



# City of Woonsocket, RI

## Planning Board Meeting Minutes

**Date/Time:** Monday, December 9, 2019 | 6 p.m.  
**Location:** City Hall | Second Floor Conference Room  
169 Main St, Woonsocket, RI 02895

I. Call to Order

Chairman Finlay called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

II. Attendance Review

Planning Board Members Present:

- a. Ken Finlay, Chairman
- b. Ron Miller, Secretary
- c. Wendall Gardner
- d. Jon Pratt

Planning Board Members Absent:

- a. Roji Eappen, Vice Chairman

Others in Attendance:

- a. Mayor Lisa Baldelli-Hunt, Mayor
- b. Kevin Proft, Administrative Officer/City Planner

III. **PUBLIC HEARING: Review the City's Cass Park Master Plan and the Outdoor Recreation Grant (DEM) application and vote to approve or deny said application. The City's application requests funding for improvements to Cass Park's recreational facilities.**

Chairman Finlay opened the public hearing at 6:07 p.m., introduced the topic for discussion, and invited the Mayor to speak regarding the proposal.

Mayor Lisa Baldelli-Hunt stated that Cass Park is 60 acres and abuts the High School and Career & Technical School and serves as the location for the schools' athletic facilities. She stated that DEM funded recreation projects are focused on providing the whole community with recreation space, not just the schools. She said that the application under consideration – like the City's previous proposals – would benefit the entire community, not just the schools. She said the grant application requires matching funds from the City (20% or \$80,000 on a \$400,000 grant) and that the Department of Public Works would provide said match, mostly through in-kind services. She listed Cass Park projects already completed, including a new parking lot, improvements around Cass Pond, the demolition of an out-dated warming hut, the construction of two full-sized basketball courts, the replacement of playground equipment,

the construction of a new softball field, and improvements at the baseball field. She said this application will focus on demolishing the existing track and building a new track to offer community members of all ages improved exercise and social opportunities. She said the City is applying for the maximum grant amount of \$400,000. She stated that space would be reserved at the center of the track for a potential football field, but that this field would not be part of the current grant. She said the City was taking an incremental approach that was within its budget. She stated that DEM is impressed with Woonsocket's results from prior grants, so the Mayor believes the City could receive a full award.

Ron Miller, Planning Board Member, asked what would happen in the area vacated by the old track.

The Mayor stated that moving the track further into the park could allow the City to construct additional parking for the track. She noted that if the football field was moved to the track facility in the future, more parking would be required to accommodate spectators. She noted that the parking area behind 366 Cumberland Street does not technically belong to the City. Instead, the city holds an easement on this land to allow parking. She noted that the plan being submitted focused on the track facility, not the parking area, but that DEM is generally flexible with the way in which grant awards are spent as long as the City stays within the project.

Chairman Finlay asked whether the new track would be constructed to meet the relevant standards to allow track meets to be held at the facility.

The Mayor stated that the new track would meet the required standards.

Kevin Proft, Administrative Officer, noted that he had developed the diagram/map that the Planning Board was provided and that it was meant to give an approximation of the proposed project. He stated that it was not an engineered site plan.

Mr. Miller asked whether the hill in the center of the park would have to come down to accommodate the new track location and whether that would impact the access road running through the park.

The Mayor stated that the access road would remain closed to public vehicular traffic and that it would be used primarily by Public Safety and DPW vehicles. The mayor said that allowing public traffic in the park could result in accidents. The Mayor stated that the topography would require excavation. She noted that the plan was not set in stone. The application is intended to show DEM the vision, but details could change when more detailed plans are developed.

Jonathan Prattt, Planning Board Member, asked what the current deficiency is with Dionne Track that prevented meets from being held there.

The Mayor said she believed it was the condition of the surface. She also noted the existing location is not ideal because it cannot accommodate bleachers or additional parking.

Chairman Finlay asked about the start date.

Mr. Proft stated that the grant deadline is December 11, 2019 and the project start date is July 1, 2020.

The Mayor stated that she and the administration are excited about this opportunity. She said Janet Coit, DEM Director, has been receptive in the past and impressed with the City's outcomes. She said City-led improvements in WWII Memorial Park after the park was handed over to the City by DEM have shown DEM that the City is a committed partner.

Chairman Finlay opened the hearing to public comment. No members of the public came forward.

Chairman Finlay asked for a motion to approve the City's application to be submitted to DEM. Member Gardner made the motion. Member Miller seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0-0 with Member Eappen absent.

Chairman Finlay closed the public hearing.

- IV. Next Meeting Date: Tuesday, January 7, 2019 (Harris Hall)
- V. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 6:24 p.m.