

Virtual Meeting 6:32 pm

October 15, 2024

Commissioners: Mara Huston, Bobby Beagan, Granger Atkeson, Laurie Eliason, Ben Carmel, Chair

Park and Recreation: Dennis Mannone – Director, Christine Sturniolo-Program Coordinator

Guests – Karl Fries, Finance Committee Representative

Roll Call: Granger – here, Bobby – here, Mara – here, Laurie - here, Granger - here, Ben - here.

**Public Comment:** None

**Director Update:** Dennis distributed Pool/Field Enterprise financials for the end of FY24 and the first quarter of FY25. Ben asked Dennis if he thought the high retained earnings in the funds may have impacted the Town Manager's thought to move Recreation salaries off the Town tax levy. Dennis wasn't sure, but said the increase in retained earnings is due to the fact the Town supplemented the pool with funds during Covid, a leaner staff and the fact Atkinson was one of the few pools open during Covid. He did submit a plan that would cross train the staff, impact grade levels and salary and hopefully hire an Asst. Director. He said the Town Manager's thought to move Recreation salaries off the tax levy was a surprise to him. He said the pool will be shut down for another 3 to 4-month timeframe in the spring or late summer of 2025. He is concerned about lost revenue, ongoing expenses and staffing costs. Bobby asked about the difference in the Pool financials over the past years. Dennis said during and after Covid the pool is running under a new model. The pool is open Monday through Friday for open swim from 5:30am to 4:00pm and then rentals after 4:00pm and on the weekend. He doesn't need as many lifeguards as in the past and he does not have regular part time front desk staff. He is hoping to hire additional part time supervisors.

Ben will invite Sandra Duran, Combined Facilities Director, to attend the next Park and Recreation meeting to discuss the work planned during the shutdown for the pool and the Community Center CPC article.

Dennis stated the retained earnings in the Field Enterprise Fund are being used to offset the expenses if the revenue projections are not met. The Park and Grounds staff has been full at 4 positions for the past few years, which is impacting expenses since half of their salaries and half of their benefits are paid out of the Field Enterprise Fund. For a number of years, instead of 4 employees, there were only 2 or 3 being paid out of the Enterprise Fund. Dennis said he may have to consider an increase in the field permit fee to cover not only salaries, but also the increase in utility, cleaning and other costs, unless something changes in the Town budget.

Ben asked for the status on the Field Assessment Plan. Dennis reported the contract has been signed with Gale Associates and they are working towards a kickoff meeting date to discuss the plan, protocol, timelines and deliverables. Mara suggested including a Commissioner in the conversations.

Dennis introduced Christine Sturniolo, Program Coordinator, to present information on the Park and Recreation programs. Christine discussed various Recreation programs running including Trunk or Treat occurring on October 19<sup>th</sup>, Puzzle Palooza, Wachusett Ski Program, starting in January, Wild Wednesday 1/2-day programs for elementary and middle school, engineering programs and the new Toddler Action Zone in the preschool room and various basketball programs. The program coordinators are supervising and staffing some of the programs along with vendors and some part-time high school students have been hired to cover the front desk and evening programs.

Mara asked about use of the Recreation van. Dennis said the van seats 12 and they are still figuring out how to incorporate the van into the after-school program since there are four elementary schools. The

staff is also discussing some type of membership for after school programs, but the earliest something like that may be offered is after the first of the year. Recreation is also offering several pickleball options, including a membership. These programs have been received well. Recreation program information is available on Facebook, Sudbury Patch, by email if an individual has a Recreation account (sudburyrec.com), and pamphlets in the Recreation front desk area.

Laurie suggested the possibility of submitting program information to a publication or newsletter in Town to generate more interest. Laurie offered to work with Christine on promotional material. Dennis offered to have the Program Coordinators and Pool Supervisors attend Commission Meetings, perhaps quarterly, to update the Commissioners on recreation/pool programs and activities.

Dennis stated Phase 1 of the Feeley Field project is 99% complete. He submitted end of the year reports to CPC and said about \$100,000 will be returned to CPC on the Feeley Phase 1 project. Phase 2 of the Feeley Field project has been stalled since the current architect does not want to be a part of Phase 2, which means the project will have to go out to bid again. In addition, a DPW Director is starting in the next few weeks and a Town engineer still needs to be hired. He suggested putting a hold on Phase 2 until the Field Assessment Plan is completed. He thought Broadacres might be suggested as a location for a softball field. He suggested only doing work such as the ADA pathway behind the two lower fields. He has discussed this idea with representatives of girls' softball.

The Haskell playground renovation has been delayed due to various issues. The architect that worked on the Feeley Field project is on this project also and has been dealing with staffing issues. In addition, the playground was used for camp due to construction of the new Fairbank Community Center. He is hopeful once the new DPW Director is on board, he can get the project out to bid in December with construction in early spring.

Mara thought there would be many suggestions on how to best use Broadacres. Mara suggested possibly using the remaining funds from Feeley Phase 1 to complete the ADA pathways behind the lower Feeley softball fields.

Mara asked about the bathrooms and water fountain at Haskell, since she had heard they were locked or broken. Dennis said part of the problem is who responsible for these issues on the weekend. The bathrooms sometimes get locked by kids who fooling around. A cleaning crew cleans the bathrooms during the week, but no one is cleaning or staffing supplies on weekends. The water fountain is working, but will be shut off for the winter.

Dennis reported Sudbury summer camp went well and he is already planning to have registration for next summer possibly in December or early January. Laurie asked how the current camp numbers compare to numbers before Covid. Dennis said in the past camp would have 100 to 140 kids per session, now they have around 100. He said the new SMILE summer program offered by the elementary school along with Sewataro, who now offers more scholarships to Sudbury residents, impact registrations numbers for Sudbury Summer.

### **Commission Updates:**

**Rail Trail** – Laurie mentioned Fuss and O'Neill, project engineers, have provided a proposal for a survey of the area including a design to improve the driveway, which may also include the parking lot as well. In addition, signage is needed to make sure it is clear where parking should occur at that site. Laurie said she thought Marcia had reached out to Dennis on this subject. Signage costs may be covered in funding from the article. Bobby thought the Commission should be included in discussions. Laurie offered to reach out and ask Marcia to come to a Commission meeting to update the Commission.

**Haskell Pathway** – Bobby will wait until Sandra Duran, Combined Facilities Director, is at a meeting to make sure he has the latest accurate information to update the Commission. Ben commented that Sandra will be at the next meeting.

**Fairbank** - Mara wasn't able to speak with Jenny Pincus to get a new update. She said work on drainage is currently being done at Fairbank.

**CPC** – Ben stated Sandra would be at the next meeting to discuss the CPC article for Fairbank/Haskell. Granger said the CPC will meet a few times before the next Commission meeting. Laurie offered to attend any meetings if needed since she had done some work with Sandra on the pavilion included in the CPC article.

**Finances** – will be discussed during agenda item with FinCom liaison.

**Polices** – Granger developed a decision flow chart for projects submitted for a more formal way for the Commission to consider an initiative or construction request by a youth group or outside party for work/projects on Recreation land. He asked for input from the Commission and Dennis. Ben suggested sending out the document and asked everyone to provide feedback and then review at a future meeting.

**FinCom Liaison Introduction/Next Steps/Recap of Town Manager Meeting:** Karl Fries, 40 Concord Road, is the Finance Committee liaison to the Park and Recreation Commission. Ben asked him to attend a meeting to talk a little bit about finances and the Recreation Department. Karl said the request tied in perfectly, because the FinCom had questions about Park and Recreation and the finances, so he suggested a joint meeting might be in order. He watched the recent Park and Recreation Commission meeting with the Town Manager regarding Recreation finances and funding. He said the FinCom also met with the Town Manager and said this is going to be a challenging budget year for the Town, but everything doesn't have to be figured out immediately, it will be more of an ongoing process. Mara asked if Karl had a chance to review any of the budget documents posted on the Park and Recreation website. Ben sent Karl a link to the presentation for review. She said Park and Recreation has the smallest allocation of Town funds and is concerned that the Town Manager is suggesting reducing the current funds.

Laurie said if the Town is moving towards a more self-funding model for Recreation she hoped there would be enough time for discussion to ensure there was revenue to cover salaries and expenses. She agreed with Bobby that it would be good to understand the Town's concerns and see how Recreation fits into the Town's funding plans.

Karl said it is hard to do a lot with the Town's budget since only about 20% is related to the municipality and the rest is dedicated to the schools. He said it will be good to look at everything with fresh eyes and a new perspective instead of doing things the way they have always been done in the past. Dennis said his department works towards keeping the programs affordable, so he is hopeful there may be a scholarship program for people in need an assistance. Karl said he thought historical information on fees, pricing and revenue generated would be helpful in the discussions.

Mara stated her concern about reducing Recreation funds in the Town budget. She said if programs become too expensive, people won't sign up and there may not be enough funds to cover salaries. Ben asked Commissioners to send him any additional thoughts on how to structure the agenda for

discussion with Karl and the FinCom. November 18<sup>th</sup> was suggested as a possible date for the joint meeting.

Mara suggested the Field Enterprise Fund be in discussion with the FinCom. She thought needed to be allocated more appropriately, specifically bathroom and playground expenses. Bobby suggested taking a look at if it's possibly less expensive and more prudent to use an outside service rather than Town employees to service the fields. Ben will follow up with Karl to secure a date for the joint meeting.

**Commission Roles & Project Assignment:** Commissioners discussed the importance of having Commissioners involved in the various Recreation projects to help and support the Recreation staff. Commissioner assigned to a project could possibly attend meetings, receive emails and be aware of the progress of the project. Dennis said budgeting, and major project decisions should still reside with the Recreation office and Town staff. After discussion, it was decided that Granger would be the liaison to the Haskell Smile Playground project; Laurie would be the liaison to the CPC article which includes the pavilion at Fairbank Community Center, Bobby would be the liaison to the Haskell and the Pathway project, and Mara would be the liaison to the Field Needs Assessment project. Ben will be the liaison working with FinCom on Recreation finances.

**Future Meetings** – Ben will send an email out regarding the joint meeting with the FinCom and asked for a response on availability for November 18<sup>th</sup>. November 4<sup>th</sup> and December 2 were also discussed as possible future meeting dates.

**Meeting Minutes** - A motion was made to approve the Park and Recreation Commission meeting minutes for August 7<sup>th</sup> and Augusts 28<sup>th</sup>. Motion received a second. Vote: Laurie – yes, Granger – yes, Bobby – yes, Mara – yes, Ben – yes. Vote passed in favor - 5-0. Mara had edits/additions to the September 16<sup>th</sup> meeting, they will be voted on at the next meeting.

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