

Virtual Meeting 6:32 pm

June 3, 2024

Commissioners: Mara Huston, Laurie Eliason, Granger Atkeson, Bobby Beagan, Ben Carmel (joined at 7.05pm)

Dennis Mannone - Dir Park and Recreation

Roll Call –Mara – here, Grainger – here, Bobby – here, Laurie – here

Public Comment: None

Chair Update: Laure acting as Chair until Ben joins the meeting.

Director Update: Dennis distributed budget numbers for review. Feeley project Phase 1 has a small punch list left. New Aquatic Supervisor hired and will start June 10th. A candidate for the Program Coordinator position will interview with the Asst. Town Manager. He is hopeful to have the position filled by the start of summer camp. He worked with the Planning Director on the Field Assessment Plan RFP. The Commission will be able to review the RFP before it goes out for bid. The first week of Sudbury Summer, Sudbury Adventure and Preschool Pals starts July 1. He is unsure if summer camp will be at Haskell or the new Fairbank Community Center, but is hopeful to have the Recreation side fully open and use of the basketball court. Sudbury Adventure will use the tent at Haskell for drop off and pick up. Summer vendor camps have been offered, but numbers are low so some may be cancelled. Nothing new to report on the after-school programming at this time, but he heard the Select Board discussed the topic and the Town Manager is expected to give his thoughts on the topic in a written document.

Bobby followed up on the Field Assessment discussion and suggested it might be a good idea to expand the field assessment and include basketball/pickleball/tennis courts. He also thought it would be good to include Sewataro. Mara added the Field Assessment Plan is to understand not only the current needs, but future needs as well. Mara asked Dennis about the current condition of the dive well. He did not have anything new to report. Mara suggested inviting Sandra Duran, Combined Facilities Director, to a meeting in July or August to discuss the pool. Mara asked for the status on the van. The van has been ordered, but a bike rack still needs to be installed. He is hoping to have it by the end of the month in time for camp and is planning to use the van for after school programs in the fall.

Laurie asked about the retirement of the Director of Terrific Twos. Dennis said the director is leaving the part time, non-benefitted position. He has interviewed a candidate and once the position is filled, he will open registration for the program in the fall.

Commission Updates:

Rail Trails – A Rail Trail Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for June 5th at 7:30pm. Laurie will attend.

Haskell & Pathway – Bobby informed that he, Lisa Kouchakdjian (Select Board), Sandra Duran (Combined Facilities Director), and the land architect met and walked Haskell field. They discussed the ADA pathway and additional handicapped parking and other options. He did not have an update from Sandra after the walk, but said he knew she reached out to Town Counsel to gather more information on the Butler Road easement.

Fairbank – Mara was not able to speak with Jen Pincus, PBC, so she did not have an update. She said when grass is planted on the Recreation side it will be roped off and will not be able to be used until the grass is

established. Laurie suggested discussing the outdoor Recreation space at a future meeting and a possible CPC article for a pavilion or some other permanent structure.

Ben joined the meeting at 7.05pm.

CPC - Mara suggested beginning to brainstorm ideas for the next CPC round and adding CPC to the July/August Commission meeting. She said the deadline for CPC articles is usually in October.

Finances – Ben said he added finances to another part of the agenda, so finances will be discussed at that time.

Policies – Ben and Granger have been gathering information from other Towns. They reported Mark Thompson or the department administrator can make changes to the Commission page on the Town website.

Mara asked Ben if he knew if the issue regarding legal ownership of different properties was addressed in the Field Assessment or Open Space and Recreation Plan. Ben will follow up with the Director of Planning.

Commission Roles: Ben opened discussion on Commission Roles to see if anyone wanted to make any changes. Commissioners agreed 2 years in the role of Chair and Assistant Chair was a good timeframe. Granger offered the Park and Recreation Charter states the Commission should regularly rotate the chairperson position on an annual basis, but had flexibility to extend the term if needed. Ben suggested everyone review the charter to see if there are any other edits they may want to vote on at another meeting. It was suggested the Town website should have a link to the Park and Recreation Policies. Grainger asked about the Online course link on the website. Dennis explained it was no longer active and it will be removed. Ben said he and Granger will review the policy and documents they found, make some recommendations and share with the rest of the Commissioners at a later meeting.

Continuation of Funding Discussion: At the last meeting, the Commission discussed the uniqueness of the Recreation funding. The Commission discussed how little funding for Recreation comes from Town tax-based funding. The Commission discussed advocating to have more Recreation salary covered by the Town or move towards having one or two of the Parks and Grounds salaries, currently in the Field Enterprise Fund, moved back to the Town budget.

Ben discussed the need to discuss how the new Community Center will be used by the Community. Mara thought they first needed to understand and agree on the mission and the goals for the Recreation department and Community Center. This would help determine fees and what funds they may want to request from the Town budget. Mara suggested putting her Recreation budget presentation on the website so residents would be aware of the funding sources. Laurie would like after-school care and more Inclusive programming included in the discussions for Recreation and the new facility. Dennis confirmed there are three separate budget groups for Recreation: The Field Enterprise Fund, the Pool Enterprise Fund and Recreation, which has a Revolving 53E1/2 fund and small Recreation Budget. He would like to see some of the Parks and Grounds salaries moved back to the Town budget. If that happened, it would help defer expenses and perhaps help with not increasing the field permit fee or at least reduce the amount the fee may increase. Dennis would also like the budget discussion to include what expenses should be paid out of the Field Enterprise Fund. For example, who is responsible for bathrooms, trash etc. on fields which are also used by residents. He said he would like to have the same discussion regarding the Pool now that it is located inside the new Fairbank Community Center. He is exploring a resident/nonresident fee, but said its difficult since the pool will be shut down again next year. In addition, he is waiting to hear how the Town wants to proceed with the idea of using the new facility for after-school care. If shared space and

Recreation rooms are used how is that handled by the Town. The Town needs to decide how they want the new facility used and what fees will be charged to cover staff and maintenance.

Commission discussion centered on where they thought their advocacy would be best used such as working for reduced fees, better field maintenance, developing recreation/pool membership fees, or how the new Community Center is used. Ben suggested the two best areas to focus on are the new Fairbank Community Center, which would include Recreation staffing, and working towards moving some of the Park and Grounds salary and benefits back to the Town budget. Bobby thought the Community Center ranked high in terms of action because resident tax dollars were used to build it. He did not think residents would be happy to pay a membership fee to use the recreation facility since their taxes were used to build it.

Laurie questioned who would be responsible for the multi-purpose rooms and said it wasn't clear to her who runs the new facility on a day to day basis. Mara said Sandra Duran, the Combined Facilities Director, is in charge of the facility and has already said the building would not be rented out until the building is completely finished. Bobby found it frustrating, since many of these topics were brought up before the building was even built and should have been addressed earlier. Ben asked Dennis how the utilities are allocated in the new facility. Dennis said he is still trying to figure that out since he has not received an Eversource bill since the building opened in January. The Pool Enterprise Fund pays for the cleaning at the pool, all other areas are paid by facilities.

Mara suggested Ben schedule a meeting with the Town Manager to begin discussion on these issues. Ben has reached out to the Town Manager to schedule a meeting. Ben asked Dennis about the Field Enterprise Fund and the concern regarding staffing expenses. Dennis said it is simple math; one half the salaries and benefits from the four Park and Grounds staff total about \$185,000 and the transfer to the Cutting Stabilization Fund is \$10,500. He said historically the Field Permits bring in between \$205,000 to \$230,000 each year, which only leaves at most \$34,500 for the fixed and miscellaneous field costs which include electric, water, bathroom cleaning, irrigation and other field maintenance costs. He said it doesn't leave room to do some of the extra field maintenance he would like to do on the fields. The field permit fees haven't been increased in a few years, but in addition to the salaries going up, all other expenses have increased too. He thought just starting with moving one salary and benefits back to the Town budget would be a big help.

Bobolink and other Signage – Ben shared the email from Laurie Capone, Conservation Director, seeking approval to post a sign at Davis Field that would inform users about the bobolinks nesting at Davis field encouraging them to be aware of this issue from May to the end of July. The sign would be posted yearly at Davis during the nesting season and removed by the Conservation office in August. Ben showed the sign Conservation suggested posting. Bobby expressed concern that a spotted salamander was on the sign and it might confuse people if it is Conservation land or Recreation land. Dennis confirmed that Davis is not used by many youth sports groups at this time. Ben stated the Commission could request Conservation edit the sign by removing the salamander and recommending a map showing where the Bobolinks would be at Davis field and make sure to mention this restriction would only be for a small part of the year during the nesting period.

After discussion, it was suggested to invite the Director of Conservation to the July or August meeting and the Commission decided to approve the sign at this time with some edits.

Granger made a motion to approve the Conservation signage regarding the Bobolinks with subsequent edits by Laurie and the Director of Conservation. Laurie seconded the motion. Dennis added that this motion should be for this season, with further discussions with Conservation regarding the Davis field space moving forward regarding lines of delineation and long-term plans.

After discussion, the Commission voted: Mara-yes, Laurie-yes, Granger-yes, Bobby-no, Ben-yes. Vote passed in favor- 4-1.

Dennis discussed a sign that the Board of Health Director requested to post at the fields alerting users of the field to ticks and what to look for and what to wear in order to protect themselves. He wanted the Commission to be aware of the signage. It was decided no vote was needed.

Advancing Priorities: Ben mentioned there was an after-school discussion at the Select Board level. He suggested discussing this at a future meeting and inviting Lisa Kouchakdjian to come and present on the Select Boards view on the topic. He also opened the discussion on the topic if the Commissioners had comments. Laurie stated the new Recreation van will be the first entry into providing some sort of transportation to the Community Center. Mara expressed disappointment that the resident parent group who conducted a survey of other parents regarding after school care was not able to present to the Select Board. Laurie thought the group was able to meet with the Town Manager and said the Commission did advocate for a Town Manager's working group.

Meeting Minutes – None to review at this time.

Future Meetings – Next meeting is scheduled for July 8th. Ben will send out suggested dates for the August, Sept, and October meetings.

Bobby made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Granger. Vote – Granger – yes, Bobby – yes, Laurie – yes, Mara – yes, Ben – yes. Vote in favor 5-0.