

LONG BEACH WEST BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MEETING
SEPTEMBER 13, 2011

The Mayor's Long Beach West Blue Ribbon Commission conducted a meeting on Tuesday, September 13, 2011 in the Council Chambers of Stratford Town Hall, 2715 Main Street, Stratford, CT pursuant to notice duly posted.

Commission Members in Attendance - Chairman Patrick Gribbon, Milan Bull, Morgan Kaolian, Devin Santa, Marcia Stewart, John Zbell - Non-voting members - Carol Szymanski - DEP, Brian Carey - Conservation Officer, Andrew French - US Fish & Wildlife, David Killeen - Town Planner, Sharon Marino - US Fish & Wildlife, Capt. Joseph McNeil - Stratford Police

Commission Members Absent - Edward Scinto

Call to Order - Chairman Gribbon called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m.

Correspondence - None

Committee Reports/Reviews - Distributed and entered into record - 1) Milford Beach Photos, Facilities and Activities - submitted by Morgan Kaolian 2) Photos Barrier Beach, Facilities and Management Initiatives - submitted by Geoff Steadman 3) Town of Stratford - Long Beach - Master Plan Map 4) Waterfront Harbor Management Commission letter 1/10/2008 5) Letter submitted to news outlets by former Mayor James Miron 2/8/2008

1) Commission discussed Milford Beach photos
2) Commission discussed Barrier Beach photos and several locations in New York
3) Commission discussed map of Long Beach - Ms. Stewart noted that the entrance is confined with sand dunes on the left and the beginning of the marsh on the right. The Commissioners discussed ways to reconfigure the parking lot - noted sand was lost during storm - discussed applying for emergency DEP permit to put sand back on the beach.

A) Sand Management Area - Very little usable sand - needs replenishing - high priority is the quality of sand - noted shells, which are 4-5' deep, are a health hazard. Mr. Santa discussed Army Corps of Engineers dredging the Housatonic - no equipment available to pump directly on the beach although anything can be done with money. Mr. Carey and Mr. Gribbon discussed building dunes and planting grass to maintain protection.

B) Long Beach Visitor Center - Commission questioned sewer line extension, concession facility and signage. Mr. Zbell discussed dune walk. Mr. Santa questioned number of parking spaces and the improvement of the parking lot.

C) Boardwalk Gazebo and Observation Platform - Discussed two (2) boardwalks to the end of the property - Mr. Bull suggested having the boardwalk end at the marsh. Mr. Gribbon would like to see a gazebo with raised platform for viewing similar to Milford.

D) Outdoor Education Center and Dunes Camping Area

E) West Gateway Area - Discussed Bridgeport's plans for recreational area.

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Ms. Szymanski from the DEP noted kayak launches need permit, controlled access between sand dunes and informed the Commission that a barrier beach cannot extend sewer or water lines - suggested composting toilet.

Old Business - None

New Business - Andrew French informed the Commission that the US Fish & Wildlife is interested in purchasing an easement over the property with the Town of Stratford retaining underlying fee. He noted the US Fish & Wildlife would not close more than 50% of the beach - closures would be driven by the nesting of Piping Plovers. Would be managed as part of the Stuart McKinney refuge. He also noted that without the US Fish & Wildlife going after funding to develop would be difficult. Mr. Kaolian questioned why the US Fish & Wildlife cannot participate without an easement? Mr. French agreed that could be done after a specific plan is formulated. Mr. Kaolian believes before an easement is considered, US Fish & Wildlife needs to present, not a conceived plan, but a proposal that would include actual projects that have received legal, documented approvals from all of the required agencies, I.e. - environmental, Stratford Planning and Zoning, building departments. We have had proposals in conceptual form and that is not enough; and that is not a guarantee this Commission needs before there is any consideration for an easement. Mr. French agreed. Mr. Zbell wanted to know Bridgeport's involvement - Mr. French noted the US Fish & Wildlife had spoken to Bridgeport approximately five (5) years ago.

Mr. French noted by selling an easement to the US Fish & Wildlife would put them in a better position to do what they wanted to do but would also help the Town do what they wanted to do with the property. Mr. Carey is in favor of a partnership with the US Fish & Wildlife. Mr. Gribbon brought up the fact that the Government walked away from the Army Engine Plant and would like to protect the Town from the same thing happening at Long Beach West - possibly clause stating contract would be null and void. Mr. French feels the Town Attorney would have to work that out with their attorney's. Mr. Gribbon feels the intentions of the US Fish & Wildlife should be discussed more openly. Mr. French noted their intentions are to manage land for wildlife - the guiding principle is "what is best interest of wildlife" - wants to interface people with wildlife.

Mr. French stated that once the Town and US Wildlife can get through easement and price they can work together to put in public access infrastructure. Noted they can be of help at federal level for projects. US Fish & Wildlife cannot make money commitment until Stratford decides what they want to do with this parcel. Ms. Marino, from the US Fish & Wildlife, sees this as a partnership with the US Fish & Wildlife a partner the Town can count on. Mr. Carey noted that regardless of an easement on the property the US Fish & Wildlife can still enforce the endangered species act.

Mr. Gribbon would like to see a plan and then let the powers to be make the decision. He asked the Commissioners to review the handouts and have notes ready for the next meeting.

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Other - Mr. Gribbon would like the next meeting to be held on Tuesday, October 11th

Adjournment - There being no other matters to discuss, Mr. Zbell made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:39 p.m. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kaolian. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectively Submitted,

Gail De Cilio
Secretary