

Virtual Meeting 6:34pm

December 6, 2021

Commissioners: Mara Huston, Ben Carmel, Laurie Eliason, Dick Williamson (joined after meeting began- 6:40pm)

Dennis Mannone, Dir. Park and Recreation/Pool

December 6, 2021 Meeting Roll Call: Laurie – here, Ben - here, Mara – here

Public Comment: None

Chair Report - Fairbank updates: Mara spoke with Jennifer Pincus regarding updates on the Fairbank Building. Commission on Disability discussed Fairbank, primary focus was on locker rooms, in addition to other concerns. Housing Authority expressed concern that new basketball courts are too close to Fairbank Circle. Mara said installing windows adjacent to bring natural light to the pool is being considered. Discussion is on installing windows to back wall and side wall off the entrance. Mara and Dennis discussed AV requirements with the architects, along with conversations on furniture for new facility. Permanent Building Committee is considering sending a letter to the Select Board seeking ARPA funds for appropriate items for the new building. Discussions on IT and security systems will be coming up in the next weeks. Mara reported a water line was found that runs under the current basketball courts and parking lot which is where the new facility will be located. Costs and funds to remove this are unknown at this time. Planning Board has added more lights to be added at Haskell parking lot. Crosswalks will have controlled light switches with flashing lights. Mara said no more value-add engineering will be done to the facility. Bids for this building will go out soon. There are 13 contractors being vetted at this time and those that pass the vetting process will be able to bid on the project. Mara clarified construction dates and impact to the pool facility. Temporary access doors will be constructed in May/June time frame of 2022 with the goal not to impacting summer camp. At the end of summer there may be a short shut down of the pool to build a temporary wall for construction/access to the new locker rooms. She expects swim season of 2022 and 2023 to be fine along with summer camp of 2022. She said there will be a shut down of the pool at some point, but she did not know the exact timing. Parking will be impacted with the construction of the building. Mara stated that would be a Town Manager issue. Mara stated there was a traffic and parking study done and at peak load the parking is adequate, she did not think the parking will be a big issue and the Planning Board is not worried about the parking.

Director Update – Dennis reported the Field Enterprise Fund is up \$25,000. He expects to bring in the \$230,000 by the end of the Fiscal Year. The Pool Enterprise Fund is \$23,192 in the positive. Swim team season has started and will go thru February. He said the numbers look better for both Enterprise Funds because neither department is at full staff. Recreation is running winter programs and Terrific Twos will start again in January. Mara asked about the financials for Recreation and Dennis responded that as of now the department is meeting its expenses. Laurie asked about the Nashoba Ski Program and if it was in-house or vendor. Dennis explained it is an outside vendor, the Recreation Staff will be coordinating the bus and supervising the program. Mara said she received some calls on the pool ventilation system. Dennis said he was aware of the concern and is checking on it. Ben asked about staffing issues. Dennis reported Chris Felt is retiring next week and the Parks and Grounds is currently down one person. The

pool is still down part-time lifeguards and one full-time person. Dennis said he is still guarding at times at the pool and covering days off for Aquatic Supervisors. He said part of the issue is minimum wage increase over the past few years and the certification requirement. Mara asked about the possibility of reimbursing for getting the certification. Dennis stated he and his staff have discussed that possibility.

Impact of Town Programs on Recreation – Dennis said this is part of a larger discussion point which includes Sewataro. He said the discussion to offer swimming, possibly free, to residents at Sewataro on weekends could have an adverse impact on revenue during the summer for the Atkinson Pool. LSRHS has used space at Sewataro for free, which potentially impacts the revenue of Recreation, since vendors will go where the rental is free, rather than pay an hourly rate. Recreation does not receive an operating budget from the Town. The Library is also offering music and vendor programs. He said many of their programs are free or at a reduced rate. He said concerts have been run for free at Sewataro because expenses are offset. Summer Concerts are an expense for Recreation. He has to hope for donations or pay for it out the Revolving Fund, which is money generated from running Recreation programs. He said scholarships at Sewataro are great, but they too impact Recreation and summer camp revenue. Recreation has no Town money for scholarships, they would have to be covered by money generated from other programs. Mara agreed with Dennis' concerns and said the Library has a few Friends' groups that help to offset costs of the programs. She said she tried to start a Friends Group for Recreation, but could not get generate enough interest. She shared the concern that Recreation does not received operating expense from the Town, and questioned how they can help to change that process. Dennis added the youth user groups are also starting to impact Recreation by offering younger age group clinics during the summer and school year. Mara asked if Dennis was trying to expand the number of programs in the summer. He said the biggest issue is rainy day space if weather is inclement. Ben asked if Sudbury is the only Town that doesn't fund Recreation expenses. Dennis said other Towns fund or subsidize events or they have some type of budget for expenses/scholarships. Dennis said the recent Halloween activity was fully funded by revenue from Recreation programs, since the nominal fee charged did not cover the full expense of the program. Dennis expressed concern that the new building will be more expensive to staff. Ben asked if the Commission could do something to advocate for funding for the Recreation Department. Mara agreed it was something the Commission could do and should be done during the budget cycle. Janie Dretler, Select Board and liaison to Park and Recreation Commission, suggested that the issues Dennis outlined be documented and submitted to the Select Board. Mara asked Dennis if he wanted to document them or the Commission. Dennis thought the Commission should write the memo. Laurie will write the memo; Dick will review. Janie said she would be interested to learn about how Sudbury compares to other Towns in regard to funding Recreation. In regard to Sewataro, she said there were issues that need be addressed by the Select Board, including the two bodies of water on the property and their operation. She said the Select Board did support having fees charged for use of Sewataro, but there are still some outstanding questions that need to be resolved. She agreed with Dennis that it is an issue for Park and Recreation.

CPC Project Update – Mara asked Dennis to discuss the issues at the Haskell Playground. Dennis stated Davey Resource Group assessed the trees that surround the Dr. Bill Adelson playground at Haskell Field. After inspection the recommendation was to remove 17 of the 21 trees, since their root structure is causing safety issues with the playground. There is also discussion about installing a root barrier for new trees. A public hearing will be held in January with the Tree Warden to discuss removal of the tree. Some of the work will take place during the winter, when the impact to users will be the lowest. He is

working with Elaine Jones on the bid process for site work and pour in play surface. Construction will be an issue, so he is trying to time it so the playground will be ready for the summer, since it will be heavily used by the summer camp due to the new Fairbank Community Center building. Mara asked if there is a plan to replace the trees. Dennis said yes at some point, it will depend on the cost of the project and depend on what is left. Laurie asked about a shade structure. Mara stated a new shade structure will be added with picnic tables. Dennis added a new piece of equipment will be added and a shade structure will be next to it. He added tents will be at Haskell this summer due to summer camp. These will be available for use when camp is not in session. Mara asked for an update on the Feeley project. Dennis said he is working on the contracts with Warner Larson, Elaine Jones and Town Counsel. The first phase of the design will be batting cages, safety issues, extending fencing and netting on the first base side of upper Feeley, some drainage on Feeley One, and soil testing. At the end of this phase, he is hopeful the results of the tests will show if drainage and renovations to the field will allow the Feeley Field to be more useful in the spring or if the fields are just too wet.

Field Fee Restructuring – Continued discussion from previous meetings. Issue is how to charge for use outside of seasonal play. Mara showed a spreadsheet of data. The current field permit does have a seasonal fee and clinic or camp fee. Some requests don't fit into the current field permit categories. Laurie and Mara have worked on this issue and reviewed data from other Towns. Their recommendation is to remove the camp and clinic fee and replace it with an hourly fee. Clinic will be up to 20 hours or less of field time. Anything outside of traditional team related activities would be charged at an hourly fee. This would cover in season and out of season clinics. It was decided that double the team size would be the limit for athletes on the field. Dennis thought this was a great first start, but he would like to go through the past requests and see how these recommendations will impact the users and revenue for the Field Enterprise Fund. Laurie agreed that it would be good to review and see what the impact will be to the users. Dennis said he would like to understand all the youth user groups needs and programs offered in order to update the field permit. Steve O'Keefe, President of Sudbury Youth Soccer, clarified the summer programs are responses to request from Sudbury parents and they run in the evenings. They may be running a summer program that replaces the New England Revolution Camp. He said they are open to work as a vendor for summer if that helps. He offered any increase in fees would be passed on to the users. Dennis will look at the categories and recommendations from Laurie and Mara and compare them with past requests.

Pool Swim Fee Discussion/Recommendation – Mara stated in past meetings swimmers have expressed concern the hourly fee is too expensive and would like to see pool memberships return. Mara researched and found other facilities have returned to memberships. She did some comparisons with Wayland and the Bede Center and shared a spreadsheet with data. She is concerned \$62 fee is too high and that swimmers will go elsewhere. Ben commented that Dennis stated in the past the pool is not run by tax dollars and the budget is set by the Town and the fee proposed was reached by looking at what was needed to meet the budget. Laurie agreed, but felt the \$62 is on the higher end for memberships. She questioned if there was a way to bring down the fee. Dennis stated he has a budget to meet, which is based on revenue goals he has to meet. He said he has discussed the proposed fees with the Town Manager and Finance Director. He said his plan is to offer a \$60 fee for seniors and \$72 for adults for a Monday through Friday membership from 6am to 4pm with no need to make reservations. Drop in fee to swim will be \$12. After 4pm and on weekends the fee will be \$8.00 for all and swimmers will have to make a reservation. Swim team season will last until the end of February and will allow him to look at

the revenue numbers and see how the memberships are working compared to the daily swim fee in regard to the revenue. In addition, construction of the new Fairbank building may impact swimmers and he is unsure how that will impact memberships. He said the numbers for the pool are not great and it is risky to offer memberships because there is no way to know how many will sign up and feel comfortable swimming not knowing how many will be in the lane. He said daily swim fees are lower this year. Rentals will allow some cushion over the next 3 months, but if numbers don't look good at that point he may have to make some adjustments. He plans to get the membership information out within the next week or so and have memberships starting on January 3. Dennis said 60% of swimmers are non-residents. He is not considering resident/non-resident fees at this time. He said the revenue needed to run the pool is roughly \$30,000 per month, which will go up every year. He may look to expand the membership usage to night and weekend after the swim team season. Mara expressed concern the fees are too high. Dennis said it is difficult to compare with other facilities if we don't know how they are financed within the Town's operating budget. The Atkinson Pool is in an Enterprise Fund, so it is not funded by tax dollars. Ben asked what the action was for the Commission on this issue. Mara said she would like to get a better understanding from the swimmers who use the pool and get their feedback. She feels the pool is a great asset to the community. Mara asked how many renters from last year returned this year. Dennis said the pool picked up Lexington Girls swim team in the fall and helped out Acton when their pool had a mechanical issue. United is only renting a few lanes on Tuesday morning. The other new teams from last year have not returned. LSRHS, Sudbury Swim Team and Nashoba have returned along with another swim team. LSRHS team is larger this year so they are renting more times, but swim team rentals are expected to be less this year. Dennis said he is going to move forward with the membership plan. He said the hourly wage is going up to \$14.25 this year and \$15.00 next year. Mara asked if the Commission still want to gather information from the swimmers. Laurie said she and Ben work on a letter but is hesitant to send it out at this time because she doesn't want to confuse the swimmers. She suggested waiting a few months to send it out. Ben said the change in fees is going to happen so it may be better to wait and ask how members feel about the fees at that time. Ben read the letter he and Laurie drafted to be sent out to the swimmers. Dennis said the letter was very similar to the letter he is planning to send out announcing the return to memberships. Mara asked if the Commission wanted to take a vote. Ben said he supported Dennis, but would abstain from a vote since he has not seen the data that supports the proposed fees. Lynne Ziffer, Aquatic Supervisor, explained the plan for memberships and the desire to help those who want to swim several days a week save money. She said the plan is to give flexibility, give financial relief and fill the times that are open to swim. She said there is a delicate balance to find the appropriate fee.

Laurie made a motion to revisit the pool membership fee structure after the three-month trial period and to review the data and survey the swimmers at that point. Dick seconded. Mara asked for data on memberships after the three-month period, Lynne said yes that it could be provided. Motion passed 4-0. Laurie – yes, Ben – yes, Dick – yes, Mara – yes.

Mara will put this topic back on the agenda in April.

ARPA Funding Requests – Mara discussed the opportunity to advocate for ARPA Funds. She said Dennis also submitted a request for the Recreation Department. The Commission requested ARPA funds for exterior facilities of the new Fairbank Building which includes outdoor recreation and funding relief for the Recreation Revolving Funds and Enterprise Funds. Mara asked Dennis about his requests and questioned if the Commission wanted to write a letter to the Select Board in support of his requests.

Deadline for submissions is December 30. Dennis said he put in a request for an 11 to 15 passenger van to help with transportation to the new Fairbank building to attend Recreation Programs. He also requested another chair lift for the pool, and some other Recreation items. Mara mentioned she noticed the Seniors had put in a request for ARPA funds to develop a path around the inside of Haskell Field. Dennis said he was not aware of that, but he talked with DPW and the Senior Director. He said it was not a great option, since a path would impact and reduce field space. Mara asked again if Dennis wanted the Commission to write a letter in support of Dennis' requests. Dennis said it that would be up to the Commission. Laurie asked about the use of the van. Dennis said it would be used for Wild Wednesdays, youth programs, Recreation programs etc. He felt it would encourage more sign-ups for Recreation programs, in addition to small day trips programs. Mara asked about insurance and costs for operation and how it would covered. Dennis said the costs would be paid out of Recreation and programs would be priced accordingly to cover costs. Dick will write the letter in support of Dennis's request for ARPA funds. Ben will review the letter.

Current Exterior Basketball Court Usage and Light Fees – No discussion, Bobby Beagan had requested to have this topic on the agenda.

Review and Approve Meeting Minutes – Mara made a motion to approve the amended November 1st minutes and asked that the letters discussed at the meeting be attached to the minutes. Motion received a second. Dick – yes, Laurie – yes, Ben – yes, Mara – yes.

Next meeting is December 6th. Field Fee Restructuring will be discussed again at the next meeting.