

Virtual Meeting – 6:33pm

March 1, 2021

Commissioners: Mara Huston, Ben Carmel, Dick Williamson, Jim Marotta

Dennis Mannone, Dir. Park and Recreation/Pool

Guests: Jen Roberts (BOS), Beth Sudemeyer (Planning), Lynn Noland, Patti Walch, (Sudbury Garden Club), Joy DiMaggio (Thursday Garden Club), Craig Berkel (Youth Football) Bob Lee (Youth Soccer) Mark Spector (Youth Baseball)

**Public Comment:** None

**Chair Comment:** Mara added Chair comments to report updates on issues raised at previous meetings. She stated the MOU, IMA, and the MeadowWalk agreement have been posted in the documents section of the Park and Recreation Commission website. The Owner's Project Manager has been hired for the new Fairbank Building Project and the Town is in the process of hiring an architect. Mara spoke with Art Reilly regarding installing lights at Turf 1 and 2 at LSRHS. Mara said one of the questions that came from her meeting with Art was if lights are put at the lower turf fields, will that take away from field rentals for the Town. Mara and Art also discussed the maintenance costs for all 4 turf fields and finding a better way to handle those expenses. Mara discussed using CPC funds to hire a consultant to design a Recreation Plan for the Town, to understand the demand for fields and see if we have the fields to meet the demand, to do a financial analysis of Recreation including programs and aquatics.

Mara informed the Commission that Jim Marotta has decided not to run for reelection and thanked him for his many years of service to the Park and Recreation Commission. Mara informed the Commission that Laurie Eliason is running for the vacant seat and welcomed her to the Commission unofficially until the election takes place.

**Director Update:** Dennis stated swim team rentals are winding down, but a few teams in the second swim team season have reached out to rent lanes. These are teams that usually hold their swim season in the fall. The Pool is \$40,000 in the positive, with five months of the fiscal year remaining. Swim lessons are being offered again, still following Covid guidelines of individual lanes. Covid restrictions continue to impact revenue. Ben asked how the current financial numbers compare to last year. Dennis stated it is difficult to compare due to Covid, but said the additional swim team rentals have helped increase the revenue from last year, in addition to reducing hours and part time staff. He is unsure when pool memberships will return and how that will impact revenue, since no one knows when people will feel comfortable swimming with multiple swimmers in a lane.

Recreation is running Wild Wednesdays, Terrific Twos, some vendor programs and opened up a family gym time program. Families can rent the gym for 1 hour use and we supply the equipment. Sudbury Summer registration takes place on Tuesday, March 9<sup>th</sup> at 12 noon. A full day camp, two-week sessions will start with 50 openings and will run from July 5<sup>th</sup> through August 13<sup>th</sup>. The number of openings may change due to Covid guidelines and interest from residents. Revenue is still low for Recreation, but spring programs have been offered and more

people are signing up. Mara asked if a preschool summer camp preschool will be offered. Dennis said not at this time.

The Field Enterprise Fund is \$48,293 in the negative, taking out the salaries, benefits and expenses. Dennis has received a number of spring field permits, so that should help reduce the current deficit. Ben asked how this number compares to last year. Dennis said it is difficult to compare since there were so many cancellations due to Covid.

Mara noted Jim Marotta joined the meeting and thanked him for his many years of service.

**Broadacres/BFRT Update:** Mara stated since she is an abutter to an abutter of the rail trail, she will mute herself, turn off her screen and act as a resident during the discussion on Broadacres. Ben will lead the discussion.

Beth Sudemeyer gave an update on the progress being made with the Bruce Freeman Trail design. A new design consultant, hired last November, prepared the concepts she is presenting tonight. They have also reinitiated the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Task Force. Dick Williamson is the Park and Recreation Commission representative. A new concept was developed for the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail parking lot at Broadacres Farm. Drawings of the plans were shared on screen. The plan is to improve the user experience with the Rail Trail, but also provide greater amenities for the Town properties. They are also looking at the Davis Field area where they are proposing a connection path from the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail intersection at North Road to create a shared use path, an information kiosk and hydration station. They also developed a parking lot concept for Broadacres which would include a bathroom and hydration station and a potential pavilion and picnic area.

Ben asked if there was anything discussed in the meetings specific to Park and Recreation that would be important to hear. Dick stated parking was important in regard to those using the Rail Trail and the fields. Commission discussed the parking lot layouts and what might work best. Beth commented that everything that is proposed on the concept plans is intended to be included in the Rail Trail project, except the pavilion.

Dick offered the task force will be meeting every week for the next couple of weeks, so anyone interested is invited to attend the virtual meetings.

Mara returned at end of this discussion.

**Discussion with Garden Clubs:** The Commission invited the two garden clubs in Town, The Thursday Garden Club and the Sudbury Garden Club, to discuss their work at Heritage and Grinnell Park. Lynne Noland, Sudbury Garden Club, stated their members have completed plans in the past for Heritage Park to help with erosion on the paths. She thought at one point the plans included an amphitheater in the park. They would like to see more parking and irrigation at Heritage Park. Lynne stated she and Joy DiMaggio (Thursday Garden Club) take care of the Blue Star Garden in Grinnell, which is a World War 1 memorial. Joy thought there was a grand

plan for Grinnell developed when the Town put in the stonewall, but she has not seen it. She thought it might have been done by the group involved with the redesign of the Town Center.

Patti Walch (Sudbury Garden Club) stated they have many ideas for design, but get bogged down since about 75% of their time is spent edging, mulching, pruning and maintaining the existing plantings. She thinks a big issue is the Town does not have specific staff time assigned to the park other than to cut the grass. This impacts the amount of time they can spend bringing beauty to the parks and gardens. Joy stated another issue is they have to be very careful with the traffic on Concord and Hudson Road.

Lynne said another issue is the Memorial Tree program. Someone has to maintain them and make sure they grow, since they need to be watered, pruned etc. They need a plaque on the ground and then they have the issue if the tree dies. She said many Towns will do a granite bench instead with a plaque, much less maintenance. Patti stated the Garden Clubs would support the idea of exploring some kind of Memorial Fund that would receive donations. The Garden Clubs would then make the decisions on what would be best to plant at the parks. They would like to see more picnic tables at the parks.

Mara mentioned the Town ADA assessment and discussion about making Heritage and Grinnell Park handicap accessible. She encouraged the Garden Club members to review the assessment and make any comments on the recommendations regarding Grinnell and Heritage.

Joy added most of the members of the Garden Clubs are close to 60 and older. She said they physically can't do as much and they are getting more dependent on Chris Felt and his staff to help with the heaving lifting etc.

Jim Marotta asked if the Garden Clubs oversee the 911 Memorial. Patti stated a separate group is responsible for taking care of the memorial.

**Field Maintenance User Fee Increase** – Dennis proposed an increase to the field permit fee. He gave some history on the Field Enterprise Fund that historically generates on average \$200,000 from permit fees. The Fund pays ½ salaries/benefits of Park and Grounds staff and ½ of the field expenses. In addition, a decision was made several years ago to take \$10,500 out of the Field Enterprise Fund and transfer it into a stabilization fund for turf replacement of Cutting Field. Every year the Enterprise Fund starts out at zero and throughout the year brings in revenue from field permits. At the end of the year, the plan is for the revenue to exceed the expenses, and any remaining revenue is placed in retained earnings which can be used at a later date.

The Town is projecting a \$230,000 budget for FY22. Expenses have been cut, but in order to cover expenses, salary and benefits a 15% increase on the current user fee of \$43 per player is required. The last increase (\$3.00) was in 2019, the increase before that was in 2017 (\$5.00). Dennis stated without an increase, there will not be enough revenue to cover expenses. Dennis shared a screen showing how the increase would impact the current fees.

Mara asked Dennis about the light fee. He stated he is still working on the correct amount to charge once he receives information from Eversource and the demand fees associated with the lights.

Craig Berkel, Sudbury Youth Football, expressed concern on fees for field permits that are for profit versus non-profit associations. He felt there should be a significant difference in the permit fee for the different groups. He would like to see a better balance in the field permit policy on rates charged to Sudbury youth groups, for profit users, etc.

Mara stated the topic has been discussed in the past, and is something that should be discussed in more detail. She asked Dennis how many users are profit versus non-profit and are they considered Sudbury organizations or non-Sudbury organizations. Dennis said he is not aware of too many that aren't non-profit. Outside groups rent occasionally when time and space allow, but for the most part it is the same users every year that have just gotten larger by lowering the age of users, or requesting more field space. Dennis stated the field permit was done many years ago with small revisions over the years. The user group categories were established years ago and may need to be reviewed and revised.

Craig Berkel expressed concern over kids being kicked off fields by people running private lessons. He questioned if they really have a permit and if they are paying a premium for the use of the field. He asked if there was a way to view field permits. Mara said Dennis gives permits to users and anyone can ask to see the permit. Craig said it is difficult to know if a private lesson on the fields is approved and young kids may not want to ask if the person has a permit. He also said if they don't have a permit, it is lost revenue.

Mara thanked Craig for his concerns. Dennis said private lessons and use of the fields without a permit is an ongoing issue. He said his belief is if the individual is making money on a Town owned field, then they should be pulling a permit. He did offer that if anyone sees groups on the fields without permits to let him know and he will investigate it. Mara said she did some research and there are policies all over the state saying that a user needs pay for public space to teach a private class.

Bob Lee, Youth Soccer, asked Dennis if he was getting full rosters from organizations. Dennis stated he is receiving rosters from group's along with their permit fees. Bob asked for clarification on the statement that park maintenance fees would be dropping. Dennis stated in the FY 23 budget, the amount for park maintenance is lower, so there may be some services that won't be done.

Craig Berkel asked about the Community Field, which is over 10 years old. Mara stated an article is on the next Town Warrant for replacement of the turf. He also asked who has authority for booking the Community Field. The high school has first priority, and then Dennis is the contact for after school hours. Light fees are paid directly to LSRHS. Dennis offered he is in

discussion with Art Reilly, the LSRHS Athletic Director, to see how booking the Community field can be streamlined.

Mara brought the discussion back to the Commissioners and Dennis' request for a 15% raise on the permit fee. Ben stated he felt 15% was high. Mara stated in her conversation with Dennis and the Town Manager, that the 15% is needed to cover the proposed FY22 budget.

Commissioners discussed the pros and cons of the increase and if a decision had to be made tonight. She said a decision is needed, so organizations with early registrations will have time to reflect the increase in their fees. Increase would be effective July 1, 2021. Commissioners continued discussion on non-profit versus profit, hourly versus seasonal block reservations. Dennis stated the increase will allow the Enterprise Fund to cover expenses and then future increase would hopefully be smaller to keep pace with inflation. He stated the salaries/benefits in the Enterprise Fund is an ongoing concern and will continue to be addressed.

Commissioners continued to discuss fees and if the increase was too high. Jim asked Dennis if he was looking for an across the board increase of 15%. Dennis stated yes.

Mark Spector, Youth Baseball, expressed concern that the permit fee has gone up significantly over the past years. In addition, youth baseball puts a great deal of their own money into maintenance on the baseball fields.

Dick expressed concerns that the fees have gone up faster than inflation and the number of kids playing sports has declined. Mara stated two contributors might be the significant increase in minimum wage to \$15 dollars and the salaries of the Park and Grounds staff being part of union contracts that get negotiated.

Jim Marotta made a motion to increase all field permit fees by 15% effective July 1, 2021 as proposed by the Park and Recreation Director. The motion received a second from Ben. Motion passed 4-0 Mara -yes, Dick-yes, Ben – yes, Jim – yes.

**CPC Update:** Mara stated the CIC supported the Haskell playground improvements as well as the renovations to Feeley field. Dennis will present requests to the Selectboard tomorrow night.

**CPC- Featherland:** Mara stated Phase 1 of the Featherland Tennis Court project has not been closed out. She is waiting on discussion/decision on sound dampening fabric. She added the possible vote to the agenda tonight to move forward with closing the article or keeping it open for additional expenses. The amount left is estimated at \$38,000, Mara will confirm the number. The estimate for sound dampening fabric was discussed in past meetings and was about \$19,000. It was thought to be a great deal of money to spend and more research was needed on the fabric and actual sound issues. Mara will submit the report as pending, and wait for more research on sound /fabric before a vote is taken.

**Master Plan Final Comments:** Mara stated the comment period has been extended to March 17<sup>th</sup>. Mara asked if anyone had a chance to read the master plan final version and asked for any comments.

Dick stated he has given comments and wanted to see if they had been incorporated in the new draft. He said he hasn't found any flaws to date, but will read through the additional sections and submit his corrections and comments. Mara had comments also asked the other Commissioners to send all comments to her. She will combine all responses and send them along to the Planning Department.

**Selectboard Accessibility Project:** The Town has hired an organization to do an ADA review on all Town facilities, inside and outside. Mara stated the report is being made public tomorrow and the comments are due before the next Park and Recreation Commission meeting. Mara sent the link to the Commissioners, which includes three high level documents with one all about Parks in Sudbury. Mara discussed some of the issues addressed in the report regarding Sewataro and the Fairbank Community Center. Sewataro is not under Recreation at this time and issues at Fairbank will be corrected with the new building. Mara encouraged the Commissioners to read the report and send comments to her. She will collect all comments and send them from the Park and Recreation Commission. Comments need to be in by the 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Minutes/Meetings:** No minutes to approve. Next meeting is Monday, April 5. The May 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting may change due to Town Meeting, unless Town Meeting is Saturday, May 5.

Mara Huston: The next meeting is Monday April 5th.

Motion to adjourn, seconded. Jim-yes, Ben-yes, Dick-Yes, Mara-Yes.