 cars.

The fairground is used to hosting events, Shea said; it’s fenced in, has its own security staff, it’s a smaller venue

and tickets will be pre-sold.

He said that while the airfield was impossible to secure since it was open on all sides, the fairgrounds can be easily secured by a small detail in the days leading up to the event and during its setup.

“They’ve been great at accommodating us in the planning stages,” Shea said, of the fairgrounds organizers.

In addition, Shea said that Atlas has already coordinated with Swanzey Police and Fire to prepare.

The Jaffrey Chamber of Commerce was involved with the festival since its inception, and while the new Monadnock Festival of Fireworks will not be held in Jaffrey, the Jaffrey Chamber will still be involved.

“We decided to involve the Chamber because it has always been a Chamber event,” said Shea.

Plus, they’re experts at parking cars, he added.

Even though the event couldn’t be held in Jaffrey and the event location had to be moved, he says keeping it in the area was something they wanted to do.

“We were able to keep it in the Monadnock Region and that was key to us,” Shea said.

Since the venue is smaller, in a new location, and just starting again this year, Shea expects between 12,000 and 14,000 people coming to the show — about half the number of their 20th anniversary show, which drew a record attendance of 32,000 people.

“We know the first year it’ll be something new,” said Shea. “So we’ll be working things out.”

He added that while the new festival will be essentially the same as the traditional celebration, they could be looking to add new activities for participants.

Atlas plans and coordinates the city of Boston’s annual Fourth of July fireworks celebrations; working there and seeing the city’s resilience after the Boston Marathon bombing gave organizers the extra drive to make the Monadnock Festival of Fireworks happen, Shea said.

“Seeing them come back from what happened has been spiritual motivation,” said Shea. “Twenty years of great fireworks shows doesn’t just evaporate. We’re going to go on and persevere.”

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Matt Shea, vice president of Atlas Fireworks

FRANCESTOWN

Town seeks legal help with Crotched

By Lindsey Arceci
Monadnock Ledger-Transcript

FRANCESTOWN — The town reached out to a New Hampshire attorney last week for assistance in contacting Crotched Mountain Ski and Ride regarding compliance with a zoning variance for outdoor lighting.

Crotched was asked to install shields to 38 lights in their 2012 expansion to comply with a variance, to allow the new lights that proved to have regional impact. Town Code Enforcement Officer Ed Hunter last spoke with Crotched Mountain Manager Pat Terry on Feb. 3, Hunter said in an interview Wednesday. Hunter said Terry told him on Feb. 3 that the shields were on order and that he would contact Hunter once he got a date of when the shields would arrive. Hunter said he has not heard anything from Terry since then.

Hunter said he is leaving it up to the Select Board to make decisions of how to go forward.

Terry did not return multiple messages by press time on Wednesday.

Town Administrator Michael Branley contacted Concord Attorney Matthew Serge last week for assistance with this situation, Serge confirmed in an interview Tuesday. Serge said he is “trying to pursue Crotched vigorously” about the shield installation.

When questioned about this, Branley said in an interview Tuesday that any concerns about the shields should be directed to Hunter. On Wednesday, Hunter said he does not know what prompted Branley to reach out to Serge.

“We’re going to increase some pressure on the mountain,” Serge said. He plans to send a communication out to the mountain this week, explaining the situation, and that the mountain needs to get this resolved quickly.

Hunter established a Jan. 22 deadline for shield installation and neither town officials nor Serge have received confirmation from Crotched that the shields are up, Serge said.

The Zoning Board granted Crotched Mountain the variance on Nov. 26 and it is still

unclear if the shields, if any, have been installed, Hunter said.

This discussion over lights at Crotched Mountain began in the summer of 2013 when residents of Frankestown, abutting towns and beyond began speaking out about the brightness of the lights near the mountain’s summit.

Although this issue over installation of the light shields could be brought to court, Serge said he would like to see if he can achieve a resolution locally. He has worked with the town for 11 years now.

Hancock resident Ted Leach said he doesn’t think the shields have been installed yet. “It looks like a car lot up there,” Leach said in an interview Tuesday about the new, 2012 lights.

Leach said he agrees the lights should be shielded, but the job is not getting done. “It’s obvious what they’re trying to do here, they’re trying to wait out the season,” Leach said.

“They leave them on all the time,” Leach said about the 38 lights in the 2012 expansion. The mountain will sometimes turn them off at 10 p.m., he said, then turn them back on again at midnight and keep them on until 6 a.m.

Terry has said at multiple Zoning Board hearings that the mountain would only have the lights on for skiing and slope maintenance. And the lights remain on until 3 a.m. for Midnight Madness, which takes place Fridays and Saturday, beginning Dec. 27 through March 1 — a total of 20 days.

But Leach said the lights are on beyond these times and that the slope maintenance trucks have plenty of lighting on them.

“We’re still working through the situation,” Branley said in an interview Monday. “We have been in repeated communication [with Crotched Mountain].”

“Most of the communication has been through Ed Hunter,” Branley said.

He did not know the last time Hunter spoke with Crotched Mountain officials. When asked if he knew why the shields were not up yet, Branley said he had no comment.

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CONVAL CALENDAR
Meetings Are Subject to Change

Thursday, February 20
Selectman’s Advisory Committee
SAU Board Room • 7:00 PM

Tuesday, February 25
Policy Committee Meeting
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