

Panel suggests multiple changes to Lafayette park plans

By JACK FICHTER

Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The city's Lafayette Street Park Advisory Committee may alter the original plans for phase three of the park by flipping the position of the baseball diamond to allow for a multi-use area. In addition, earlier plans for a long nature trail may be cost-prohibitive.

The committee is also dealing with remediation of wetlands on the rear portion of the acreage from Viasant, a contractor hired by Jersey Central Power and Light (JCP&L) to deal with below-ground contaminants left behind from a coal-gasification plant that operated on the property.

During a meeting May 10, city engineer Tom Thornton, of Mott MacDonald, said multiple types of wetlands exist on the property. He said there are different types of habitat, including low marsh, high marsh, highland, high marsh, mixed maritime meadow, mixed maritime forest and maritime woodlands.

JCP&L has installed pri-

mary and secondary underground containment walls due to contaminated soils and groundwater. Thornton said every drop of water falling on the former gas plant area was being contained along with pumping wells tied into a treatment plant.

Thornton said it may be best to avoid the wetlands area of remediation for a proposed nature trail into the marsh.

"We may find out there is no benefit to being in this area at all," he said.

Original plans called for a semicircular elevated walkway above the tidal marsh, Thornton said. He said the length of the proposed walkway would put the cost "through the roof."

Thornton suggested a shorter walkway toward a freshwater pond and creek. He noted a berm on the property originally on the plans as part of a trail. The berm is too narrow for an at-grade walkway and if it were widened, it would involve filling in wetlands, Thornton said.

"You're probably not going to get a permit to do

that," he said.

An elevated walkway would be an alternative to using the berm, Thornton said. He questioned covering the berm with an elevated platform from an ecological standpoint.

How much grant money is available for the trail section of the park is unknown, Thornton said. A path through the wooded area merging into the wetlands with a small access to the pond may be the best choice, he said.

Committee Chairman Mike Jones said phase three of the park project is completely funded by the county but the city has only two years to complete the work, otherwise the grant money goes away. He said the city is limited in digging and displacing soil in the contamination area for a building or light poles.

Thornton said plans should be shown to JCP&L, which is willing to provide some excavation. He said the utility requested the amount of runoff from the property not be altered to a great degree.



Provided

This overhead photo shows the area of remediation being undertaken by Viasant on behalf of Jersey Central Power & Light.

"They want to maintain what falls and percolates now because that's what all their calculations are based on," Thornton said.

Deputy Mayor Shaine Meier said the committee is favoring moving the parking area to along St. John's Street. He said no containment walls run along the street.

Jones said if the baseball diamond were "flip flopped, about 120 feet of property would be available for most

anything. He said he envisioned a U-shaped parking lot with the dog park to the rear of the property.

Committee member Hilary Pritchard offered a design that flipped the baseball diamond and placed Wise-Anderson Park at the front entrance off Lafayette Street with a water feature. She envisioned a stage at the previous planned location of the baseball diamond.

Thornton said a plan for the park shows an 8-foot-

wide bike path along what originally was the outfield berm for the baseball portion.

"I think our concern too is whatever you do on the Lafayette side, we want it to look like a park, with trees, as beautiful as possible, so it doesn't just look like a school and a parking lot," said committee member Sharon Lee Kustra, who is also a member of the Cape May City Elementary School Board of Education.

Committee member Mark Pask, who is also a member of the city's Shade Tree Commission, suggested planting trees that did not require a lot of maintenance. Deputy Mayor Shaine Meier suggested a minimal amount of fencing so users of the park could walk in any direction.

Jones suggested restrooms be centrally located in the park. Thornton said the committee seemed to be suggesting a multi-use area with a stage and a lawn area in front of it.

The committee's next meeting is scheduled for 4 p.m. May 24 and is open to the public.

Grossman

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upcoming June 5 primary.

He's running against engineer Hirsh Singh of Linwood, former FBI agent Robert Turkavage of Brigantine and former Assemblyman Sam Fiocchi of Vineland.

Grossman grew up in Atlantic City and graduated from Atlantic City High School. His political awakening came when his mother took him to the Ritz Apartments to hear John F. Kennedy make a campaign speech in 1960, what he described as a "life-changing event in politics."

"I was a John F. Kennedy Democrat," Grossman said. "If John F. Kennedy were alive today, he'd probably be denounced as a right-wing Republican by most Democrats."

Grossman said a "game-changing event" that switched him to become a Republican was President Lyndon Johnson's 1968 urban renewal efforts in Atlantic City.

Pauline Hill, director of the Atlantic City Housing Authority, cleared 80 acres of the city for an Uptown Urban Renewal project, bulldozing homes and businesses. It was hoped the project would combat what officials deemed as blight. The cleared area, dubbed "Pauline's Prairie," extends along Atlantic Avenue from Virginia to Connecticut avenues.

"Eighty percent of that land is as vacant now as it was in 1968," Grossman said. "What was particularly tragic about it is you had a lot of World War II Jewish refugees who thought they escaped that, they thought if you owned a home in America no one could take it away from you. Here the government was taking it away from them."

Grossman said the city's use of eminent domain and the neighborhood's destruction turned him from a John F. Kennedy

Democrat to a Tea Party conservative and now a Trump Republican.

A graduate of Duke University and Temple Law School, Grossman noted his political involvement revolved around his hometown.

"I always saw Atlantic City as the microcosm of America. I thought it would be very easy to fix the problems of Atlantic City because I was a smart kid and I had this Duke education and I was determined to clean up corruption and waste," Grossman said.

He served as an Atlantic City councilman from 1986 to 1990. He was elected to the Atlantic County Board of Chosen Freeholders in 1988 and served for three years.

Grossman said the problem wasn't with Atlantic City politicians, but the "corrupt voters."

"People wanted government to take from somebody else and give to themselves," Grossman said. "I really had an awakening when I saw how the more you help some people the more you hurt other people. That's when I developed this real appreciation for the founding fathers, the Constitution, the idea that government should be limited and really be the referee of the football game. Government is not there to make the right team win. Government is there to make sure the rules apply equally to everyone."

He left politics to raise his young family and returned to the political arena again after his children went through college and were, according to Grossman, "brainwashed about all the good things about America."

In 2003, he formed the group Liberty and Prosperity with 24 people. He was arrested with Bogota Mayor Steven Lonegan at the Middle Township Performing Arts Center in 2008 for handing out litera-

ture at an event with then-Gov. Jon Corzine about hiking tolls on the Garden State Parkway.

"I was handing out leaflets protesting, opposing putting the parkway \$30 billion into hoc and tripling the tolls to pay for it," Grossman said.

Liberty and Prosperity has grown into an organization with 200 members, 100 donors and 1,500 people keeping touch online, he said.

Grossman stepped down as Liberty and Prosperity's leader in February to run for Congress.

The group holds weekly meetings at 9:30 a.m. Saturdays at the Shore Diner in Egg Harbor Township.

"We're teaching what really should be taught in our public schools, starting from kindergarten. That's been totally lost from our culture," Grossman said. "Government is not when you get elected, and then you give free stuff to the people who helped you get elected."

On the issues

Grossman's four main issues during his campaign are enforcing immigration laws and reducing immigration to sustainable levels, repealing the existing mandates from the Affordable Care Act that increase health insurance costs, advocating for the Second Amendment and letting President Donald Trump "do his job" by rejecting "fake impeachment charges," obstruction or "resistance."

He said the 1.2 million legal immigrants currently in the U.S. are "too many." Grossman said chain migration should also be halted. Chain migration gives the family members of newly arrived immigrants preference over other immigrants, he said.

"We're letting the immigrants shape our immigration policy instead of

Americans shaping our immigration policy," Grossman said.

He noted the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, promoted by Sen. Ted Kennedy, "fundamentally changed America" by eliminating the quota system for immigrants based on national origins.

"We don't believe that America can survive as a nation we were founded on if we continue this way. We're inviting people who have no attachment to America. Their only attachment is they're an uncle or an aunt or a cousin to somebody who's here," Grossman said.

Regarding the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy, "hard cases make bad law and that's a hard case."

"I certainly have sympathy for the people who came over as children, however I see no moral or legal obligation that the people who are in their 20s who are committing crimes who have no education and are contributing nothing to this country, I see no moral or legal obligation for them to stay here," Grossman said.

Young immigrants called "Dreamers" who have taken steps to assimilate should get preference as part of an overall deal in which immigrant numbers are reduced, he said.

"There's a solution if you want to find a solution, but what is happening today with today's Democrats, I get the idea today's Democrats don't want solutions," Grossman said. "The more problems there are the more issues they have to get elected. You might call it victim politics, where everybody's a victim. If everybody's a victim they need the Democrats to protect them. The American idea is you should be able to earn your own money and create your own opportunities and then you don't need

government."

Grossman said the federal government shouldn't fund abortions. He said Planned Parenthood, a nonprofit organization that provides abortion, birth control, pregnancy testing, treatment for sexually transmitted diseases, cervical cancer screening and clinical breast examinations, is a "political organization" that should not receive government funds. He said late-term abortions after the fifth or sixth month are "barbaric."

On the subject of gun control, Grossman said gun laws that reduce magazine size won't "solve anything" and are a "political strategy by Democrats to demonize people who legally own guns."

He called the gun issue "political manipulation," and said additional laws wouldn't help the problem of gun violence and are a "distraction" from real issues.

"Whatever is causing this epidemic of murder is something other than the restriction on guns. It has something to do with the issue of the culture of drugged-up kids, or teachers and counselors not being able to share information with each other, of this relentless Hollywood culture of portraying America as evil and glorifying violent people who rebel against it," Grossman said.

According to Grossman, New Jersey does not persuade businesses to locate to the state.

"We have high taxes, we have so many regulations over businesses that almost everybody is in violation of something," Grossman said. "That means if you want to succeed in business you have to make deals with the politicians to get some sort of exemption in the taxes or in the laws."

Grossman supports Trump's "Make America Great Again" (or MAGA to devotees) message of put-

ting national interests first.

He excoriated higher education, notably Stockton University, for criticizing the country's past.

"The message being taught to our kids is America was a bad place in the 1950s. It was full of racism and lynching and women had no rights and homosexuals had no rights. I know that's a total lie because I grew up in that America. I grew up in that Atlantic City where the African-American community was just like any other ethnic group. You had your hotels, you had your bars, you had your stores. We were all in it together," Grossman said. "Anybody can walk anywhere and if you were gay there was a place called Snake Alley. It was a thing where everybody did what they wanted to do and it was a beautiful place."

Grossman said until Trump's 2016 presidential campaign, "people complained how awful the country was."

"For all his (Trump) flaws, America needs a president to stand up to that and say 'America is great,'" Grossman said. "When you see all of the attacks and slurs being thrown at him, in my viewing it he's not being attacked because of his womanizing ... or anything else. As far as I'm concerned, he's being attacked because he's defending the America that I had learned to love. Because of that, those attacks on Donald Trump are actually an attack on me."

Regarding national security, Grossman said there's no difference between foreign and domestic policies.

"I think America is being attacked because we Americans have lost faith in our country and are not defending our country," Grossman said. "If people overseas feel that we don't think our country's worth defending, they're going to attack us every way they can."

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