

**TOWN OF DARIEN  
WEED BEACH COMMITTEE OF PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
PUBLIC INFORMATION SESSION  
JANUARY 26, 2016**

ATTENDANCE: Lorene Bora, Chair; Dennis Conetta, Diane Conologue,  
Amy Doering, Werner Domittner, Mary Flynn, Goody Gray, Marc Ioli.  
STAFF: Parks & Recreation: Jim Coghlan, Pamela Gery, Director,  
OTHER: Weston & Sampson: Dan Biggs, Sherry Ruane

WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

Ms. Gery introduced herself and welcomed the public and thanked all for the wonderful turnout tonight to this information session. She noted that the Weed Beach Committee has been working for the past several months on the development of this presentation and introduced members of the Committee as noted above.

Ms. Bora reviewed the agenda and explained the format:

- An open feedback forum and information session as the preliminary stage of presenting concepts in response to surveys and public interest on improvements to Weed Beach.
- Order of the information session is to have the project consultant team deliver their presentation followed by question/answers then public comments.
- Guidelines of public comments would be limited to two minutes, to refrain from applause, to be kept civil, and on the topic of Weed Beach expansion.

Presentation and Discussion with Weston & Sampson of Conceptual Drawings  
for the Weed Beach Expansion Project

Ms. Bora introduced Mr. Dan Biggs and Sherry Ruane with Weston & Sampson. Mr. Biggs gave an overview of the firm, delivered the power point presentation and fielded questions and comments from the audience.

Prior to the start of the presentation a member of the public clarified that the opening slide included Noroton Bay, but is not included in the area of the map for the improvements to Weed Beach. Mr. Biggs acknowledged and agreed that Noroton Bay is not a part of this expansion project.

\*Questions/Answers:

*\*It is noted that names of those members of the public that spoke were not detected due to placement of microphones and in most instances were inaudible in the recording.*

## Questions from the public:

Peter Wilson, Nearwater Lane asked if flood zone considerations were taken into account with regard to the two past coastal storms. Mr. Briggs explained that there was analysis of flood impacts and with each option there are pros/cons and alternatives and as the plan evolves further, with elevations and the final details will be put into process for evaluation of flood zone conditions as a master plan is developed.

Yael Vanhulst, 2 Baywater Lane asked about the traffic input and safety and security on Noroton Bay residents and if any focus group studies were done. Mr. Briggs explained that further studies on traffic and other impacts will be done on the alternatives as the plan evolves further beyond concept. He referred to the slide in the presentation that

Ms. Gery spoke to clarify that this is still the preliminary stage and we are still taking input but this was the big picture concept development that feasibility studies will follow.

Terry Frank, Co-President of Noroton Bay Association asked if the committee met with Andrew Black.

Ms. Gery replied that he is who she had sent the message to invite. She did speak with him and had him invite the Noroton Bay Association to the previous open house session back in November about 45 neighbors came out and attended the presentation. She added that they did comment and provide feedback in an open dialogue forum

Yael Vanhulst, 2 Baywater Lane spoke again and stated that she was president of the Noroton Bay Association and many people have serious concerns on security and traffic; all this has taken them off guard with the progress of the plan

Mr. Biggs explained that this is a preliminary stage with gathering input on which of these schemes are liked and disliked; and is not far along at all, and many further phases are part of the development planning. He explained that these are still ideas and what happens after this is an involved process

Ms. Bora clarified that this design in the presentation is in response to the surveys and part of the information gathering process that will assimilate and funnel it to evaluation by the Committee for recommendation on next steps of feasibility studies, impact studies, operational and budget impacts. Once the committee hones in they will make a recommendation to the Parks & Recreation commission that will hold another public hearing; then on to the Zoning Board and many other steps in the process.

Mr. Daniel Deambrasio, 7 Waverly Road questioned the maps, so 2,000 said they wanted a pool somewhere in Darien, and wondered if we should ask those people where the pool should be.

Mr. Biggs returned to the slide that outlined survey responses and explained the method of gathering responses to show the number of people and what they favored and their interests. The responses prior were a pool at any place in Town and he clarified these options had to be focused on data on how to make improvements to Weed Beach.

A member of the public (name not given) asked if other options were evaluated for the location of the amenities listed and asked to review the numbers of the survey responses for any bias. Mr. Biggs explained that as outlined on the slide, survey responses were culminated to show the number of people and what they favored and their interests. The responses to initial surveys were to have pool at any place in Town.

Ms. Sarah Partel 22 Weed Beach Road stated that there could have been inherent bias on the survey what attempts were made to address feasibility.

Mr. John Tranker 196 Nearwater Lane concerned about bias in the survey. A lot of people want to see a pool in Town and many ... noted that in reality there are tidal zones and impact of storms and the shoreline of structures, most of the plans are not feasible and would never pass an engineering study. Not much consideration is made of a buffer—first slide--what concerns are addressed for all neighbors.

Mr. Biggs spoke on Town's request of the Committee is to how to best determine appropriate land use for this property, and that the goals of this preliminary stage were to address public interest and responses to the survey.

Ms. Gery noted again that the goal at this stage is to present the concepts in response to the interests of the public as culminated from the surveys and feasibility studies will be done along the various next stages.

Ms. Bora clarified that the Town has asked this Committee not to include Short Lane and that has been closed and no access off Nearwater Lane.

Ms. ---- asked to elaborate on the lights for the tennis courts and plans. Mr. Biggs explained that there was interest in expansion of the courts, but the size and periods of operation have not been determined at this point.

Jan Raymond stated that this plan is backwards in contrast to how Town Boards operate with goals of land use and environmental protection and outlined her experience on the Land Trust Board. She spoke on the need to remediate flooding and the increasing environmental impacts of adding an infrastructure of this nature, and asked why there were no costs presented or rankings of the options and again noted that this was all very backwards. She noted that a pool would have the problem of removal of sand and the continual maintenance costs involved.

Ms. Bora asked to go back to the process and explained that there are many questions still to be evaluated and many challenges that the goal at this stage is to present the concepts in response to the interests of the public and guideposts from the community as culminated from the surveys and feasibility studies will be done along the various next stages once we know what direction is to be taken.

Paul Tombalochi, 30 Hilton Street, said he hasn't heard much about the pump stations, and asked if any change to the purpose will take place on the pump stations or remediation of the lot of land. Ms. Gery addressed this by saying the pump stations will not be impacted at all in this process, they will stay as is.

Mr. Jim Fandansil asked about seasonal timing and how this would be handled and that most of Weed Beach is not used this type of year maybe three months at best only in the summer, and will cost a lot to manage. Mr. Biggs explained that from the data each option will have alternatives –one idea is to have use throughout the year cross country skiing or show showing the spectrum of desires of town and evaluated with a balance across the options of Town recreational needs.

Lee Morrison, Juniper Road asked if anyone looked at Waveny Park and the New Canaan Town pool. Ms. Gery replied that she has been in contact with New Canaan Director and community members and they are very happy with a Town self-sustained pool for the past ten years. She added that the Committee is listening to the public and there are so many stages with a lot more work to do to refine the options and it is there obligation to listen to the people and there are so many stages to everyone's point, but they are still trying to refine it.

(Name not audible) asked if a season or positive feedback and data if not feasible at the beach will that expand the charge to explore the feasibility study, constructability or traffic impacts done on locating a pool elsewhere.

Ms. Bora noted that members of this committee are also members of the Parks and Recreation Commission and the survey was designed for feedback on the overall viewpoint of the Town.

Ms. Gery replied that the Town is 97% developed so there aren't many options, and yes the Town has 'feelers' for other sites such as The Diller Property and The Edgerton Property; so the answer is yes, absolutely looking at other sites. They initially thought the pool would not fit at the beach area, but once wetland studies were done they realized there was space.

Bob Green, 23 Nearwater Lane asked how many parking spaces are there now and how many additional would be required, and in comparison to New Canaan Waveny Park and the amount of activity has in the summer how does this compare to the plans for Weed Beach.

Mr. Biggs outlined that there are currently 159 and 130 additional are recommended for a total of 289. Mr. Green asked for the basis of 289

Ms. Gery explained that New Canaan would like to see more membership and yes it is a bigger park but they didn't delve into the number of parking spaces there, but again, specific plans would depend on the uses of the property. Mr. Biggs explained current zoning ordinance was used as basis for use of property and structure requirements of the state guidelines and facilities of the park.

Ms. Jean \_\_\_\_\_ 11 Juniper Road asked about general use parking for residents -- does it include special event parking or if pool, are accommodations made for meets and shows, etc. The reality is that overflow parking is on Nearwater lane and as we all know there is no parking available there. Mr. Biggs replied that rough numbers would not take into account special events and parking plans would be added based on the options and structural needs evaluated.

#### Public Comments:

1. Peter Etter, Red Bine Road, asked how many people in the audience lived north of I-95. Not many...He asked not to judge the reaction to the plans and responses based on the stickers as this was a silly way to track responses. He stated that there are not enough options for that type of survey, supposing if you liked all, you can't indicate that with these sticker codes. He reviewed the history of improvements made in the 80's with a first phase of dunes and grasses that are now overgrown and you can't see over the dunes. He stated that what is really needed is clean sand.
2. Carolene Luz, 29 Fairfax Avenue spoke on the positive impact that a pool has for a community and asked to please consider the divers. She asked to please include depth with a pool design to incorporate a diving pool.
3. Peter Van Winkle, 31 Baywater Drive spoke on the process as being backwards and would rather find land that will sustain the plans first. He added that less is best and building in a depression area full of sand is not a sustainable option. There should be another option – leave it alone.
4. Mike Kiernan 295 Post Road spoke in support of a Town Pool – doesn't care where—where there is a pool, there's a way; suggested that shuttle service can be an option to deal with traffic.
5. Pam Domittner 25 Nearwater Lane spoke on how her children ride their bikes and despite traffic concerns, she feels it is safe in the summer. She shared other comments made that Darien doesn't need a pool because it has clubs, but it took her seven years on a waiting list—so clubs are limited. She said she grew up in Simsbury and a Town pool worked out well and would love to see this in Darien as children need to learn to swim as a life skill. She added that she lives on Nearwater and the traffic is not bad on this street at all.

Ms. Gery thanked all that spoke and offered to the audience to e-mail any further questions to her and noted her e-mail address is on the Town website.

The information session was concluded at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
M. Knox  
Telesco Secretarial Services