

Virtual Meeting 6:38 pm

January 16, 2024

Commissioners: Mara Huston, Laurie Eliason, Bobby Beagan, Granger Atkeson, Ben Carmel-Chair

Dennis Mannone- Dir Park and Recreation

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

Public Comment: None.

Chair Comments: Ben met with Dennis to review the Financials of the Recreation/Atkinson Pool. He has made some positive progress and is hoping to present information on the Recreation/Atkinson Pool Budget and Finances/Allocations in a future meeting. He introduced Granger Atkeson's, the recently appointed new Park and Recreation Commissioner.

Director Update: Dennis reported the Atkinson Pool and Recreation opened up to the public on January 2nd. He sent out financials on the Pool and Field Enterprise Fund. The pool is back to over 100 memberships. The pool has limited hours on the weekends and during the week due to staffing and swim team rentals and he added the staff is getting used to the new building and learning how to operate with the temporary front desk and entrance. Laurie said there were concerns raised with crossing Fairbank Road to get the temporary entrance, but said the swim teams can now enter through the senior center. Dennis said there are concerns about lighting, drainage, and snow removal. Users of the Recreation activities and pool have been informed they may enter through the senior center. He said it should get better once the Recreation side is completed. Dennis said the Pool is still down a full-time staff member and part time lifeguards, so the salary expenses are a little misleading. He said the position has been open for over a year and there has been very little interest. He is unsure of the how his department expenses will change in the new facility. He said he is trying to get some clarification from the Town Manager of who should be paying for what expense and who has control of what area.

He said the Field Enterprise Fund is pretty quiet in the winter, but he does have one outstanding permit for Youth Football. The Parks and Ground staff is still down one person. Mara said she was still not clear on what was covered in the Park Maintenance account. She asked for further information on that account when they get into discussions on Financials of the department. Dennis clarified that field permit money can only be used on field maintenance expenses. The field permits do not cover Haskell playground expenses, tennis court maintenance, and ice-skating expenses. Those expense are covered out of the Town Parks and Grounds budget. The Field Enterprise Fund is responsible for field maintenance, irrigation, water, electricity. He said moving forward, the Town will need to decide who is in charge of field/Town bathrooms and the expenses associated in running them throughout the year. Granger asked about the indirect costs. Indirect costs are for ½ the health benefits of the Park and Grounds staff since half of their salary is paid out of the Field Enterprise Fund. Mara added the \$10,500 withdrawn every year goes into the Cutting Stabilization Fund. The same amount is contributed annually by the DPW budget.

Dennis reported 90% of the Feeley Field project is completed. He said here is a punch list of about \$40,000 worth of work that hasn't been paid yet because some of the work can't be done until the spring. Dennis is working with the DPW department to rebid Phase 2 of the Feeley project. Dennis had mentioned before that Warner Larson is not continuing on with the project. Ben asked if the work that

needs to be completed on Phase 1 will impact the girls' softball this spring. Dennis didn't think it would because most of the work can be completed during the day before the practices/games. The start of Phase 2 will depend on how quickly the bids go out and a new contractor is hired.

Dennis is working with DPW on the bid package for the Haskell playground which he is hopeful will go out in the winter with a construction start in the spring. Ben stated the last discussion clarified that the pour in play surface was the highest priority with the equipment second. Dennis stated there will still be some wood fiber at the playground and the current pour in play surface under the swing set will be kept. Ben asked Dennis about the new spinner and if it would it be flush to the PIP for accessibility. Dennis wasn't sure and said that new piece was an add alternate

Mara requested that once Dennis knows the plan she would like him to present the specifics to the Commission, so they can understand the plan for the playground and the trees. Dennis cautioned at this point changes can't be made since there is a finite amount of money already approved. Dennis stated the trees are being removed because the root system is destroying the PIP surface. He will work with the DPW department on replacement of the trees. He said if funds are leftover after the playground is finished, he may be able to use some for tree costs. Laurie agreed that the public would want to know if trees are being removed and if there is a plan to replace them, so there is shade at the playground, even if it is 6 months down the line.

Mara stated she heard the Teen Center had been disbanded and asked Dennis of the status. Dennis said the volunteers decided to disband the financial piece of the organization. They will be donating some funds to the Park and Recreation Youth programs. Dennis is unsure at this time if Teen Center will return. He said the department has been offering some youth programs and having success. The middle school ski program to Nashoba has been successful even with the light snow this season.

Dennis met with the Sudbury Extended Day Director last week to brainstorm on ideas to meet the needs of Sudbury residents and give a tour of the new facility. He said the three main issues are, transportation, staffing and space allocation. In addition, if the decision is to be a licensed after school program there are square footage allocation requirements that would have to be followed. He has plans to discuss this topic with the Town Manager, to see if this is something the Town wants undertake as a program. An after-school program would also impact other programs that could be offered by the Park and Recreation staff. The Department currently runs afterschool programs instructed by staff or vendors. The new gym is being used to run adult men and women's basketball in the evenings along with pickleball clinics and open sessions. Dennis has requested the basketball hoops be fixed so they all be raised depending on how the gym is being used. Currently, 3 of the hoops are fixed and 3 can be adjusted. He is looking for all the hoops to be adjustable.

Mara asked about the status of the hybrid bus for Recreation. Dennis said he has to go before the Select Board again to see if they will agree to a gas van or bus. He said it has been very difficult to get the hybrid or electric bus/van.

Commission Updates:

CPC: Mara reported the CPC voted in favor of Phase 3 of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. She said they have not yet agreed to fund the Parkinson driveway expansion and improvements at Ti-Sales Field. They still

had questions on the request and needed additional information. The next meeting is this coming Wednesday.

Rail Trial: Laurie reported ongoing construction on the rail trails, and that they are not officially open. The current plan is for completion of Phase 2 in the fall of 2024. Phase 3 is in the works now with the goal of 25% design done around June of 2024. She reported that Framingham has closed on their portion of the BFRT, so the rail trail will not stop at the Framingham line and go all the way to Rte. 9 in the future. Laurie added a survey has been sent out to seven Towns along the rail trail to gather information on maintenance of the trails and who is responsible for the specific areas. The next meeting is scheduled for February 7th.

Haskell Pathway/Lacrosse wall: Bobby reported no update at this time. He is still working with the Combined Facilities Director to pull a meeting together. Bobby stated he wanted to clarify that he is in favor of the lacrosse wall, but is looking for exact details on size and location to see if there is any impact on the proposed Haskell pathway or youth sports fields. The plan is to walk the field in February or early March depending on the snow.

Fairbank Update: Mara stated the abatement process in the old center is progressing and the target date for demolition of the old building is the week of January 20th. The current pool viewing area and aquatic office is being renovated along with construction of the new Recreation entrance and new camp bathrooms. The parking lot and new basketball court will follow in the spring. A process is in place for staff to report any issues with the new facility. Bobby asked if there was a plan to address the flooding that is occurring on Fairbank Road. Mara said they are working on the drainage issues.

Ben asked about skating at Featherland. Dennis said the rink is set up and ready, just need cold weather for over 5 days. Once it is opened information will be posted on the Park and Recreation website. Bobby asked about the skating rink that used to be at the Fairbank Community Center. Dennis said that was SMS youth hockey's material and the Town let them set up at Fairbank. He believed they moved everything to Sewataro.

Park and Recreation Revolving Funds: Dennis stated every year the Commission has to sign the Revolving Fund articles that are put on the consent calendar at the annual Town meeting. He said the department has three Revolving Funds that roll up to one. The first is a Youth Revolving Fund, second a Teen Center Revolving Fund and the third is the Recreation Revolving 53E1/2 Fund. He is keeping the dollar amounts the same this year. The funds were set up a number of years ago, but with Covid and the change in the department some of the funds are not used as much as before, but he is keeping them active for now. He will leave originals of the Articles in a folder at the front desk of the pool for the Commissioners to stop by and sign. Once the Town report is completed he will leave that in the folder too for signatures. Ben clarified that the funds basically hold revenues until invoices come in and expense are paid out of the fund. Dennis agreed and added the expense can not go over the expense total of all the Revolving Funds.

Mara made a motion to vote on the three Revolving Fund Articles as presented by the Park and Recreation Director. Granger seconded the motion. Vote: Granger – yes, Mara – yes, Bobby – yes, Laurie – yes, Ben - yes. Motion passed 5-0 in favor.

Ben stated the Commissions Annual Report is due January 26th. Mara stated she had many edits and suggestions. Ben shared his screen with a draft of the Commissions annual report. Ben discussed continuing with the editing in the meeting or Commissioners submitting their comments and a subcommittee of 2 people combining all the comments and presenting a final copy to the Commission. Mara suggested recording the comments and then have two people finish the final edition.

Ben offered to be one of the two to finalize the report. Laurie will be the other Commissioner to finalize the report. The Commissioners reviewed the draft and reviewed by paragraph and recorded the edits, comments and additions to the draft. Dennis will send Ben a list of programs Recreation ran in 2023. Ben and Laurie will review all the comments, additions and edits and get a new draft to the Commissioners for review by Friday of this week. Any comments, edits should be sent back to him by the middle of next week so that he can submit it by the 26th of January.

Mara made a motion to authorize Ben and Laurie to edit and revise the Park and Recreation Commission's report that will be in the 2023 Annual Town Report. When finalized, the report will be sent back to the Commissioners for comments with final copy of the report submitted by Ben to the Town by the due date of January 26th. Seconded by Granger. Vote: Laurie – yes, Bobby – yes, Granger – yes, Mara – yes, Ben – yes. Motion passed in favor 5-0.

Ben mentioned future meetings will discuss operation plans for Fairbank, the Park and Recreation Charter and priorities. He asked the Commissioners if they felt there was a need for better communication on how the new facility is expected to be used by the Community. Mara stated the building has only been open for 14 days and there are many issues that need to be addressed so March or April may be the time to discuss how the building can be used by outside groups. Laurie thought there needed to be more communication on the status on the use of the building now and the plan for the future. Bobby stated he thought some type of communication should come from the Town Manager. Dennis said it is difficult since the residents are looking to use the facility, but he is short staffed the recreation side of the building won't be complete until the spring. Dennis suggested if the Commission decided to send an email perhaps the Town Manager could make a statement at the beginning of a Select Board meeting to update the Community on the status of the new building. Bobby offered to draft the email and then send it to the other Commissioners for review and comments and then Ben will send the email to the Town Manager.

Future Meetings: February 5th is the next scheduled meeting and then March 4th. Feb 5th may be moved in order to accommodate the new Planning Director's attendance.

Approval of Minutes: December minutes were not ready, but November can be voted on. Mara made a motion to approve the November 13th minutes with corrections. Laurie seconded. Vote: Mara – yes, Laurie – yes, Bobby – yes, Granger – abstained, Ben – yes. Vote: 4-0, 1 abstained

Motion to adjourn by Granger, Bobby seconded. Vote: Bobby – yes, Laurie – yes, Granger – yes, Mara – yes, Ben – yes. Vote: 5-0.