

RESOLUTION NO. 415

AUTHORIZING A LICENSE AGREEMENT REGARDING THE LAWSON LAKE PROPERTY AND CAMP OPPORTUNITIES, INC. AND ADOPTING A PUBLIC USE PLAN FOR THE LAWSON LAKE PROPERTY FACILITATING PUBLIC ACCESS FOR PASSIVE USE

Introduced: 12/22/97

By Conservation and Improvement Committee, Messrs. Richardson, Clouse, Gordon, Collins, Donohue and Ms. McKnight:

WHEREAS, The County of Albany owns a parcel of land located in the Towns of Coeymans and New Scotland known as Lawson Lake, this property includes a lake, trails, a number of cabins, lodges, recreational facilities and a house, and

WHEREAS, The property and facilities are used by community groups, school districts and other organizations for recreational and educational activities, and

WHEREAS, A day camp program benefiting urban youth and their families has been operated at the Lawson Lake property since 1967 by Camp Opportunities, Inc., a not-for-profit corporation servicing more than 700 families each year, and

WHEREAS, There exists the potential to develop new, passive use recreational facilities open to the general public in a cooperative manner that does not interfere with the continued operation of the programs of Camp Opportunities, Inc., and

WHEREAS, Camp Opportunities, Inc., in consideration for its use of the property, has in the past and currently continues to provide resources for a significant share of the necessary maintenance, management, oversight and security of this Albany County property and its facilities, including the employment of an on-site caretaker, and

WHEREAS, Since the County purchase of the property in 1979, a formal use agreement has never existed between the operators of Camp Opportunities, Inc. and Albany County, and such an agreement is now deemed necessary and prudent for the maximum public use of the Lawson Lake property, now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, By the Albany County Legislature that the County Executive is authorized to enter into a license agreement on behalf of the County of Albany with Camp Opportunities, Inc. for the use of the Lawson Lake property in accordance with the terms set forth in the licensing agreement and the public use plan approved and adopted herein, and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the term of the license agreement shall be for five years commencing on January 1, 1998 and ending on December 31, 2002, and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Albany County Legislature hereby adopts the Public Use Plan for the Lawson Lake Property, attached hereto as Appendix "A", and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the County Attorney is authorized to approve said license agreement as to form and content, and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Clerk of the County Legislature is directed to forward certified copies of this resolution to the appropriate County Officials.

Resolution was amended by Mr. Richardson as follows: On page 3 of Appendix "A" under the Parking paragraph, amend the second sentence to read: "Contingent upon the same enumerated considerations, a backup parking site will be located south of the west side day camp road and west of Lawson Lake Road, within the gate if practicable, and if not practicable, as close as possible to the gate."

Amendment was passed by unanimous vote.

On roll call vote on the resolution as amended the following voted in favor: Mss. Barlette, Benedict, Messrs. Bray, Cannizzaro, Clouse, Collins, Commisso, Ms. Connolly, Messrs. Crummey, Darbyshire, DeCecco, Dennis, Ms. Denison, Messrs. Domalewicz, Donohue, Ethier, Gordon, Graziano, Grudecki, Houghtaling, Infante, Joyce, Laudato, Mss. Maffia-Tobler, McKnight, Mr. Nowicki, Ms. Reed, Messrs. Richardson, Riddick, Ms. Robinson, Messrs. Ross, Rueckert, Russo, Sherman, Ward, Ms. Wiley and Mr. Young -- 37.

Those opposed: -0-.

Resolution was adopted. 12/22/97

Appendix “A” Resolution No. 415 for 1997

PUBLIC USE PLAN FOR THE LAWSON LAKE PROPERTY

INTRODUCTION

This plan is intended to identify steps to be taken by the County to provide public access and passive recreational use of the Lawson Lake property. Since 1980, the property has been used regularly by Camp Opportunities, Inc., an organization that provides inner-city children with summer recreational programs, in addition to short-term use by schools, organizations, and groups.

PUBLIC ACCESS

Loop-trail

A newly developed loop trail will be accessible year round at the south end of the property on the west side of Lawson Lake Road. The loop trail will be accessible from a trail head adjacent to a parking area.

East Shoreline

The lake’s east shoreline will be accessible year-round from two points: a drop-off point located on an improved pull-off along Lawson Lake Road and via an existing cleared shoreline access path starting just inside the main gate to the west side day camp.

West Shoreline

During those times of the year when Camp Opportunities is not in session and at other times when the camp is not in operation, such as on weekends during the summer months, public access to the west shoreline will be available for the purpose of shoreline fishing and launching canoes and other cartop vessels.

West Side Day Camp

Public access to the west side day camp will be available when Camp Opportunities is not in operation, including weekends during the summer months when the facility is not in use by Camp Opportunities. Use of the west side day camp by local schools, organizations, and groups will be by reservation only, following review by the County Office of Natural Resources in consultation with the County Department of Law and the County Department of Public Works. Applications will be processed within ten (10) business days of the submission of a fully completed application form.

East Side Day Camp

Public access to the east side day camp will be available when Camp Opportunities is not in operation. Use of the east side day camp by local schools, organizations, and groups will be by reservation only, following review by the County Office of Natural Resources in consultation with the County Department of Law and the County Department of Public Works. Applications will be processed within ten (10) business days of the submission of a fully completed application form.

Drop-Off Sites

Two new drop-off access points to the lake shore will be developed. One will be located at an improved, widened pull-off along the shoulder of Lawson Lake Road with immediate access to the east shoreline fishing area. This site will include a stairway or other means as needed to provide convenient, year-round access for cartop vessel drop off and shoreline fishing. The second site will be established near the existing beach area adjacent to the west side day camp. This site will be available for use when Camp Opportunities is not in operation. The site will include two handicap parking spaces, while other visitors will return their vehicles to the new parking area as described in the Implementation section below.

ALLOWABLE USES AND ACTIVITIES

Trail Use

The public will be afforded the opportunity to engage in a wide variety of multi-seasonal, passive recreational uses on the Lawson Lake property. Hiking, bird watching, nature study, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing will be provided on a loop trail to be developed in the wooded area south of the lake.

Fishing (including ice fishing)

Shoreline fishing will be available year-round from the lake's east shore and from the west shore during the months when Camp Opportunities is not in session. Fishing from canoes and other cartop vessels will also be available on a year-round basis. In addition, use of the lake as a locally popular ice fishing area will continue to be available during the winter months.

Boating

This plan provides for the use of canoes and similar portable, cartop craft on the lake. In order to facilitate this use, a readily accessible drop-off point will be located at each of the respective lake shores. As with shoreline fishing, the east shore drop-off will be accessible year-round; however, use of the west shore drop-off will be available when Camp Opportunities day camp program is not in operation. It is important to note that no motorized craft or larger vessels requiring trailers will be allowed under any circumstances. Prohibition on the use of boat trailers is intended to preclude the possible introduction of problematic species such as water

chestnut and zebra mussel which can be readily picked up in area waters such as the Hudson and Mohawk rivers.

Camp Opportunities Day Camp

Use of the facility by Camp Opportunities for the purpose of operating its summer day camp program shall be in accordance with a License Agreement executed between Camp Opportunities and the County.

Other Uses

Use of Lawson Lake for outdoor education and recreation programs and activities by schools, organizations and other groups is encouraged. Use of the west side and east side day camp facilities for these purposes is available by reservation. Family picnicking will be allowed in designated areas of the west side and east side of the lake.

Prohibited Uses and Activities

Given the aforementioned permitted uses, various uses and activities will be expressly prohibited. These include, but are not necessarily limited to, swimming, open fires, overnight camping, hunting, trapping, motorized vehicles, motorized boats and large craft requiring trailers, and consumption of alcoholic beverages*. All such prohibited uses and activities will be clearly posted on public informational signs to be placed at strategic locations on the property. *The consumption of alcohol may only be allowed under special permit approved by the County.

IMPLEMENTATION

The immediate objectives of this plan, which include provision of public access to the property for passive recreational use and parking for facility users, will be satisfied by implementation of the following components:

Boundary Posting

The irregular nature of the park boundaries, private ownership of two inholdings, and presence of numerous existing trails that cross property lines will require meeting with adjacent landowners to address questions of trail use and access and to assist in the accurate placement of boundary postings. Preliminary boundary posting will rely upon deed directions, tax maps and landowner feedback.

Parking

A gravel-based parking area of approximately 10 spaces will be constructed at a preferred site located within the gate, south of the west side day camp road in an area currently covered by trees, contingent upon the following considerations; Traffic safety; Environmental factors; Engineering factors; and Cost considerations. Contingent upon the same enumerated considerations, a backup parking site will be located south of the west side day camp road and west of Lawson Lake Road, within the gate if practicable, and if not practicable, as close as possible to the gate. The

general location of the parking area will be designed in concert with the siting of the trail head and connector spur for the loop trail as discussed below, in addition to providing maximum oversight of facility use by the property caretaker. The exact placement of the parking area will be determined following consideration of site specific conditions including area requirements and existing grade.

Trails

A loop trail in the southern portion of the property on the west side of Lawson Lake Road will be developed utilizing portions of an existing trail system at its base. While the majority of the existing trail is clearly discernible and in need of minimal improvements, certain portions demonstrating wet, slippage prone, or otherwise sensitive conditions will be realigned and/or rehabilitated as necessary. Trail access will be through a linkage extending from a trail head in the vicinity of the parking area to the loop trail itself. A warming shed will be provided by the County located in close proximity to the parking lot.

Public access to the lake, and particularly, to the shoreline fishing area on the east shore, will be afforded by an existing path beginning just inside the main gate at the entrance to the west side day camp. Portions of this path may be seasonally wet following snow melt or heavy rains; however, no improvements are planned at this time due to cost and regulatory constraints.

Specifically, the most cost-effective remedial measure, involving placement of substantial fill to raise the grade above seasonally wet conditions, would be prohibited under provisions of State and Federal wetland regulations. Furthermore, the only feasible alternative deemed acceptable to the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation would involve installation of a raised boardwalk over wetland areas. Based on preliminary design undertaken by the County Division of Plans and Projects, the cost estimate for such a boardwalk is considered prohibitive under current fiscal conditions. As a future consideration, however, fiscal constraints to constructing this boardwalk may be alleviated by securing outside funding support such as subsequent rounds of 1996 Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act assistance.

Signage

In addition to boundary posting, trail markers will be placed at regular intervals on the loop trail to guide trail users along the intended route. This is particularly important given that the existing trail forming the basis of the loop trail is only one portion of an unmarked trail network located south of the lake.

In order to ensure public safety and safeguard the natural and structural integrity of the facility, public informational signs will be posted at strategic locations throughout the property clearly detailing prohibited uses and activities (e.g. swimming, open fires, camping, hunting, trapping, motorized vehicles, alcoholic beverages, etc.), as well as signs indicating that this is a "carry in, carry out" facility

relative to the absence of rubbish bins. In addition, a large informational sign will be erected at the parking area to assist in educating the public about the property and how it should be used. This may include a list of regulations, map of the trail, hours when the park is open to the public, and other pertinent information.

East Shore Lake Access

In compliance with environmental and other pertinent regulations, the County Department of Public Works (DPW) will widen a shoulder area along Lawson Lake Road for use as a drop-off point for canoes and other portable, cartop craft, but actual parking will be prohibited at this site and limited to the new parking area discussed above. In addition, DPW will install a wooden stepway or other suitable means to negotiate the steep slope from the drop-off point at road level to the shoreline to facilitate lake access. It should be noted that implementation of these measures is dependent on satisfactory compliance with any applicable environmental regulations. As mentioned above, shoreline fishing will continue to be provided from the east shore and will be accessible from the designated parking area via an existing path along the shoreline.

West Shore Lake Access

This plan will accommodate lake access for the purpose of fishing and use of canoes and other portable, cartop craft from the west shoreline when Camp Opportunities' is not in operation. At these times, vehicle access will be permitted through the main gate to a second drop-off point at the existing beach area where cartop vessels may be unloaded and picked up. With the exception noted below, actual parking will be prohibited at this site and limited to the new parking area discussed above.

As an added provision of this plan, two designated handicap parking spaces will be located proximate to the west shore drop-off site, thereby providing ready access to the lake for physically disadvantaged individuals. Only vehicles with official handicap parking license plates or displaying other acceptable demonstration of a visitor's physical disability will be allowed to utilize these spaces while at the facility. As mentioned above, all other users must park their vehicles in the designated public lot.

Other Considerations

In order to afford use of the loop trail for cross-country skiing and other passive winter activities, snow plowing of the parking area will be carried out by County DPW crews during routine plowing of County Route 109.

Finally, as relates to security issues, the proximity of the Caretaker's house to the parking area will facilitate oversight and policing of the park by the facility caretaker. Additionally, the property should be periodically checked by the Albany County Sheriff's Department during regular patrols in the Lawson Lake vicinity.

Local law enforcement officials will be notified of events involving special use permits.

Annual Review

There shall be an annual review of this public use plan by the Albany County Conservation and Improvement Committee. This review shall include, but not be limited to, an evaluation of the implementation status of this plan and subsequent enhancements to same as well as reports concerning the annual receipts and disbursements records for the facility and compliance with the federal acquisition agreement dated 5/31/79, Land and Water Conservation Fund Grants manual and subsequent revisions of same.