

Community Members Weigh In On Good Ground Park Proposal



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[By Carol Moran](#) Community members who gathered at the Southampton Town community center in Hampton Bays on Monday to discuss plans for Good Ground Park reached a consensus: the park should be passive, with the majority of the 36 acres kept natural.

Southampton Town purchased the land that sits just west of Squiretown Road between Montauk Highway and Sunrise Highway using Community Preservation Fund proceeds in 2003. Earlier plans for the park failed to gain community support, and it fell off the town's radar, due in part to a lack of funding needed to carry out the construction.

Town officials, including Supervisor Anna Throne-Holst, Deputy Supervisor Frank Zappone and Town Planning and Development Administrator Kyle Collins, attended the meeting on Monday to hear input from members of the public on what they would like to see at the park. The 50 residents were polled, with a natural amphitheater or area for concerts, walking trails, and bicycle racks among the most popular ideas.

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Marion Boden, a member of the Hampton Bays Civic Association, thanked the town administration and Kevin McDonald, a Hampton Bays resident who has been a leader in the effort to develop the park, for facilitating "our dream."

Ms. Throne-Holst explained that if developed correctly, the park would anchor a proposed north business corridor, which would function like a pedestrian-friendly Main Street parallel to Montauk Highway. The town has been moving forward with a hamlet study, formally called the Generic Environmental Impact Statement, which makes recommendations on how to mitigate the effects of dense development and attract tourists. The park and the north main street proposal fall in line with those recommendations, she said.

The biggest obstacle in developing the park is finding the funding to do so, and a lack of public support for previous plans kept grant applications from being successful, Ms. Throne-Holst explained. The town has hired Jennifer Mesiano Higham, a grant consultant writer from Mesiano Consulting, to apply for a grant through the State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

The town officials encouraged community members and leaders of community organizations to send letters of support to Town Hall that would strengthen the application, which is due in mid-June. Mr. McDonald said the intent is to submit a stronger proposal that has community backing. The town expects to receive a response from the state next fall.

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