

Virtual Meeting 6:33pm

March 7, 2022

Commissioners: Mara Huston, Laurie Eliason, Dick Williamson, Bobby Beagan

Dennis Mannone, Dir. Park and Recreation/Pool

Meeting Roll Call: Laurie – here, Bobby - here, Dick – here, Mara - here

**Public Comment:** Kevin Westerberg, 239 Raymond Road, expressed concern about the growth of pickleball and the impact on the pickleball courts in Sudbury. He is hopeful some thought has been given to managing the tremendous growth of the sport and the impact to neighborhoods surrounding courts. He is already hearing the sounds of pickleball in his neighborhood as the weather gets warmer. He has several articles on pickleball noise and soundproofing and wanted this concern to be on the Commission's radar. He would like the pickleball courts removed at Feeley and said the noise is much worse than softball or tennis. Mara thanked him for his comments and asked the Commissioners if they wanted to add this topic as a future agenda item. Laurie thought it was a good idea to discuss the topic. She would like to learn more about the pickleball issue which is played at a recreational site where tennis, softball, baseball is also played. Mara will add the topic to the next meeting agenda. Bobby asked Kevin to forward the articles he mentioned to the Commission.

**Chair Report:** Mara stated she was invited to attend the March 21 FinCom meeting with Adam Duchesneau, Planning Director, to answer FinCom questions regarding the CPC Article for the Open Space, and Recreation Plan and the Field Assessment.

Mara stated she received a form from a Sudbury Garden Club requesting permission to work in Heritage Garden. She was asked to sign the form giving the master gardeners of the Garden Club permission to work in Heritage. Bobby was in favor of them doing the work, but was unsure if a motion could be made since the topic was not on the agenda. It was decided to make a motion, so work would not be held up.

Bobby made a motion to give Mara Huston permission to sign the volunteer paperwork on behalf of the Commission in order to give the Sudbury Garden Club permission to work in Heritage Park. Seconded by Dick.

Janie Dretler, SelectBoard, asked if there was a plan or anything I place to show what the gardening plans are for Heritage Park. Mara stated the Commission is contacted if there are major changes, but they do not have a plan for work to be done by the garden clubs. No additional discussion from Commissioners.

Vote: Dick – yes, Laurie – yes, Bobby – yes, Mara – yes Motion passed in favor 4-0

Mara was contacted by Lisa West, Hope Sudbury, regarding camp scholarships. She told Mara scholarships are available through Hope Sudbury. Laurie asked if there was some way to advertise that camp scholarships are available through Hope Sudbury. Dennis stated Recreation does not have funds for scholarships, but if anyone inquires he refers them to the Town Social Worker who works with the individual to secure available scholarships.

Laurie was concerned people would not know where to go and thought I might be good the post the information somewhere. Bobby agreed and asked if it could be posted on the website. Dennis stated

he would see what they could do, he just didn't want to confuse people with where the funds would come from.

Mara informed the Commission she was contacted by Sudbury TV regarding the possibility of moving the Commission meetings to another night next fiscal year, since there are so many meetings on Monday night. She asked the Commissioners to consider if another night might work for the meetings.

Mara stated the construction bids for the new Fairbank building will be going out in March. She and Dennis were involved in detailed conversations regarding the building and a variety of different topics. They just received information on phasing. Fencing has been modified, so the front doors to the pool and recreation office will be available during the summer. After camp, in August, anyone entering the pool or recreation offices will have to use new entrances. Mara said the impact to the pool is becoming more understood and Recreation is the department that will be most affected by the construction of the new Fairbank building. She added there will be some disruption to the pool before camp to build a temporary egress door by the dive well. The usual two week shut down at the end of summer for the pool will now be a four-week shut down. She said contractors will be installing a large plastic tarp to protect debris from entering the pool, while the wall is prepared for access points to the new locker rooms.

Once the new building is completed, the pool viewing and recreation entrance will then have to be finished once the old building is destroyed. It is still not clear how long many weeks it will take for the new recreation entrance to be completed.

Mara stated the Commission has the opportunity to consider requesting CPC funds to build the second basketball court and put lights around both courts, and the other item to consider is new gutters for the pool as a capital item.

Mara said the walking path at Haskell, discussed in previous meetings, is on hold due to other projects and staffing issues with DPW. It will be discussed again in the future.

**Director Update:** Dennis sent out department financials and offered to answer any questions. Dennis stated he wanted the record to reflect he has not been in favor of the Field Assessment Plan Mara will be discussing with the Planning Director from the beginning. The department as a lot going on, especially with the Open Space and Recreation Plan to occur at the same time. He believes he has a good handle on current field inventory based on past assessments and time would be better served to get the new Fairbank building operational and using the results of the Open Space Plan and come back to a Field Assessment later, if necessary. He also expressed concerns about the new Fairbank project and the projected shutdowns during construction. He is concerned memberships will be impacted again, staffing will be impacted and the construction may impact revenue. He stated the basketball court is no longer an add alternate and lights have been taken out of the project. Recreation/Pool is the most impacted of all three departments in the building. He has to move the summer camp across the street for the next two years and no longer has access to basketball courts, volleyball court, fenced in area etc. He is concerned because so much has been cut already and the bids haven't even been sent out yet.

Mara stated the Field Assessment will be done after the Open Space, Recreation Plan. She asked about other programs Recreation is running. Dennis stated his staff does an excellent job of promoting the programs on Facebook and uses email blasts and the website to promote all programs. The staff is

currently getting ready for summer camp registrations, summer programs and planning for spring programs.

**Understanding Park and Recreation Finances:** Bobby stated he and Ben have not made any progress since the last meeting. Mara will add this topic to the next meeting agenda.

**Grant Opportunities for Community Events:** Mara stated she and Laurie had a discussion with the Program Coordinators regarding Recreation Community events for FY23 and the possibility of funding options through grants. She said the timing was good because the Master Plan has a section on public health and well-being. Some of the ideas discussed were Summer Concerts, a Five K and Fun Run, and a Winter Wonderland Festival. Expenses and estimated budgets for events were discussed and how to fund the projects. Mara stated the Sudbury Foundation has a grant opportunity called the Sudbury Program. Any Commission or Department can submit a request, but it must have the Town Manager's approval. Deadline for the next submission is April 1 for a June review, which would mean the funds would be available by July 1.

Commissioners discussed the different events and proposed budgets. Dick asked how funds were raised in the past for the summer concerts. Mara recalled that money was solicited from the business community. Dennis offered that funds from Recreation has also been used to fund the various Recreation Community events held in the past, in addition to donations received from the business community. Dennis said it takes a great deal of time and effort to run the events especially since they often occur after work hours. He is also concerned about the impact of the new Fairbank Building being a construction site soon. He suggested starting small and waiting to see what type of funding can be secured.

After discussion, it was suggested the Commission offer one event such as an end of summer concert/block party at Haskell field, understanding the concerns that Dennis raised regarding the events. The thought was to apply for a grant. Mara stated she will review the specifics of the grant to see when the money has to be used by and any other details.

Mara the concern regarding funding shows the Commission they should advocate for more Town Funds for Recreation in the next budget cycle.

Mara made a motion for the Park and Recreation Commission to pursue a grant opportunity funding to support one concert and a block party during summer 2022. Laurie seconded the motion.

Vote: Laure-yes, Dick -yes, Bobby – yes, Mara – yes. 4-0 in favor.

Mara will request a meeting with the Town Manager's and in the interim will work on the grant application. Mara and Laurie will reach out to the Program Coordinators with any questions.

**Field Use Policies:** Laurie shared her presentation on the Field Fee Discussion. She has met with Dennis a few times to discuss dynamics surrounding this complex issue. She gave an overview of the current organizations requesting permits, both seasonal and clinic requests, youth and adult and non-resident and resident. Discussion centered on hourly fees verse seasonal permits and camp and clinic fees, and why the clinic rate is higher than the seasonal rate. In the past, there was discussion of moving to an hourly rate model. What qualifies as a season for a permit was discussed in addition to the number of players on a field associated with the permit. Dennis expressed concern about the groups that will do a clinic at an hourly rate and register a lot of kids for their programs. Laure discussed some examples of how field permit revenue would impacted if the fees were changed to hourly verse the current

clinic/camp fee. Dennis thought it was good to have open discussion about the field permits but didn't think it was something that needed to be solved tonight. Mara stated her concern for lost field revenue if groups go somewhere else for a cheaper rate. She is looking to generate the appropriate revenue for the department and for the Field Enterprise Fund, but also respect the users and provide a ~~reasonable~~ **reasonable** service. Dennis agreed and is looking to work towards a field permit that is simple and consistent that doesn't gouge people but is fair and brings in the revenue needed to support the Field Enterprise Fund which currently has a budget of \$230,000. He said that budget does not include his time handling all the permits and questions that come in during the year. He would like to see the focus be on getting the Town to pick up some expenses and salary for the Parks and Grounds Staff that is currently in the Field Enterprise Fund. It was decided to continue discussions on this topic outside the meeting and discuss again at future Commission meetings. Bobby asked Laurie to distribute her presentation to the Commission for further review. Mara will send out slides she has presented at previous meetings also on the field permit issue.

**Public Comment:** Mara re-opened Public Comment for those who were not at the meeting during the Public Comment section. Craig Blake, 300 Old Lancaster Road, discussed the equipment storage bin that Park and Recreation provided at Featherland in the past. It held one or two pickleball nets, but was unfortunately vandalized and the nets were stolen. He said the group that plays at Featherland brings their own nets and tools to remove water and debris from the court to make the courts playable. He said the group is discussing supplying a new storage bin or shed and supplies, but would like approval to have it secured to the fence. He said it would probably hold four nets, squeegees, brooms and some towels. He was requesting permission, not funding. He said he would bring a proposal back to the Commission in June. Bobby asked what percentage of the pickleball players are from Sudbury. Craig said about 50%, he said the sport is becoming very popular. Dennis commented that as the numbers grow they may need to look at pulling a permit to schedule time on the courts for an extended period of time similar to other organized groups. Craig did comment that the group had discussed offering clinics for new players and asked how that would be handled. Mara stated she would add the Pickleball discussion to the next meeting agenda.

**Review and approve Minutes:** Mara stated the questioned information in the December minutes was correct and okay to approve. Motion to approve the December 2021 minutes. Motion received a second. Vote: Dick – yes, Laurie – yes, Bobby – yes, Mara – yes 4-0 motion passed in favor.

**Future Meetings:** Next meeting scheduled for April 4<sup>th</sup>, May 9<sup>th</sup> and June 13<sup>th</sup>. Mara stated she did receive notification that virtual meetings will continue through July.

**Motion to adjourn.** Seconded. Dick – yes, Bobby – yes, Laurie – yes, Mara - yes