

Thurston Park Committee  
Minutes of January 16, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 pm

In Attendance:

Members: Steve Nelson, Sonia Nelson, Scott Monroe, Kenneth Molfetta, and Jen Smith

Abutting property owners York Town Rd: Kathy Kellison and Jerry Smith,  
Vice President of China Historical Society: Tim Hatch

The minutes of the December 19, 2024 meeting were approved unanimously after a motion to approve from Scott Monroe and seconded by Steve Nelson.

We began the meeting with a brief review of the history of the park and the status of the York Town Road in both China and Albion. The York Town Road in China was discontinued in 1956, however, a right of way was maintained for public access. We discussed the maintenance issues associated with the north entrance and why improving access from the south would be desirable. Recent surveys also show that town residents would like to have improved access from the south as well. With that in mind we invited the landowners abutting the York Town Road on the south to discuss our thoughts and hear their thoughts and concerns. Kathy Kellison's property abuts the park on the south side of the park. While she would appreciate improved access to her property, she is concerned that it provides better access for others to her property and is worried about vandalism and trash. She has had issues with these in the past. Jerry Smith (no relation to Jen Smith) expressed similar concerns and reported he even had an old vehicle abandoned on his property. The committee discussed that we have had little problems with trash or vandalism in the park so far. Jerry Smith and Kathy Kellison both reported on other access roads to the park that are no longer in existence but maybe could be looked at. We discussed the need to explore some of this further and reassured them that we would keep them in the loop with any further discussions or plans.

Tim Hatch, the Vice President of the China Historical Society presented some information on the history of Thurston Park and the early African American settlement of Abraham Talbot. See attached handout. He recommended some more research into these early settlers and locating their homesites. We are aware

that someone had done research into Thurston Park and written a book in the past, but as of yet have not been able to find out more information.

We discussed China Ice Days 2025. Last year we held an Owl Prowl on Friday evening at the park. We had also planned to have sledding and a bonfire with s'mores and cocoa, however there was not enough snow to hold the event. After discussion the committee voted unanimously to hold the same events again.

We discussed the Land for Maine's Future grant which has an application deadline of January 24, 2025. This is a federally backed program and requires a lot of work to get the grants. The committee discussed this and voted unanimously to not make an application this year, but to focus on applying for the recently voter-approved Maine Trails fund when applications become available.

Under old business we tabled the trail name signs discussion as neither Steve Nelson or Jen Smith have had time to contact the sign makers. The FEMA funding from last winters' storm damage looks like it has been approved but still needs some final documentation before finalized. Hopefully, that will come through soon so we can make plans for repairs this spring.

We discussed our TIF application which is due by 2/28/2025. We will need to know if we are getting the FEMA funds before we can determine what we will be requesting from TIF. If we get FEMA funds we could focus on further trail development. We discussed adding a Ridge Trail starting at the handicapped parking area and ending at a junction with the Town Line Trail.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 PM.

The next meeting will take place on Thursday, February 20, 2025 at 6:30 pm in the portable building at the town office.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jeanette "Jen" Smith