

October 24th, 2016

Park and Recreation Commission Minutes

Mike Ensley, Mara Huston, Jim Marotta, Dick Williamson

Public Comment: None

Minutes from September 12th, 2016 approved with minor changes 4-0

Discussion on tennis opportunities and improvement to Feeley – Mara noted that tennis playing at the Feeley courts was often compromised by strong winds. The winds of most concern come from a southerly direction. The courts are shielded from northerly winds by trees along the north side. She provided information on a knitted windscreen that could be placed along the fence on the south side of the courts at a cost of about \$600.

Mara suggested that interest in tennis might be stimulated by setting up a “recreational tennis league” whereby residents interested in playing tennis would submit their names to a ladder whose main purpose would be to rank players so as to identify closely matched players for subsequent matches. Lexington has a similar recreational league. Dick noted that Sudbury had a similar set up in the late 70’s and early 80’s. Mike said that any interested resident could set this up.

Discussion and possible vote of CPC application for Featherland tennis court – Mara offered a draft of a Project Submission Form requesting \$175,000 of CPC funds in FY 18 for rebuilding the tennis courts at Featherland.

Mara handed out copies of a 2012 CPC fact sheet that broke down CPC funding over the previous 9 years. Of the total, 8% had gone to recreation. With no other Park and Recreation requests having been made to the CPC last year and none again this fall, Mara suggested that the tennis court funding was both timely and a modest request compared to the past. Dick noted that about \$100,000 of CPA funds had been approved every year for construction of sidewalks. However, a recent legal decision would not allow CPA funds to be used for sidewalks in the future. So looking at CPA funding from the past (leaving out sidewalks) sets a benchmark for the future of somewhat less than 8% for CPA funding of recreation.

Jim Marotta noted that Commissioner Bobby Beagan, who was not at the meeting, had earlier questioned whether there was enough demand for tennis to justify the expenditure for rebuilding the courts. Jim reviewed information on the number of tennis courts per person in nearby towns. By that measure, Sudbury is already well served with tennis courts without the rebuilding of the Featherland courts. Feeley and high school courts, combined with those at fitness centers and private tennis clubs means that there are a lot of courts in Sudbury.

There was a long debate about what was the take away from votes on Featherland tennis courts funding last spring. The Town Manager's budget included such funding so Park and Rec. did not seek CPA funding. A request was made to the Capital Investment Advisory Committee (CIAC) for a capital exclusion article for funding the tennis courts. Jim had follow-on conversations with CIAC members and left with the impression that the request was turned down because CIAC felt that there was not enough interest in tennis. Dick had a quite different impression. The CIAC request was turned down because they felt that the tennis court funding should come out of CPA dollars and further, suggested that such a subsequent request be made.

Article 25 requesting capital funding for tennis courts at the May 2016 Town Meeting was voted down. A subsequent ballot question 13 for the May 17th 2016 town election asked for \$175,000 of property taxes for court reconstruction. The question was defeated 970 to 724. Again a vigorous discussion ensued concerning the message sent by the voters. One opinion was that the votes were a death knell for tennis courts funding. Others opined that such funding was only one of 14 capital requests and most went down to defeat because voters didn't like the way such a large list of capital items came up all at once and wasn't addressed as part of an ongoing budgeting process. One opinion was that individual requests could be considered separately in the future.

Mike felt that the whole CPC request was bad because it had been made in a rush by a new member of Park and Rec. (Mara) and had not gone through the usual multi-year vetting of new efforts. Dick and Mara countered that the request had been under discussion for the two years since the fences were taken down under the crush of snow during the winter of 2015. Further, Mike asserted that the Commission had voted unanimously for a priority list of Park and Rec. capital projects and that the Featherland tennis courts were near the bottom of the list and as such, shouldn't be considered at this time.

It was recognized that the Commission was not ready to take a vote so the issue will be discussed (and possibly voted on) at the next Commission meeting.

Spring Triathlon – Discussion - Mara noted that the Park and Rec. spring triathlon had been a popular event for many years until the unfortunate death of a competitor in a bicycle-vehicle collision in 2015. She suggested that the event occur again in spring 2017, but that the cycling route be changed to avoid the dangerous turn at the intersection of Hudson and Maynard Roads where the death occurred. She laid out for consideration a potential cycling route primarily on Hudson, Peakham and Dutton roads. Mara will discuss this further with Director Kayla McNamara.

Future Meeting Planning – Mara noted that it would be helpful if Commission meetings were held on a regular schedule so that residents would have a better heads up on when to attend, given that the agenda usually comes out only a few days before a meeting. Other members said that it has been an ongoing policy to

hold meetings on the first Monday of each month, with necessary rescheduling for Monday holidays. A commitment was made to lay out the meeting schedule, accessible on the Town web site, for the next several months.