

**TOWN OF OLD ORCHARD BEACH
TOWN COUNCIL WORKSHOP
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2008
TOWN HALL CHAMBERS**

**A Town Council Workshop of the Old Orchard Beach Town Council was held on Tuesday, December 2, 2008 following the regular Town Council Meeting. Chair MacDonald opened the meeting at 7:35 p.m. Discussion was on the following:
1) Financial Issues. 2) Ballpark. 3) Continuing goals discussion.**

The following were in attendance:

**Chair Sharri MacDonald
Vice Chair Robin Dayton
Councilor Laura Bolduc
Councilor Shawn O'Neill
Councilor Mike Tousignant
Town Manager Steve MacDonald
Assistant Town Manager Louise Reid**

A previous meeting of the Ballpark Working Group was attended by the Town Manager, the Public Works Director, the Planner, the Council Chair, Linda Jenkins (Chair of the ad-hoc Ballpark Working Group), and Tom LeChance. The purpose of the meeting was to review a new Ballpark material donation offer as well as goals & timelines per Linda's email below: Part of the discussion raised the question if money is being put into the Ballpark is it putting the "cart before the horse" and focused instead on if the Council should create a public process to develop a community vision (not strictly a Council vision and not just a Baseball proponent's vision) for the Ballpark. Perhaps returning to previous work done by the Ballpark committee and start from there...with lots of public involvement. Discussion by the Ballpark Working Group included possibly returning baseball to the Ballpark which is a wonderfully nostalgic idea, but seasonal baseball as the only use of this 50-75 acre town owned parcel just does not make good fiscal common sense. It provides no permanent jobs and little or no commercial tax revenue. With all due respect to the hard working and dedicated baseball proponents, OOB residents need to expand their vision of the economic potential of this property to help create a 12 month business climate here, something that all parties want to make happen. Let's consider developing a destination facility to attract people to OOB all year long. Let's help develop this property to be an economic engine for the region, not just more condos or seasonal businesses just for OOB visitors. We could pursue a commercial/retail complex but there is plenty of that all around us and this idea was not strongly accepted by the public during the last Ballpark review. Instead, let's consider an indoor performing arts facility tied to a small to medium sized convention center. The convention center could be considerably larger than the one in Saco on the Turnpike and will attract business activity all year long. A hotel and restaurant run by local business people are natural add-ons perhaps designed as a green project, both from energy efficiency and landscaping aspects with connecting walking paths. Sharri MacDonald likened the entire Ballpark site to an "outdoor community center" in that the activities available would bring the community together for outdoor recreational pursuits. Sharri also stressed the economic development potential of the site and emphasized that it would be best to consider existing hotels in any future plans as they often struggle during the off-season with occupancy. Linda indicated that other multi-uses could be incorporated into the entire site. Steve indicated that

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the Ballpark Working Group's plans do not conflict with a longer-term and larger-scale plan of the type that Gary is proposing. Tom similarly felt that the one could lead to the other. Build it small to begin with and prove that the economics work and this could pay for larger scale improvements on the site such as a community center. Sharri indicated that she appreciated the input of the Ballpark Working Group and the Town Staff at this meeting and that based on this information, she would like to schedule a Council Workshop (perhaps as soon as Dec. 2 depending on Tom's availability to be present) to review this critical junction with the entire Town Council for their direction on how to proceed with the Ballpark at this time as well as for the near-term and for the future.

Linda Jenkins reported on the work of the Ballpark which included work done since April of 2008 when a group of citizens decided that after nearly twenty years of watching the Ballpark property deteriorated, decided now was the time to do something. They presented a plan to the administration and have had several meetings with the public safety officials, the planning department and the administration. Volunteers have ranged from youngsters of four and five years old wanting to help to senior citizens coming to work and support. She expressed thanks to Michele Bourgault and Mark Koenig and to Council Dayton for the time she has spent in promoting this project.

Discussion in this Workshop centered around allocating \$12,000 of town money toward re-roofing three buildings at the Ballpark property. A local roofer, Dan Furtado, volunteered to do the work and the money allocated would cover the cost of supplies. After discussion it was agreed that the motion would be made at the next meeting of the Town Council scheduled for December 16, 2008 but there was a sense of consensus at this Workshop of agreement for the allocation. Earlier this year the Council authorized \$25,000 for security upgrades and less than \$1,000 of that allocated money has been spent thus far and that was for fencing. All other upgrades have been donations of services and goods. Linda Jenkins and Tom LeChance reported on the Ballpark's previous condition with tires and other waste all over the place and vandalism making its mark. Since volunteers have been in there doing work and upgrading the property there has been little if no vandalism. The Town Manager related that there is something that meets the definition of security in a roundabout way when people are working and having activity at the site.

Councilor O'Neill suggested that the Council should leave the \$25,000 for security purposes and grant additional money to fund the roofing project and that there should be support for the volunteers. Councilor Tousignant expressed concern that if the Town funded the roofing project it would be asked to come back and pour more money into the project later. He was concerned that there was no business plan that had been presented and that interest in the project might fade or the project would continue to cost money instead of making money. He did, however, indicate that he would support the \$12,000 for the roofing supplies.

Both Jenkins and LeChance expressed concern that although there is a lot of interest in this with outside groups to use the property there has no authority been given to this Committee to sign agreements with outside groups. Jenkins asked for the support of the Town to form an Administrative Group for the Ballpark. Continued discussions will be directed to this suggestion since there were questions raised who would have the authority to make decisions on such a Committee; some suggestions being Parks and Recreation; others suggested the Conservation Commission; others suggested under the direction of the Town Manager. The Ballpark Group did give the Council a preliminary plan of goals and objectives for the Ballpark. It was noted that the structural engineer has looked at the buildings and indicates they are sound. They also indicated they felt there were other volunteers that would agree to

provide free service to the up keeping of the Ballpark. LeChance indicated that he felt the Ballpark could be self-sustaining. Chair MacDonald indicated that whatever is done will bring the community together. The Chair also asked the Town Manager to research how the group could become a Town Committee. Jenkins indicated that she knows people want a community center at the Ballpark and although that is out of sight at the moment, the Ballpark has a lot of possibilities. Councilor Tousignant suggested that perhaps the largest of the three buildings could be used by Parks and Recreation. Recreation Director Jason Webber indicated that he runs 80 programs and none of them with tax dollars. Fire Chief John Glass and Planner Gary Lamb both discussion concerns they had with the use of the Ballpark, although congratulated the group on their hard work, including the deteriorating condition of the Public Safety buildings where nothing has been done to upgrade those facilities which are used every day. Others who spoke at the meeting included David Goyet and Bob Rings.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

V. Louise Reid
Town Council Secretary

I, V. Louise Reid, Secretary to the Town Council of Old Orchard Beach, Maine, do hereby certify that the foregoing document consisting of three (3) pages is a true copy of the original Minutes of the Town Council Workshop of December 2, 2008.

Louise Reid