

Virtual Meeting 7:03 pm

November 12, 2024

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

Park and Recreation: Dennis Mannone – Director

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

Ben stated this meeting is to prepare for the meeting with FinCom on November 18, at 7:45pm. The preference is not to have a full Commission meeting, so two Commission members will attend to present the Recreation/Pool/Field information. If the full Commission attends, he would have to work with the FinCom quickly to change their agenda to a joint meeting. This meeting will be used to discuss and educate the FinCom members about the many funding mechanisms of Recreation and how they interact with the Town Budget. In addition, to make FinCom aware of the many assets of Recreation in Town and discuss how Recreation will use the new facility to its fullest potential along with the many other Recreation sites in Town. Commissioners agreed with a non-joint meeting. Laurie wanted to be sure issues regarding the Field Enterprise Fund and the possibility of self-funding the entire Recreation department were discussed. Mara said the Commission should encourage FinCom to dive deep into the Field Enterprise Fund and understand the expenses and determine what should be covered by the Town and what should be covered by the field permit fees. Mara said the Commission needed to educate the FinCom on the Revolving Fund, Pool Enterprise Fund, Field Enterprise Fund and the funds from the Town Budget. Recreation has the smallest Town budget which was a concern when the Town Manager discussed cutting back the Park and Recreation Budget and possibly moving to a self-funded operation. Mara expressed concern that since the Revolving Fund is funded with revenue from programs, an increase in program fees to cover salary costs currently in the budget, could cause program fees to rise and prohibit some from participating. Mara stated that Recreation is part of the community and helps with mental and physical health and emotional health. During Covid it was proven that Recreation was a vital part of helping residents exercise by playing tennis, pickleball, soccer, and overall use of the fields and playgrounds. In addition, Recreation offers Sudbury Summer Camps, and childcare options that are traditionally more affordable.

Dennis said his FY25 Budget is due at the end of the month. He received instructions for a zero-based budget except for COLA increases. He has his budget hearing with the Town Manager, Assistant Town Manager, and the Finance Director on December 11th. He too was surprised to hear the Town Manager suggest moving all Recreation to a self-funding model. Dennis stated he did mention adding an Assistant Park and Recreation Director and some restructuring of staff to help the new Community Center meet the demands. The additional funds for these staff members would be paid out of the Revolving 53E1/2 fund and Pool Enterprise fund. He will discuss this further at his budget hearing.

He said the Town needs to figure out the long-term plan on how to maximize the operation of the new Community Center.

Dennis suggested the Commission focus on the Field Enterprise Fund with the FinCom because it is in the most trouble right now due to rising expenses and static field permit fees. He said the Field Enterprise Fund was in a deficit last year and expects it to be in one again this year, so the field permit fees may need to be increased. The bigger discussion is who is responsible for what, such as maintenance and cleaning of the field bathrooms or is that a Facilities issue. The Field Enterprise Fund is not responsible for maintenance of the tennis/pickleball/basketball courts. In addition, Dennis said the youth groups spend additional funds on the fields above the field permit fees in addition to the many

volunteer hours spent cleaning up the fields. A few years ago, the Town set aside \$40,000 out of the Town Managers Capital budget for field maintenance, but that hasn't occurred since before Covid.

After discussion, Ben asked the Commissioners what they hoped to accomplish at the FinCom meeting. Dennis suggested presenting at a high level, discussing the Field and Pool Enterprise Funds and the Revolving Fund explaining how they operate. Then educate the FinCom on what the Park and Recreation Commission see as stress points. He gave the example of the Field Enterprise Fund as a stressor since it may not be able to generate the revenue needed without an increase and help in determining who is responsible for what on the fields. If Enterprise Funds do not meet their budget, the Town has to fund the outstanding balance. The Pool would be the second stressor, it will be shut down again for a period of time in 2025. How will that impact the pool and its revenue and the third piece is Recreation. Can we program enough to grow the department and is that by a combination of Town funds and program fees. He added capital or CPC projects, such as a new concession stands at the fields, roofs on fields buildings etc. could also be discussed.

Laurie added she would like the Commission to advocate that the Recreation department is not expected to be self-funding until it is clear the department can be successful in that model.

It was decided that Ben and Mara will represent the Commission with Dennis also in attendance. Ben will circulate a draft of the presentation for comments from the other Commissioners. He will cover the opening and stressors with input from Dennis. Mara will cover the financials with input from Dennis. Ben expected the meeting to take no more than an hour. Dennis said he will not be presenting anything at the meeting, but will be able to answer any questions if asked. Mara stated the goal is for the FinCom to get a better understanding of the Recreation Department and the funding vehicles associated with the department.

Mara made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Granger seconded. Vote: Bobby – yes, Laurie – yes, Granger – yes, Bobby – yes, Mara – yes, Ben – yes. Motion passed 5-0 in favor.