

Virtual Meeting – 6:35pm

May 3, 2021

Commissioners: Bobby Beagan, Mara Huston, Ben Carmel, Dick Williamson (Joined at 6:45pm)

Jim Marotta

Dennis Mannone, Dir. Park and Recreation/Pool

Mara called meeting to order at 6:35pm. Roll call: Bobby, Jim, Ben, Mara in attendance.

Public Comment: None

Chair Comments: An architect for the new Fairbank Community Center has been hired. Dennis and Mara attended a Park and Recreation focused meeting today where Recreation needs were discussed. The Selectboard has created a Sewataro subcommittee which is comprised of Charlie Russo and Bill Schneiller. A meeting was held in mid-April, the agenda is posted on the Town website and the meeting may also be available in Sudbury TV.

Director Update: Dennis discussed the Field Enterprise Fund financials. Revenue is \$179,550 and expenses are \$184,019. 50% of the Park and Grounds field salaries will be charged to the Enterprise fund. Expenses will be up due to additional cleaning at the field bathrooms. Dennis is still working with Eversource to understand the demand fees for lights, so correct fees can be charged to users. Mara asked when it would be appropriate to bring the Town Manager into the discussion. Dennis is still developing information and will involve other staff, if necessary.

Mara asked about field scheduling and block reservation time that is not used. Dennis still has to contact the user groups if he gets a new request to see if space is available in the block reservation. Mara stated she hoped some type of technology in the future would help with this issue.

Recreation Department is bringing in revenue through spring and summer programs. Summer camp will have 60 openings (due to CDC guidelines) for elementary age children. The Revolving Fund is about \$20,000 ahead, which isn't great, but enough to cover salaries and expenses through the summer. Dennis is waiting on additional guidelines on camp guidelines. Recreation is also running summer sport programs in association with the schools. Mara asked if camp will just be for elementary kids, and if there will be an opportunity to expand the numbers. Dennis responded camp is only for elementary kids, no preschool or middle school camp this year. He is concerned with indoor space for rainy days and does not anticipate expanding the camp numbers. The camp will use the pool from 12 to 3 Monday through Friday. General public will not use the pool during this time, per state guidelines. Mara asked about early drop off/late pick up. Dennis said there is no plan to run that program at this time.

Atkinson Pool is busy with second half swim team rentals due to Covid. Belmont and Lexington requested to use the pool for swim practice and virtual meets. Some lap swimmers are starting to swim outside. It has been a good year for the pool due to the unanticipated swim team and dive well rentals due to other pools closing.

Atkinson Pool Users Discussion: Mara shared her screen with a framework she created for discussion. Framework included Financial Overview, Rental Scheduling Policies and Scheduling, and Program Overview. Mara asked Dennis for an overview on the hours of operation at the pool. Dennis stated the pool is open from 6am to 8:00 pm Monday through Friday. If rental requests make it financially worthwhile to stay open, a few lane rentals are also available at that time. The weekend hours, 7:30 to 2pm, are also dictated by swim lessons and rentals. Lap swim is included if the lanes are available. Sunday hours are 8 to 5:00pm. Rentals and staffing dictate hours of operation at this time. Summer hours are still to be determined. Mara asked if there was steady group of lap swimmers coming to the pool. Dennis stated he sees repeat swimmers in early morning, but the numbers drop off after lunch. Activity picks up again after 3, when renters come in to use the pool through the evening. Mara asked about the percentage of revenue from rentals verse individual swimmers. After reviewing the estimated numbers, it was a 2 to 1 ratio.

Mara asked if there was feedback from users on the lane rental policy. Dennis said the current system seems to be working for now although it does get expensive for the lap swimmers who swim more than three to four times a week. He is waiting to see if the CDC guidelines change and when people will feel comfortable sharing lanes. He doesn't want to offer memberships until he is sure what hours the pool will be open on a regular basis, which may not be until the fall. Mara asked about staffing issues. Dennis stated staffing is an issue, he is only using a few part time staff at this time. He anticipates using additional lifeguards and instructors over the summer for camp.

Mara opened up the discussion to attendees. Stephanie Gregory, 71 Willis Drive, asked about memberships since she swims 3 to 4 times a week. Katie Remley, 21 Page Rd, Lincoln, would like to see the aquatic programs back at the pool in the fall. Julie Nocka, LS coach and user of pool, commented that it would be nice to see the reservation system continue, if people wanted to continue to have their own lane. Diane Hoaglin, commented that she would also like to see the aquatic classes return. She felt the classes were very important to the seniors health and fitness. Matt Schlessman, 40 Boston Post Road, Sudbury, thanked Dennis and his staff for all the hard work to keep the pool open. He is very grateful to be able to swim and felt very safe know the pool is following CDC protocols. He would, of course, like to see the pool return to memberships, but understands if the lane rentals need to continue for a bit longer. He also felt that as more people get vaccinated, they will be more willing to share lanes again.

Mara stated she agreed with Matt that the pool staff has done an amazing job keeping the pool open and users safe. She asked the Commissioners if they had any comments. Ben asked if there was some type of action they were supposed to be taking with the users' comments. Mara stated the comments were just information for the Commission at this time. This information is helpful along with information gathered from field users, the garden clubs, and tennis/pickleball court users. Her goal is to submit a CPC request in the fall to get a Recreation Plan for the Town and the more information gathered will help define the scope of the project.

Linda Faust, 189 Boston Post Road, Sudbury, expressed concerns using the pool due to Covid. Mara asked Matt Schlessman to share his experience at the pool with Linda which he did.

Mara asked Dennis to respond to a few of the questions regarding reinstating programs and memberships and asked if he could give them an idea of how many swimmers are using the lanes. Dennis stated family lanes are offered and are still restricting that to immediate family up to five people. The charge is \$20 per family. Lap swim is by the hour for \$10 an hour to swim in the lane alone. Programming classes is a more difficult at this time, since only so many can be in the dive well at a time. The other difficulty is making the numbers work with charging for the class and covering all expenses. At this time running the programs comes down to a space and financial issue. The hope is to have programs running in September. Swim lessons are being offered at this time.

Mara stated Governor Baker has indicated that by August 1st everything should be fully open. Mara stated it would be great to bring back Aquatic classes in the fall if vaccination numbers are good and the Governor has reduced restrictions. Mara felt that if there was a demand, we should offer aquatic programs as we did in the past. Bobby Beagan stated that as we look forward, we have to continue to go by the guidelines, but should take full advantage of trying to get people back in to swim and use the pool.

Mara asked Dennis to report on rentals at the pool, seasonal and year-long and how they balance with use of the lap swimmers. Dennis stated there are no year long renters, but renters that rent at different times throughout the year. Dennis added several of the renters came to Atkinson because their pool closed due to the pandemic. He does not believe they will all come back to rent the pool next year. He said most of the swim team rentals will stop in May/June. He also added the pool was able to host more swim meets this year due to the fact that they were virtual, he said that will probably not be the case next year. Due to the virtual meets the staff requirements were less and expense were less due to no audience or use of the locker rooms. Dennis said on some weeks the pool held 5 swim meets on a Saturday because they were all virtual.

Mara said she hoped the swim teams would be able to go back to having actual swim meets with multiple teams in the building next year. Christianne Murry, 50 Kato Drive, stated the Sudbury Swim Team has been swimming at the Atkinson Pool for over 35 years. They rent lanes at the pool from October through May every year on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Swim meets are on Sundays. She stated their lane prices have increased over the years, but this past year they have paid \$20,000 more than previous years. She stated this is not something they can sustain or pass on to their members. Sudbury Swim Team limited the users this year to 160 since only 4 could be in a lane at one time. She said she did not think \$40 per lane would be sustainable for them and felt they were being asked to take on the bulk of paying for the pool as someone who has been at the pool the longest and uses the pool the most. Mara asked Chrissy to quantify the usage difference from past years. Chrissy said the team had to give up Tuesdays

since there was another user already booked. They would have used it for 2 to 3 hours. Mara confirmed that Sudbury Swim Teams overall usage went down, but fees increased.

Julie Nocka, LSRHS Swim Coach, thanked Dennis and Staff for their work during swim team season and agreed that everyone made concessions and worked together. Julie said swim meets were difficult since races were back to back with little time for rest since they were virtual. She said she couldn't speak to the financial impact, but was hopefully next year would return to normal.

Carolyn Schwartz, 31 Mitchell Rd, Concord, asked about the status of the construction of the new Fairbank Center. Mara replied the new building will be built next the existing Atkinson Pool. The mechanical room of the pool will be rebuilt. Locker rooms and viewing area will be new. Design will be done in 2021, construction will be in 2022 with completion in 2023. Carolyn asked if the pool will be available during this time. Mara responded she didn't know the answer to that question, but the hope is the impact to the pool will be minimal.

Pickleball at Feeley and Featherland: Mara Huston asked Bobby Beagan to share any additional information he obtained on the sound barrier material for pickleball noise. Bobby responded he did not have much new information, but was waiting on some return calls from Park and Rec directors who are also dealing with the noise issue. He did research and even stopped by some parks to get a sense of the sound. He said it was fantastic to see the Featherland courts being used, but he could hear the sound of pickleball being played and could see why it might bother people. He said road traffic drowns out the sound, but without that, the sound of the paddle hitting the ball can be heard. He is researching how much it would cost to control the sound and if the sound barrier material really works. He said some of his research showed a community that installed it and found it didn't work as well as they anticipated after spending approximately \$20,000. He will continue to do more research before the next meeting, but thinks the Commission may have to consider a policy on playing hours similar to other communities. He said some communities restrict play to residents. Mara said she has played pickleball on Sunday mornings and has recorded the sound. Bobby mentioned the noise may be irritating to those watching baseball at Featherland. Mara said the cost of the sound barrier material was quoted at \$19,000. This would only wrap a portion of the Featherland court. The entire court will not be wrapped since that would not allow people to see if the courts are being used or the police to see what was going on at the courts. It would also be very expensive.

Mara stated there was no vote on the agenda tonight, the Commission was continuing to gather information on the issue. Mara asked Dennis if there were continued complaints. Dennis stated no, that it had been pretty quiet in regard to pickleball noise complaints. Mara suggested tabling the discussion at this time. Bobby said the Commission could discuss requiring different balls and paddles. Mara was not sure how that could be enforced. She would like to see the sign at Featherland changed to say tennis, pickleball and basketball only on the courts. Dennis will check with Chris Felt to see if anything can be done to the existing signs.

At this time, there is no money to cover sound barrier material at Feeley. Mara reached out to Bettina Westerberg who lives close to Feeley Field to report on what she has observed since the last meeting. Bettina, 239 Raymond Road, said they haven't seen a lot of pickleball play at Feeley lately, but the neighborhood does not want pickleball played at all at Feeley. She would like the pickleball courts removed. Bobby clarified he didn't say the pickleball sound was horrible, he said the noise was something the Commission should keep an eye on and see if there is anything that can be done to lessen to it. Mara stated she is looking to submit a CPC article to hire a consultant to develop a Recreation plan for the Commission. She said if funds become available, the pickleball courts at Feeley could be moved to the opposite side of the tennis courts and sound barrier material could be put on the fence at that time. The trees would also act as buffer for the sound.

Bobby Beagan stated he thought this issue was something the Commission needs to work with the Park and Recreation Director on because nobody on the Commission has a Park and Recreation background or degree. He felt the Commission was within its scope to listen to people's complaints, gather information and work with the Director and a possible consultant down the line to address the issues. He also stated that if pickleball numbers and activity continues to grow, they may need to look at them as a user group that will need to rent the courts.

Dick Williamson said there are sound engineers who would be able to determine how much noise the barriers will control.

Tim Walsh, 326 Raymond Road, is an abutter to Feeley Field and said the noise does travel. He said the Senior Center has lessons for pickleball, so he is concerned about the growth of the sport. He would like to see the courts moved to another location in Town. Stephanie Kuster, 245 Raymond Road, attended in support of her neighbors. She does not think moving the courts to the other end would help the noise and would more than likely bother other neighbors on Maple Lane. Kevin Westerberg, 239 Raymond Road, concerned pickleball is a gathering sport and as it grows in popularity more will come to play at Feeley. He would like to see the courts moved to another area in Town. He said some of the other neighbors in the neighborhood were not able to make the meeting, so he is speaking for them.

Mara said there are no immediate solutions and no funds currently available to make any changes at Feeley, but the Commissions goal is to hire a consultant with CPC Funds in the fall. If approved, the money would be available after July of 2022. Bettina Westerberg stated she would still like to pickleball lines painted over.

Town Meeting Preparation: Mara asked Dennis if he needed assistance from the Commission in preparation for the two Recreation articles he will be presenting at Town meeting. Dennis said he completed the videos for the CPC articles and he will be prepared to discuss any budget questions that may come up at Town meeting. His only comment was on the way CPC is administered and thought the Commission may want to get involved to figure out how to better proceed with the requests and who is actually sponsoring them. He did not write the articles, the

Planning Board did, but he is presenting them. Girls Softball submitted the request for Feeley improvements, but they are not presenting. He found it a little confusing and is hopeful the process can become better moving forward.

Community Survey for Recreation: Ben worked with Dennis on developing a survey for Recreation. Ben shared his screen with a sample survey from the Park and Recreation Commission stating they wanted to better understand the types of activities the Town residents would like to engage in for passive recreation and building community bonds. Ben discussed the questions on the survey and the types of information the survey would hopefully bring in to the Commission. Mara asked the Commissioners for any input. Bobby stated he appreciated Ben's hard work, but again wasn't sure it was the role of the Park and Recreation Commission to develop and distribute surveys. He felt surveys should probably come from the Recreation Department. Bobby said he would like to discuss the Commission's roles at the next meeting. Ben agreed that it was important to figure out the role of the Commission. It was decided to discuss this further at the next meeting.

Review and approve meeting minutes for March 1 and April 5: Mara requested one change to the March 1st meeting. Motion to approve the March 1 minutes as amended. Motion received a second. Jim – yes, Ben – Yes, Dick – yes, Bobby – yes, Mara – yes.

Motion to approve the April 5th minutes. Motion received a second. Jim – yes, Ben – yes, Bobby – yes, Dick 0- yes, Mara – yes.

Motion to adjourn the meeting - Jim – yes, Ben – yes, Bobby – yes, Dick – yes, Mara – yes. Commissioners thanked Jim for his years of service and welcomed Laurie Eliason to the Commission. Commission. Next meeting is June 7. Any summer meetings will be discussed at that time.