

Virtual Meeting – 6:40pm
June 21, 2021

Commissioners: Bobby Beagan, Mara Huston, Ben Carmel, Dick Williamson, Laurie Eliason
Dennis Mannone, Dir. Park and Recreation/Pool, Lynne Ziffer, Pool

June 21, 2021 Meeting Roll Call: Ben -here, Bobby – here, Laurie – here, Dick – here, Mara – here

Public Comment: None

Comments from Chairperson: Mara stated a design concept for the Fairbank Community Center had been approved. She showed the basic concept for the building, with a new gym in front of the pool, along with offices, program rooms, Locker rooms, recreation rooms. It is still unclear where the SPS entrance will be located. SPS will be located on the second floor. Parking will be located on both sides of the building and across the street at Haskell field. Mara reiterated that this was a concept and work is still being done on the layout. She stated the meeting from early June could be watched at Sudbury TV. Bobby asked if the user groups had input. Mara stated they were heavily involved. Mara stated there have been challenging issues such as pool viewing, shared spaces etc. Lynne Ziffer offered she has heard pool users are very concerned the natural light from the windows will be gone and the pool will be much darker. This will create a different look and feel to the swimming environment. Mara said this problem has been discussed and falls into the category that we can't have everything. Bobby said the architects should know this is a high priority and to think outside the box to try to keep as much natural light as possible. Mara stated there are many important factors such as locker room space and viewing area so it will depend on the ranking of each need to determine the final design. She heard the concern and will bring it up again.

Mara had conversations with Sudbury Soccer and Sudbury Football regarding user fees for summer clinics and fees in general. She said the January meeting with representatives of the youth groups was very informative. It was clear to her that the Commission needs to revisit the Field User Policy. She spoke with Sudbury Little League regarding their interest in Broadacres and small baseball fields on the site. She told them the Commission is working toward an updated recreation plan. She responded to emails regarding pickleball and Feeley.

Director Update: Dennis reported the Atkinson Pool had one of its best years due to increased lane rental fees and the fact that many other pools closed, which allowed for more rental revenue in addition to reducing part-time staff and pool hours and that many residents and non-residents swam at \$10.00 per hour. The pool hosted more swim meets since they were all virtual. The Field Enterprise Fund fees were increased by 15% on July 1, 2020. This along with sound planning and cutting costs allowed for a balanced budget in FY21. The permit fee may need to be adjusted in the future depending on the revenue/expenses in FY22. The Recreation Department is in better shape also due to the fact that programs such as Terrific Twos and

Sudbury Summer Camp are able to run. Summer camp will start in two weeks with over 60 kids, CIT, and staff.

Laurie asked about the ages for camp. Dennis stated the camp was originally for ages 7 to 12, but younger groups were added at a later date. Camp is basically full, although some campers have switched to SMILE, the school summer program. Mara asked about staffing for the pool, Dennis stated this is an ongoing issue impacting all Recreation Departments.

Commissioners Roles and Responsibilities: Mara stated discussion have taken place regarding the roles and responsibilities of the PRC since the last meeting. The Town Manager asked Town Council for an opinion on the roles and responsibilities of the Park and Recreation Commission under the strong Town Manager Act. Mara stated the PRC is a policy making board that works in collaboration with the Town in setting fees. The collaboration is between the Commission and the Town staff and if there is disagreement it will be brought to the attention of the Town Manager for a decision. Ben asked why the Commission doesn't have all the responsibilities listed in the Mass. General Law. Mara stated the Town Manager Act supersedes Mass General Law. The Town Manager is responsible for all staffing decisions and department budgets. The Park and Recreation Commission is responsible for policies and works in collaboration with the department on fees.

Bobby felt the responsibilities of the Commission were still vague. He would like to see the responsibilities well defined and signed off by the Select Board or added to the Town by-laws so the responsibilities are clear for future Park and Recreation Commissioners. Ben and Bobby will work on a very clear job description for the Park and Recreation Commission. Bobby suggested there should be Town money put aside for use by the Park and Recreation Commission. Mara will add this as a discussion topic on future agendas.

Atkinson Pool Fees and Policies – Three areas of discussion are memberships; lane rental policies and fees related to Sudbury and non-Sudbury swim teams in addition to aquatic programs. Mara said the goal is to have full memberships offered again starting in September of 2021. Two policies to be discussed were senior citizen age and punch pass expiration date. Ben and Mara reviewed past data supplied by Lynne in 2020. Discussed pros and cons of changing the age from 60 to 65. Lynne asked if there would be a grandfather clause protecting those already considered seniors under the current senior citizen membership

Mara shared the spreadsheet Lynne and Dennis presented and the Commission voted on in June of 2020. The fees have not gone into effect yet, due to Covid, which is why there is an opportunity to review them again and adjust if necessary. Discussion on how the change would impact the budget and those who thought they would qualify as a senior based on age 60. Dennis said this would require additional senior memberships for a while, one for 60 and above, those grandfathered in, and one 65 and up for new senior memberships. Mara suggested giving the seniors under 65 with an active senior membership when the pool closed in March of 2020, 6 months to sign up for a new senior membership when they become active in September.

Ben made a motion to change the policy for a senior pool membership at Atkinson Pool from 60 to 65. All adults 60 and over who had active senior memberships at the pool when it was shut down due to Covid, would be grandfathered in to a senior membership as long as they purchase a senior membership within six months, of the new memberships being offered in September of 2021. Motion received a second. Vote: Ben – yes, Bobby – yes, Laurie – yes, Dick – yes, Mara - yes.

Laurie asked how this will be communicated. Mara stated there will be communication on all new membership rates once established. Mara asked Dennis if he wanted her to write the email since this is a policy change.

After some additional discussion, the Commission decided to revote the motion just voted.

Bobby made a motion to change the policy for a senior pool membership from 60 to 65. Motion seconded.

Janie Dretler, Selectboard, questioned the age policy change and how it follows the Senior Center age policies. Mara stated the age at the Senior Center was 60. Janie stated it would be good if all departments agreed. AARP senior age is 55. Bobby agreed the Town should agree on an age for seniors. Mara stated the Pool Enterprise Fund can be handled differently due to the need to generate revenue.

Vote on the motion age: Bobby – yes, Ben – yes, Laurie – yes, Dick -yes, Mara – yes.

Motion made to create a policy to grandfather in all adults 60 - 64 who had an active senior membership on March 2020 when the pool was shut down due to Covid, as long as they purchase a new senior membership by January 31, 2022. New memberships will be offered in September of 2021. Motion seconded. Vote on motion: Bobby – yes, Ben – yes, Laurie – yes, Dick -yes, Mara – yes

Bobby asked if the Commission needed to vote on the rate change. Mara responded that the vote took place back in June of 2020.

Commission moved on to discuss punch pass expiration date policy. Mara explained the punch pass is a discounted swim pass, basically 6 swims for the price of five. Bobby asked if the Commission can set an expiration date on this item similar to the gift card expiration date. Mara asked Dennis if he knew the answer. Dennis did not, but also felt all the pool membership fees would need to be looked at again. He added he was not sure he wanted to offer punch passes again. He would rather encourage people to sign up for some type of membership. He does not know how memberships will be impacted by construction of the new building. He added some memberships were put on hold after the Covid shut down, so that is also potential expense estimated between \$15,000 to \$20,000 that may need to be refunded. Mara stated based on that information, the Commission cannot decide on punch passes, but will need to have a summer meeting to discuss membership fees.

Bobby asked about potential construction phase of the new building. Dennis responded the ballpark for construction would be in the spring of 2022. He is concerned about offering yearly memberships since the pool may be shut down for a time. Mara stated the goal of the new construction is to limit the shutdown of the pool.

Mara asked Dennis to explain his comment on the \$20,000 of refunds. Dennis stated this number refers to the yearly, six month and punch passes that were impacted by the pool shut down due to Covid. Refunds or credits in the system have been given when requested. The number is now between \$15,000 and \$20,000.

Bobby expressed concern the refunds may impact retained earnings. He thought it might be best to clear the refunds up in some way now. Mara said that is a question for the Finance Department. Dennis has addressed this with the Finance Director but will contact him again.

Mara stated the next policy she wanted to discuss was a breakeven program policy that included program minimums. Mara stated users have expressed a desire to run aquacise programs again, but Dennis has stated the concern that programs must have enough registrants so they are not running at a loss. Bobby asked if the policy would call for cancellation of the program if the minimum wasn't reached. After discussion, it was decided a policy was not needed at this time. Bobby asked if there was some type of policy in place already. Dennis stated his staff looks at programs about 10 days out from the start to determine if there are enough registrants to run it. They make the decision based on if the program is in house or a vendor program. In house programs have a bit more flexibility. Mara stated the plan is to drill down more into the Recreation programs in the fall to understand all the issues.

September 11th Memorial Tree – Connie Marotta showed pictures of trees that are overgrown and hanging over the September 11 Memorial. She was instructed to come to a Park and Recreation Commission for approval. Mara asked who would pay for the tree to be taken down. Connie stated she was originally told to present to the Planning Board, which she did, and then the next day someone said she needed go before the Park and Recreation Commission. Mara asked Dennis how this would be paid for, Dennis responded probably by the DPW.

Bobby made a motion to approve the request to cut down the slanted tree at the 9/11 Memorial Garden. Dick seconded the motion. Vote approved. Laurie – yes, Dick – yes, Bobby – yes, Ben – yes, Mara – yes.

Return to Atkinson Pool Fees and Policies: Mara shared her screen with the Pool Enterprise Fund data from the recent Town Meeting. She explained it shows pool expenses, both actual and forecasted, expenses and the FY22 budget number \$464,136.00. Mara shared reports from the Finance Director which show revenues and expenses for the Atkinson Pool for the past several years. Her concern is residents and non-residents pay the same rental fee at the pool, which differs from the field rentals. She would like to discuss if non-Sudbury swim teams should pay more for a lane rental than Sudbury teams and should non-profit swim teams pay less than for

profit swim teams and then make policies accordingly. She said the Field policy allows for different fees for Sudbury and non-Sudbury teams. Mara asked the Commissioners if they thought the Sudbury teams should have scheduling priority over non-Sudbury teams. Bobby agreed they should. Lynne said they do have priority. LS is given the time slot right after school and rents the entire pool. Lynne said they accommodated and give priority to LSRHS and the Sudbury Swim Team. Mara brought Chrissy Murry, Sudbury Swim Team, into the discussion. Chrissy's concern is moving forward will they have access to the same schedule they have had in the past, pre Covid. Mara asked if the Commission should draft a policy that states the Sudbury teams should get priority over other teams. Chrissy said she would love to see that in writing. Laurie said it makes sense. Bobby agreed and suggested the policy may want to say Sudbury non-profit.

Mara showed the field permit policy and said she would like to see one for the pool. Lynne said there is pool rental form, but it wasn't used during Covid. She said the Sudbury swim teams were given priority in 2021. Mara asked Lynne or Dennis to send a copy of the form to the Commission. It was decided to hold further discussion until a copy of the form is reviewed.

Mara stated the PRC had a detailed conversation in June of 2020 and thought the vote was to raise fees at the Atkinson Pool by 15% across the board. Mara stated the Commission found out in May of 2021 that the lane rental fees went up by 30%. She said the Commission needs to figure out what the lane rental fees will be for the next year and should all teams pay the same, or different rates depending on non-Sudbury teams and profit/non-profit teams. Ben asked if it was easy to determine profit and non-profit teams. Mara said it would be easy and would be listed on the form.

Lynne explained that the proposed rates in 2020 were determined more by attempting to figure out how to reach the revenue needed to operate the pool in a year impacted by Covid, being unsure how many people would return to swim and being unsure how swim teams would operate. Data was taken from all past revenue sources and as always, it is a balancing act between memberships and rentals so the increases were not all 15% across the board. Mara felt the 30% increase in lane rental was high. She discussed the need to look at different rates for non-Sudbury Teams, and profit versus non-profit teams. Dennis felt there should not be difference in rental fee charged to the different teams. He said in the past, the Town covered benefits for the Pool staff, but for the past 3 years they have not, and it is now an added expense to the Pool. He stated he concerned teams will leave if they find out others are renting the same lanes for less. Since the pool is an Enterprise Fund, if discounts are given for some, the money needed to run the pool will have to come from some other source. He said any changes will have to be reviewed by the Town Manager because they may impact the approved FY22 budget. Dennis did not feel it was accurate to compare a Pool rental policy to a Field rental policy. Dennis explained half of the expenses for the fields is in a Town budget, while the Pool does not get any funds from the Town.

Commissioners discussed the lane increase at great length from the past year and expressed concern that it went up \$10.00. Discussed recommending a rate change and how that would impact the pool. They stated they were trying to find a balance and wanted to listen to the taxpayers. Dennis stated if the lane rental last year was \$5.00 it would probably have to go up another \$5.00 this year.

Lynne and Dennis explained that about 64% of the lane rental revenue received in FY21 will not be received in FY22 since the majority of the teams will go back to their respective pools that were closed in FY21

It was agreed that there are still many unknowns regarding the pool so it is difficult to know how revenue will come into the pool in FY22. Mara stated they have to be careful not to put the burden of revenue on the swim teams. Dennis stated the pool is not out of the woods by any means with the construction of the new building ahead and possible shut down of the pool for renovations or impact due to construction.

Laurie stated she was sensitive to the fee increase, which is never ideal, but also the pool needs revenue to stay in business. She said this may not be the year to decrease rates for one group and increase for others. Mara stated it will be a challenge for the next couple of years until we get the new building in place and see how many swimmers return and purchase memberships.

Bobby said it will be concerning if the Town pays 27 million on a new building and the pool isn't able to bring in enough revenue to cover expenses. Mara said she expects the pool to bring in more revenue with the new building. She also stated if the pool is shut down for a significant period of time due to construction the Town should be covering those expenses.

Dennis stated without any retained earnings, the pool could be looking at a deficit again coming out of Covid and the impact of construction.

Bobby asked if there was any sort of uptick in activity after vaccinations. Dennis said a little but it is not as busy now in the summer since many people are swimming outside now. He will continue to close the pool early if there are no renters in the evening.

After a lengthy discussion, no decision was made on rental fees or membership. Mara stated the discussion will continue at the next meeting.

Community Programming after Covid: Discussion moved to the next meeting.

Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Comprehensive Plan Presentation: Mara recused herself from the meeting since she is an abutter, Ben will act as Chair. Len Simon asked to present this comprehensive plan as information for the Commission anticipating changes that may happen in Sudbury over the next two or three years and looking to maximize the potential opportunities the Town can derive from the changes. No vote will be taken. Len stated the two changes that will hopefully happen are the construction of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail from the Concord line to

the intersection of the Mass Central and Bruce Freeman trails. The second is the placement of a transmission line from the Sudbury substation to the Hudson/Sudbury Town line. This will bring pedestrian and bicycle residents to the commercial district. The trails will not intersect with RT 20. The comprehensive plan includes a plan to extend the Bruce Freeman trail to RT 20 so that users of the Rail Trail will not have to travel on roads or through business districts. Len said it would be easy to extend the trail to intersect with Rt. 20. This plan calls for installing a DOT bike/walking path from to Rt. 20. In addition, the plan includes a plan for the abandoned gas station on Route 20 which is an eyesore for the Town. He said it is ideally located for a nice “pocket” park for its ideal location as a rest area in Town. The location already has crossing for pedestrians and traffic control. He said it was an opportunity for Park and Recreation to create a nice park in the commercial district for residents and non-residents. Ben asked what is stopping the Town from enacting this plan. Len said nothing he was aware of. Len said he will come back before the Commission as more information is developed. Commissioners thanked Len for the information and presentation.

Town email for the Park and Recreation Commission (PRC): Mara asked if the Park and Recreation Commission would like to request Town email addresses for each Commissioner. These emails would be used for all Park and Recreation Commission communication. Commissioners thought this was a good idea. Mara will put the request in with the Information Technology Director.

Review and Approve meeting minutes: Moved to next meeting.

Summer Meeting Dates: Mara stated not everyone can make the dates she proposed, so she selected July 19th as the next meeting date. Meetings will be virtual until April of 2022. First fall meeting will be September 13th. Capital improvement/funding process discussion will start in the fall.

Motion to adjourn the meeting – Bobby – yes, Ben – yes, Dick - yes, Laurie – yes, Mara – yes. Next meeting is July 19, 2021.