

Virtual Meeting 6:32 pm

February 6, 2024

Commissioners: Mara Huston, Laurie Eliason, Bobby Beagan, Granger Atkeson, Ben Carmel-Chair
Dennis Mannone - Dir Park and Recreation

Guests: Adam Burney - Planning Director, Karyn Jones, resident - After School-Care

Roll Call –Mara – here, Bobby – here, Laurie – here, Granger – here, Ben – here

Public Comment: Kat Little, 551 Concord Road, stated she was in support of moving Pride Day to a safer more accessible location.

Chair Comments: Ben received the annual request from the Garden Club to allow volunteers to work at Heritage Park. He read the letter which included the goals for this year and the request to work on the grounds of Heritage. Mara made a motion that the Park and Recreation Commission give Ben Carmel the authority to sign the document granting permission for Garden Club volunteers to work on the grounds of Heritage Park. Laurie seconded the motion. Vote: Mara – yes, Bobby – yes, Laurie – yes, Granger – yes, Ben – yes. Vote passed in favor 5-0.

OSRP with Adam Burney: Ben invited Adam Burney, Planning Director, to discuss the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) and understand plans moving forward. Adam said he spoke with Dennis regarding the OSRP and understands and agrees with the important nature of the OSRP along with the Field Assessment Plan which is included in the funding. Initially he said it made sense for the projects to be done together, but upon learning there were concerns about ownership of some of the non-park parcels, conservation parcels and select board parcels, he suggested going forward with the Field Assessment plan and then the OSRP will be based on the Field Assessment plan. Mara offered that she did a review of the Park and Recreation ownership of land parcels and found that some are not labeled properly. She will send the information to Adam.

Adam stated he would look at RFPs from other communities and work with Dennis to learn exactly what he wants to see from the study, what the Commission would like to see and have Legal review it before it is put out to bid. Laurie clarified that Adams’s plan is to start the field assessment as soon as possible while in parallel review ownership of the various parcels to get them in order and then begin the Open Space and Recreation Plan. She stated her biggest concern is being without an updated Open Space and Recreation Plan since without one the Town is not eligible for grants. Adam agreed, but stated the Field Assessment would give information on field needs, which would be necessary for the OSRP anyway even if they were done at the same time.

Bobby said Gale Associates had completed a Field Assessment and then completed an updated Field Assessment plan a number of years ago. He sent a copy to Adam.

Ben asked Adam about the scope of the Field Assessment Plan. Adam said it would involve the Town and the two public school systems since they have field use agreements with the Town, in addition to the various adult and youth sports programs. As programs grow, there may be a need for more field space so the Town might need to look at increasing field space.

After discussion, Ben made a motion that the Park and Recreation Commission support separating and accelerating the Field Assessment Plan from the Open Space and Recreation Plan and provide support to Adam and the Town.

Mara seconded the motion. Vote: Bobby – yes, Mara – yes, Granger – yes, Laurie – yes, Ben – yes.

Motion passed in favor 5-0.

After-School Care with Karyn Jones: Karyn Jones, 27 Pendleton Road, presented results of a survey on the need for after-school care in Sudbury. Karyn explained how the data for the survey was derived and shared the data captured from those who responded to the survey. She said the top challenges noted were lack of space, transportation and coverage for early release Wednesdays. 68% percent of respondents said they would utilize a new Sudbury Public School-operated or contracted service or a Parks and Recreation after-school care/enrichment program and 28% said they would consider using these services. Many commented they would like a mix of after-care coverage and some enrichment opportunities. Enrichment opportunities requested included science and STEM, sports, arts and crafts and music. Karyn was hopeful presenting the data will start discussions on how the Town can supplement existing options to better meet the needs of all families. Karyn questioned if Park and Recreation would be willing to start a working group to discuss this topic further and see what can be done for the residents of Sudbury.

Ben thanked Karyn for the presentation and thought a working group was a good idea, but didn't think it was something Recreation could do alone since the topic touches so many groups. Mara agreed and stated she hoped the new Community Center might be utilized to aid in this need. Karyn stated her group met with the Superintendent, Brad Cozier to discuss the after-care issues. They also met with the Town Manager, Andy Sheehan, who said he recognized the need but didn't want to comment too much since he felt this was under the purview of the schools. Karyn stated when they met with the Superintendent he said after school care was not under their purview. Karyn said other Park and Recreation Departments they looked at use third party vendors to run after school care programs. Karyn said they plan to speak with Sudbury Extended Day, and a few other child care facilities in Town. They have spoken with a few Select Board members, but not as a group.

Laurie mentioned that Park and Recreation does offer some after school programs by vendors but what is really missing is the transportation piece. She would support establishing a working group to advocate for moving forward on this issue. Mara agreed it would be great if they could get a Town Manager's working group to set goals and bring people together. Bobby agreed and thought it would be a good for Karyn to give this presentation to the Select Board. Dennis stated staffing is big issue in addition to transportation. In addition, the Recreation side of the new building is not complete yet and is still using a temporary entrance. He said Recreation will do a mix of in-house and vendor programs and said he was also in favor of the working group. He met with Sudbury Extended Day several times and recently gave them a tour of the new facility. He offered there is licensing involved when a full-fledged after-care program is run. He added the Sudbury Public School's SMILE program was funded through ARPA for the first two years and now funding for the program has been rolled into their regular budget. Dennis stated Recreation programs are not funded through the Town budget.

He said it has been difficult to get an electric or hybrid van/bus for transportation, so he is still working with the Select Board. He is hopeful they will approve a gas vehicle that can be retro fitted later to be hybrid. If that is approved, it would help with transportation to after school programs run by Park and Recreation at the new Community Center.

Mara suggested the Commission advocate that the Select Board invite Karyn to one of their meetings so she can present the data she presented. In addition, advocate and request the Town Manager create a Town Manager Working Group to help prioritize and solve the after-care school issue. Mara asked Karyn to send her presentation to the Park and Recreation Commission. Mara offered to draft a letter to the Town Manager and Laurie offered to review and help edit the draft. Dennis suggested adding funding of

the program in the letter, and Mara asked that he send a note to the Commission with comments to that effect.

Ben made a motion to allow Mara and Laurie to write a letter to the Town Manager and Select Board on behalf of the Park and Recreation Commission essentially advocating to make after school programming a priority and recommend to the Select Board to ensure Karyn Jones can present her survey data at a near term Select Board meeting and advocate for the creation of a Town Manager led working group to address the important topic of after-care school coverage for families.

Laurie seconded the motion. Vote: Bobby – yes, Granger – yes, Mara – yes, Laure – yes, Ben – yes. Vote passed in favor 5-0. Mara suggested Karyn write a letter to the Select Board as soon as possible requesting to be on their agenda to discuss this topic.

Field and Indoor Space Discussion – Ben stated there were long term discussions on use of space and some more immediate requests. He said the current requests are for Pride Day, Relay for Life and bathroom usage at the new Fairbank Community Center. He said there was also a dog-based incident at one of the parks, but he is waiting on more information. Ben stated the plan was to take a look at the Commissions policy on indoor and outdoor space permits on the areas they have jurisdiction over. Bobby stated in the past the field permit policy was written for youth sports and other athletic uses for fields. If someone came in with a different request, it would be handled on an individual basis. Mara agreed the current policy is basically for seasonal sports. The current request is to move the Pride Day location from the Goodnow Library to Curtis Middle School. Mara said there have been other requests for birthday parties on fields, indoor use of rooms for chess tournaments etc. and the problem needs to be solved on how these facilities will be rented. She knows insurance is often an issue, but feels the problem needs to be solved so the Community Center can be used along with the community fields. Bobby questioned if the Commission had jurisdiction of the Curtis Field. Ben stated the need to look at what is a Town sponsored event and how they are handled.

Ben stated Pride Day is requesting to use the Curtis Middle school indoor and outdoor facilities along with the school dumpsters and trash receptacles. He said the Select Board is helping with the coordination and publicity of the event. Dennis stated if the request is for a Town Event that involves a field he reviews the request and informs if the field is already reserved or available. If the event is approved, he would have to let the youth groups know they could not use the field that day. Dennis said special events should go through the Select Board, since staffing, trash, police details etc. are often involved. He has notified the youth groups they will not be able to use Curtis Field on Pride day. Ben stated there was no need for action or to take a vote. He asked Dennis to copy him on his communication to the Town Managers office regarding the field request for Pride Day and Relay for Life.

Ben stated Mara had a question on the new Community Center bathrooms. Mara questioned a sign on all gender/family locker room that said swim teams are not allowed in the room. She said the all gender locker room was created to support the needs of many people who do not want to use the gendered locker rooms. This would include people with disabilities who need larger spaces for changing, mix gendered families, and the LGBTQ community. She said the LGBTQ community members on swim teams may not feel comfortable going into the gendered locker rooms, so she is concerned about the sign on the door saying teams are not allowed in the room. She would like to understand why the sign is there and encourage that it be taken down. Dennis stated the sign is there to discourage swim teams from going in there and changing. This includes visitor swim teams, LSRHS and SST since it would be a concern to have mixed teams changing together, male and female, and to have over 30 to 40 kids in the room all

at the same time. He said he and his staff has discussed this with the swim team coaches and informed them that anyone who is not comfortable in the gendered locker rooms, for whatever reason, can definitely use the family/all gender locker room without a question. He said to open it to everyone would be a logistical nightmare for the staff and also not serve the purpose for those who don't feel comfortable in one of the other locker rooms. He said kids are fooling around in the locker rooms currently and the building has only been open for a month so they are also trying to work through all the challenges of the new facility. SST has had to put parent volunteers in the locker rooms to supervise the swimmers. He added swim team coaches use the family/all gender locker room since MIAA rules prohibit coaches from changing in locker rooms with the students. Mara stated she understood the concerns, but her concern is for the one or two kids who are part of the LGBTQ community who do not feel comfortable in the gendered community. Dennis stated the family/all gender locker room is open to them, the sign means no full teams are allowed in the room. Mara said she thought the sign should come down because a LGBTQ member on the swim team will see it and think they can't go in the room. Laurie agreed with Dennis that it would be a concern to have full swim teams in the room changing together and questioned if the wording could be different on the sign, so that any impacted swimmers would feel comfortable using the room. Laurie asked if the coaches were aware of the sign. Dennis said yes and the general consensus is they like it because they have the majority of their swimmers in two not three locker rooms and if anyone wants to use the family changing room they are more than welcome to use it. Dennis expressed frustration since the facility has only been open a little over a month and he and his staff are trying to navigate the new building, which isn't complete yet, and he is being told how to run the pool in a difficult situation with short staff and his concern is about safety. He said the sign will be taken down tomorrow and the teams will be able to use whatever locker room they want for their teams.

Ben added he wasn't sure the Commission had any jurisdiction over the signage at the Pool. Ben had to leave the meeting at this point and Laurie took over as Chair.

Director Update: No Director update.

Commission Update:

Rail Trail: Laurie stated there is an Advisory Commission meeting tomorrow night and will update at next meeting.

CPC: Mara reported the TI Sales parking lot driveway extension was approved to be recommended for Town Meeting approval.

Fairbank: Mara reported the old Fairbank building is being taken down. The drainage issues in the front of the building will be addressed. A light outside the Park and Recreation temporary entrance has been added. The missing pickleball line will be addressed after the project is completed. The multi-purpose room divider will be installed soon and the pool viewing area is making progress. There are issues with the Recreation entrance roof structure that need to be resolved. Lobby will not be available, even if it is complete until there are two egresses for that side of the building. The next PBC meeting is on February 20th

Haskell & Pathway: Bobby is still working to schedule a meeting regarding the lacrosse wall at Haskell.

Meeting Minutes: Motion to approve the January 16, 2024 minutes as amended and the December 4, 2023 minutes. Seconded by Mara. Vote: Bobby – yes, Mara – yes, Bobby – yes, Granger – yes, Laurie – yes.

Future meetings: February 6th and March 4th

Mara made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Bobby. Vote: Granger – yes, Mara – yes, Bobby – yes, Laurie – yes. Vote passed in favor 4-0.