

Virtual Meeting 6:35pm

November 1, 2021

Commissioners: Bobby Beagan, Mara Huston, Ben Carmel, Laurie Eliason, Dick Williamson

Dennis Mannone, Dir. Park and Recreation/Pool

November 1, 2021 Meeting Roll Call: Laurie – here, Ben - here, Bobby - here, Mara – here, Bobby and Dick joined after start of meeting.

**Public Comment:** None

**Chair Report:** Mara contacted Facilities Director regarding the pool filtration system and including it in the capital requests. She confirmed he is working with Dennis to get the request in the FY23 capital budget. Mara stated she attended a Permanent Building Committee and advocated for including the Council on Disabilities in the new Fairbank Community Center. She mentioned the Facilities Director is working on a plan to have solar panels on all Town buildings. The Fairbank Community Center will be designed for solar panels, but it is outside the scope of the project. They will be put through another funding source. She said there will be an AV/Technology meeting in the next week or so, and she will update the Commission.

Mara reported the Commission received three letters from residents on topics that have been added to tonight's agenda. She stated the driveway at TI Sales had been paved.

**Director Update:** Dennis sent out financial updates to the Commission. Field Enterprise fund is in good shape. Fall sports end around the middle of November. Pool report shows a net of almost \$13,000 to date. Summer camp revenue is included in the revenue. Pool activity is pretty steady, seminal to last month, with more swimmers coming back to swim indoors after swimming outdoor all summer. Swim team season is starting with LS captains' practices and Sudbury Swim Team practices. Mara asked if there were any restrictions due to Covid. Dennis said just Sudbury's mask mandate. He said he will work with the swim teams on a case by case basis to figure out how many spectators they feel comfortable with in the building. He said the number in the lanes will probably be kept to six. Mara asked about virtual meets. Dennis said most meets will be in person. He said the bigger issue will be with staffing and covering the hours required for the swim meets. He said lifeguard staffing is still an issue, but the new Aquatic Supervisor will be a great asset.

Mara asked about the Recreation programs. Dennis said the department is offering Wild Wednesdays, but the numbers are low due to bus shortage They have also offered archery, dodgeball and paint nights. He said they are always looking to see what people are looking for in programs. Mara asked how the program information is being shared and if Dennis has explored new ways to get the information out. He said the program coordinators use Facebook, email, and have reached out to the different PTO groups to get on to my email or email mailing list as well with posted quite a bit on Facebook recently.

Laurie expressed concern about cancelling programs with low numbers since people may not be inclined to sign up again if programs are cancelled. Dennis understood, but said some programs are hard to run with low numbers and are not as much fun.

Mara asked Dennis if he had been involved in discussion about the ARPA Funds. He had not. He said he was told the Town Manager and Finance Director would handle ARPA and there was nothing he needed to do and they would let him know if there was. Mara questioned if the Commission should be advocating for the ARPA Funds for lost recreation revenue during the last year. She felt it might make sense to advocate for funds to support the Revolving and Enterprise Funds and discussed writing a letter.

Bobby suggested inviting Dennis K and Henry to the next meeting, to discuss it with them to show that the Commission is going to be proactive on the subject. Dick asked if there was a mechanism for advocating for the funds. Mara thought the Town staff makes the recommendations and the Select Board makes the final decision on how the funds are spent. Laurie said she would support Mara sending a letter. She thought the loss of recreation programs impacted public health.

Mara asked if Dennis planned on starting Teen Center again, he said not at this time. He said they are offering some middle school trips and the Nashoba Ski night.

Mara said there will be a conversation on Wednesday night in the Select Board meeting about Sewataro and the possibility of allowing more activity for residents on weekends next summer. She asked Dennis if he was involved in the conversations. He said he received a packet of information today on the subject. He did not know the specifics of the ongoing discussions on activity at the property.

Bobby asked about the packet of information. Dennis said he received it from the Town Manager. It including some thoughts on swimming and how the property might be used by residents. Bobby asked Dennis for comments. Dennis just looked at it quickly and thought it was interesting and had more questions. He said it was unclear if there was a fee for use, how the ADA requirements will be handled and who will be staffing the property for residential use. He thought the plan could ultimately hurt the pool for summer use if residents can swim outside for free. He said many things in Town are having a detriment to recreation and this is just another example.

Bobby requested that topic be added to an agenda at a future meeting. Mara clarified the topic is activities that are organized by the Town that negatively affect recreation. Bobby agreed and said this would be based on what Dennis is experiencing.

Laurie stated she saw pictures of the Halloween pumpkin carving event at Park and Recreation and said it looked like it was well attended, organized and fun. Ben said he attended and it was fun.

**Pool Membership Letter:** Mara stated the Commission received a letter from Richard Murdoch regarding pool membership and advocating for the memberships to return and stop the daily registration and eight dollar an hour fee. Mara made calls to other facilities and reported that pools are memberships and punch passes are being offered at other pools. She felt the Commission may want to vote to recommend bringing back punch passes/memberships. She was concerned the pool is losing swimmers to other pools. She said the Commission has heard from swimmers before that they would like to see the memberships/programs to return. Dick said he understood the request but said it would be good to know the revenue trade off from daily swim fees to memberships. Mara didn't think anyone could really predicted. She said Dennis did express concern about doing anything longer than a monthly recurring because we don't yet know the impact on the memberships when it comes to the construction project, but that's still a several months away at this point. Mara said she thought the initial impact for

the pool users would likely be in July or August of next year. Mara asked Commissioners their thoughts on pool memberships. Laurie thought having a monthly pass would be more appealing than the daily/hourly fee. Bobby agreed with Laurie. Ben's comment was to ask the users of the pool to communicate to Dennis what they are looking for in regard to pool programs and memberships.

Dennis said he and his staff have been looking at bringing memberships back for quite a while and what type of financial impact it would have on the pool. He said it is very difficult because there is no way to know how many people will purchase a membership, and how many will continue to pay the daily fee. In addition, the business model of the pool has changed. It is now heavily rented in the evenings, and the open swim time has been reduced in the evenings and on weekends

Mara asked if there was a way to put a survey out to pool users. Dennis said he and the staff have spoken with many of the users and have received feedback on their desire for memberships to return. He said he is planning on offering a monthly recurring membership. He is planning on a flat fee for all users, based on hours open and the new construction at the facility and how that may impact users. He is also concerned how the membership model may impact revenue. He will propose the membership option to the Town Manager and Finance Director. He said he is currently thinking of proposing a \$62.00 a month membership fee. Dennis explained that there is a need to keep the membership option simple since he is still do not have a full lifeguard and front desk part-time staff. The membership would only be during the daytime from 6am to 4pm, Monday through Friday. Members could swim as long as they wanted and as often during that timeframe. The staff would no longer need to create hourly swim sign ups during the day, which is very time consuming. He said this option would be a bridge to the next once we see how the construction impacts users and how memberships and rentals impact the revenue verse the expenses required to operate the pool. Commissioners asked for data on how the \$62-dollar membership fee was decided on by the staff.

Mara asked about punch passes and how people who still have them will be handled. Dennis said when asked they have been converted to credits in the system or refunded. Commissioners were concerned punch passes would not be offered since they generated significant revenue in the past.

Dennis said he is not in favor of punch passes at this time, but did not rule out bringing something like it in the future.

Commissioners discussed punch passes and getting feedback from pool users. Ben suggested obtaining the pool user list and send a note from the Commission stating users send their input regarding fees and the pool membership verse the reservation system currently in place.

Richard Murdoch, 30 Nobscot Road, was invited to speak regarding the letter he sent to the Commission on bringing memberships back. Richard stated he doesn't see people who used to swim at the pool all the time before, because the \$8 per swim is too expensive. He felt that bringing back memberships would bring back more swimmers. He said for many seniors swimming is also a social event and that has been lost with the reservation system. He said Dennis won't know if the memberships work until it is tried. If it doesn't work, he said they can go back to the reservation at \$8 a swim.

Bobby asked about the construction starting in April at the Pool. Mara said she was not aware of that date.

Dennis said he heard around the end of April the pool may need to be shut down for a few days to a week in order for a temporary wall to be built on the far side of the pool. This is for the new doors to be constructed for openings for the new dressing rooms and emergency exits. Mara said she thought this work would be done in the summer. Bobby pointed out that with construction schedules can change and more time should always be added with construction estimates.

Dennis stated his plan on memberships, if approved, is to make them active sometime in early December.

Commission decided to send out an email to the database of current and past users of the Atkinson Pool and have Dennis send it out on behalf of the Commission.

Motion made for Ben to write the email to past and present users of the Atkinson pool soliciting input on plans to activate swim memberships, with a review of the email by Laurie. Motion received a second. Bobby-yes, Laurie-yes, Mara-yes, Ben-yes, Dick-yes.

Dennis asked if he should hold off on memberships until feedback is received from the email. It was decided not to hold up offering recurring memberships. Ben stated offering memberships at \$62 per month will have to go through without any recommendation from the Commission at this time. He said the email is a separate avenue to inform users about the Commissions thoughts and solicit feedback from them.

Mara discussed two letters sent to the Commission on Sewataro. Mara stated Bob May sent a letter to the Select Board advocating to have a charette of some form to discuss long term vision of Sewataro. He asked the Park and Recreation Commission to support the request. The other letter from Len Simon asked the Select Board to put an article on the next Town Warrant to hire an independent consultant to look at the future uses of Sewataro and asked for support from the Park and Recreation Commission.

Mara stated the renewal contract with the camp operator for Sewataro is coming up soon. Laurie said she thought the Town had to let the camp operator know by June of 2022 if they will be able to renew for another five years. Commissioners discussed the letters, the need for additional discussion on the property and how it should be used and if they wanted to send a letter of support to Select Board.

It was decided that Dick will write an email to the Select Board advocating for a more comprehensive process to evaluate the potential uses of Sewataro prior to renewing the camp operator agreement.

Len Simon, 40 Meadowbrook Circle, thanked the Commission for adding this topic to the agenda and review the letter he wrote with Jeff Levine. He said when the Town decided to move ahead and acquire the property there was no plan at all, financial or otherwise. He suggested the Town should look at what the property can and can't be used for and the financial costs associated with its use including a hygiene evaluation of the pools and swimming ponds. Len stated in depth analysis is needed by someone with expertise to evaluate how this piece of property should be used and what it will cost the Town. He did not think anyone had the expertise. It is currently costing the Town three quarter of a million dollars to pay for the debt for the property and that will continue for the next several years at least. He said the logical step is to hire an outside consultant with Park and Recreation assisting in the planning. Once the report is completed it would be presented to the residents including the financial aspects and what the cost would be to the taxpayers to manage the property.

Robert May, 90 Maynard Farm Road, said he agreed with letter from Len and Jeff. He the challenge is to get a plan with an analysis by an expert to review the various options for the property that gives the Town the best use and cost benefit. He said the current contract has already been amended twice so it can be amended again. He said the current camp does not serve the Sudbury community. He felt an assessment of the property residents paid 11 million for would help make the best use of the property.

Jeff Levine, 42 Chanticleer Road, echoed what Bob and Len stated, and said we have paid 11 million for a parcel of land and the Town is not really sure what to do with it and until we can make a reasonable decision based on facts and costs we are not really taking advantage of the opportunities the land provides. He said he had no criticism of the camp operator, but the Town residents can not use the property during the summertime and its really just available in the offseason and even then, it is restricted. He said when the property was purchased there was no effort to identify costs associated with operation/use/maintenance of the site. He felt now was the time to do that before a new contract is signed, which is why he hopes the Commission will support asking the Select Board to undertake a study utilizing an independent consultant with expertise in land use planning

Mara made a motion that Dick Williamson write a letter to the Select Board to support the efforts to define a better plan for long term use of the Sewataro property. Bobby will review the letter. Motion seconded.

Ben would like the motion to include the impacted Committees and Commissions in the process. Bobby would like working with professionals to define a plan in the motion and involve Commissions and Committees impacted and Community feedback. Laurie agreed that to the motion to get appropriate professionals exploring the best uses of the property before deciding to commit to another five years with the camp operator.

Motion Vote: Dick – yes, Bobby -yes, Ben – yes, Laurie – yes, Mara – yes,

**CPC – Haskell Playground/Feeley Field** – Open Space and Recreation Plan and the detailed Recreation Assessment for FY23 is being processed through the Planning Director. Mara stated that one of the reasons this needs to get done is the Open Space and Recreation Plan expired in 2013. The Town can not apply for grants without an expired plan.

Mara stated she needs a Commission vote to close the two Featherland CPC articles, which will revert any remaining funds back to CPC.

Motion made to close the Featherland CPC Articles. Motion seconded. Vote: Bobby – yes, Dick – yes, Ben – yes, Laurie – Yes, Mara – Yes. Mara will close the Featherland projects with CPC once she clarifies the financials with the Director of Finance.

Dennis gave an update on the Haskell playground project. He said he is working with the architects at Feeley now to figure out the process moving forward. He is also working on the Haskell playground project trying to figure out the best timing for the work to be done. He said a survey regarding the trees near the Haskell playground showed they need to be removed.

Bobby questioned if the memorial tree is one that needs to be removed. It will not be removed. Mara Huston asked for the Commission to receive updates every few months on these projects.

**Commission Role/Responsibilities:** Mara asked if there was anything new to share on this topic. Bobby said he had some additional information was still waiting for more. He thought it would be better to wait and discuss with all the information.

**Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Update:** Mara recused herself and Ben facilitated the discussion. Dick presented an update on the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. Dick gave a brief update, concentrating on the areas directly relating to the Recreation areas. Starting from the north the trail will go down just to the west of Davis Field. The trail will curve to the south and parallel the west edge of the current parking lot at Davis. There will be a direct path to Davis Field. Moving South, the next area will be Broadacres and the plan includes a parking lot, pavilion, and water bubbler. Mass highway may or not pay for these items, but they will be included in the final plans. The next area is the TI Sales, still a question as to access to the field. The rail trail will have a traffic light at Peakham and Hudson Road. The next area of construction will be from Powdermill Road and Concord Road down to the Mass Central Rail Trail. Dick said there will have to be coordination with the Department of Conservation and Recreation because they want to have a traffic circle for bicycles. Dick offered to answer additional questions. Ben asked if there was anything Dick was concerned about as it relates to Recreation. Dick responded no, not at this time. Mara returned after BFRT conversation.

**Fairbank Project-Outside Landscape Plans** – Commission discussed the outside landscape plans for the new Fairbank Community Center. She said there are two pieces; one is the outside landscape plans which include parking, space set aside for summer camp programs, one basketball court with lights and a second basketball with lights that are part of the alternate plan. Mara asked the Commission if they want to request the Select Board and Town staff to request ARPA funds for any outside landscape expenses. Mara felt the Commission should request funds even if they get denied. She stated the Commission, along with Dennis, need to provide the project team guidance on the exterior landscape issues. She stated the need to give clear direction to the project team on the priorities for the outsourced space and requesting ARPA funds to cover the costs.

Dennis stated he was in favor of some type of patio or covered pavilion for summer camp, arts and crafts and for the picnic tables. A covered pavilion would allow for outdoor programming. He thought the project lacked adequate parking, especially to require staff and users of the facility park across the street and have to cross a busy Fairbank Road in the morning and evening in the dark. He also felt there would be competition for parking spaces when Haskell field and the playground is in heavy use.

Mara stated parents would be dropping off kids for programs and parking across the street would actually be closer in the new facility. Dennis discussed the possibility of adding more parking on the Recreation side. He discussed adding more parking rather than the second basketball court.

Bobby felt it was important to get lights on the basketball court right away. He felt it would very difficult to add lights later.

Janie Dretler commented on the parking and asked how the proposed parking compares to other Community Centers. She also stated it was not that far of a walk across the street. She felt parking was at a premium and it is costly so additional parking would be an added expense. Bobby stated he was not so worried about the distance for parking but rather the congestion and safety of the those using the facility. Janie stated the architects are looking at crosswalks and safety issues. Bobby asked is a traffic/safety analysis had been done regarding parking and traffic.

Mara made a motion to request the Select Board and Town Manager use ARPA funds for the lights for the basketball courts as well as the hard surface area for picnic tables with potential for cover for the outdoor programs. Motion received a second. Vote: Laurie – yes, Ben – yes, Dick – yes, Bobby -yes, Mara – yes.

Mara will write an email to the Fairbank Design Team and copy the Park and Recreation Commission on feedback about parking limits and the importance of improved safety at the crosswalk due to congestion and traffic. She will also ask for the seasonal parking study results and will include the Commission's concerns about the lack of communication with the community on the project.

**Field Fee Restructuring:** No new data, postponed discussion.

Current Exterior Basketball Court Usage: Postponed to next meeting.

**Review and Approve Meeting Minutes** – Motion to approve the minutes from October 4 as amended. Seconded by Dick. Vote: Dick – yes, Ben – yes, Laurie – yes, Bobby – yes, Mara – yes.

Next meeting is December 6<sup>th</sup>. First meetings in 2022 will be on January 10 and February 7.

Motion to adjourn. Seconded. Vote: Dick – yes, Laurie – yes, Bobby – yes, Ben – yes, Mara - yes