

Virtual Meeting 06:33 pm

March 10, 2025

Commissioners: Mara Huston, Bobby Beagan, Granger Atkeson (joined meeting at 7:00pm), Laurie Eliason, Ben Carmel, Chair

Guests: Heather Halsey, Sudbury Garden Club

Park and Recreation: Dennis Mannone – Director

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

Public Comment: None

Director Comments: Dennis sent out Recreation/Pool financial reports to the Commission. The Smile playground contract has been sent to the Town Manager for review and approve; the Select Board already approved the contract. The work is scheduled to begin in late June/July timeframe. Mara suggested once the projected timeline is established it would be good to provide more detail to the Commission and residents and post it on the Town website. Dennis said they will make announcements and put signage up. Bobby expressed concern that parking will occur on the grass now that trees have been removed around the Haskell playground. He asked Dennis to look into some method to show parking is not allowed on the grass.

The Field Assessment survey is moving forward and Dennis plans to meet with Gale next week. He is still waiting for information from some users' groups. The initial questionnaire is done and the next step is getting maintenance data (labor and expenses) on the fields from the Town and schools. Gale will meet with Dennis and others in a small group and take any feedback and create a draft plan with all the information gathered and present that to the group with timelines spelled out.

Summer camp sign-ups are going well. Laurie asked how numbers compare to previous years. Dennis said the numbers are continuing to grow post Covid. He moved registration up a month, but thinks the numbers are where they were last year, with Sudbury Adventure signups further along than last year. The need for rainy day space and time in the pool limits the number of campers he can enroll.

Recreation will also offer vendor camps before and after the 6 weeks of summer camp. The van, purchased last year, is currently being used for middle school programs. Mara stated she would also like to see it used for elementary programs since it is an area of need for parents and was one of the reasons the Commission advocated for the van. Dennis said it's more difficult to get to all the elementary schools with staffing being an issue. Mara reiterated the importance of the need for elementary afterschool care needs. Laurie asked if the van was being used to pick the kids up a school and transfer to the Fairbank Center. Dennis stated the van is currently being used for middle school programs and transportation to Fairbank for a program. Laurie suggested using the van for an elementary program even it is just for one school to help the parents of elementary age children. Dennis said he just doesn't have the staffing for the afterschool programs. Laurie agreed with Mara the need for afterschool care for the elementary needs to be discussed in the future.

250th Anniversary with Heather Halsey: Ben informed the Sudbury Garden Club applied for a grant for a garden project in Heritage Park to commemorate the 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution. The Sudbury Garden Club was notified by the Plant America Committee that they received a grant for \$1,900. The plan is to install a garden to honor the history of Sudbury. Heather Halsey, 19 Sylvan Way, presented the designs and plans for the garden to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the

American Revolution. Heather said the labor will be covered by master gardeners, the Sudbury Garden Club, possibly the Thursday Garden club and additional volunteers. All plants will be bought wholesale from Caveccchios. Heather is looking for approval from the Commissioners for the Garden Club to plant the garden in Heritage Park.

Bobby made a motion to approve the garden plan for the 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution as presented by the Sudbury Garden Club for Heritage Park. Mara seconded the motion. Mara – yes, Bobby – yes, Grainger – yes, Laurie – yes, Ben – yes. Vote passed in favor 5-0.

Master Gardener Permission: Ben discussed the annual request from the Sudbury Garden Club to work in Heritage Park. Heather mentioned master gardeners work in Heritage on the first Wednesday of every month. Motion made to grant permission for the master gardeners to work in Heritage Park for another year. Seconded by Laurie. Vote: Laurie – yes, Bobby – yes, Mara – yes, Granger – yes, Ben – yes. Vote in favor 5-0. Ben will sign the form and send to Heather.

Spring User Group Discussion: Commission discussed dates for potential meeting with user groups regarding the Field Needs Assessment. Dennis will reach out to Gale. Ben mentioned the week of April 14th or April 28th as possible dates. The goal of the meeting is to go over the Gale findings based on the information received from the user groups and Town and/or to collect more information and give user groups a chance to ask more questions and get feedback. Ben and Bobby will work on securing a date for the meeting with Gale.

Mara mentioned that Commissioners had discussed in the past the need to walk Broadacre and Davis Fields. She suggested the Commissioners also walk Feeley and Haskell. Bobby added they may also want to walk Parkinson. Mara requested the Commission received a draft of the Gale information so they have a chance to review it before the meeting. Dennis will speak with Gale and see what their timeframe is for completion of the report.

Commission Updates: Ben is still working on creating a list of major goals for the Commission and is hoping to have it ready by the next meeting.

Rail Trail: Laurie mentioned the draft of an RFP from Marcia Rasmussen in regard to the Parkinson's driveway and lot improvements. The draft RFP includes property boundaries, landscape wetland delineation, storm water management and traffic analysis. Laurie mentioned this RFP is separate from the signage discussion that has occurred in the past. Funding for the signs is allocated by the Town. Laurie offered she thought the RFP looked good.

Haskell Pathway: No update. Bobby did speak with Youth Lacrosse and they have not come up with any alternatives to the requested wall. He will hopefully have more information in April.

Fairbank: No update at this time.

CPC: Granger stated there is a Forum in April. Mara asked if he knew what projects were on the consent calendar. Granger did not know at this time.

Ben asked if Dennis had any additional discussion on the overall Park and Recreation Budget. Dennis stated he has attended a few meetings, one to discuss capital requests and then the budget hearing with Fincom and the Town Manager. He approached the Town Manager about the budget plan and was told they would discuss Recreation and the Pool budgets after Town meeting. Dennis added a number of departments did get increases and additional staff. He gave the example of the Parks and Grounds Department requesting an additional person in the FY26 budget and their contracted services and summer help budget lines decreased by \$30,000. Mara clarified the Parks and Grounds budget increased while the Park and Recreation might be told to cut their budget. Dennis said his budget

stayed pretty much the same this year. He found it interesting that other departments were able to move things around and get additional help for staff.

Mara suggested inviting the Finance Director to a Commission meeting to discuss Park and Recreation and Pool budgets. Dennis agreed and thought it would be good to discuss what the Town Manager brought up at a previous Commission meeting the idea of looking at the Field Enterprise Fund, the Pool Enterprise Fund, Revolving Accounts, and Budget and the plan for the department moving forward. He said he will probably have to increase the field permit fees and pool fees in the next year.

Discussion on Atkinson Pool, funding and short/long term viability: Ben mentioned the capital projects meeting a few weeks ago where the Combined Facilities Director presented all the work that would be done at the pool and the request for additional funds at the upcoming Town meeting. The bids came back higher than expected, so there may be a request for additional funds. This caused a discussion and questions such as how much money has the Town invested in the pool over the course of the last decade. Mara expressed confusion because she thought in past meetings it was made clear the Pool Enterprise Fund is not funded by taxpayers, however, capital improvements are funded by taxpayers.

Mara mentioned she was involved in the working group for the Fairbank building and they were assured the pool base was fine. The original plan was to keep the project below \$30 million because it was thought the article wouldn't pass if higher. She said the Combined Facilities Director was asked to put together a maintenance plan for the pool moving forward.

Dennis agreed the Pool has not received much capital funding over the years. In 2020, \$160,000 was received for a project in the filter room to replace the sand filter. The pool operating budget has funded several projects such as the back-room computer system and the recent UV Filtration system for the lap pool. He is working on developing a true operating budget for the pool, since it has been closed on and off for that last year or so, and the water bills are higher than average due to pool leaks, along with added expenses for the chemicals. Utility bills are coming in higher in the new building, so he will have a better idea of the overall operating expense after a year in the new building.

Mara recalled the Pool Pak was replaced about 8/9 years ago.

Ben stated the Atkinson Pool and Field Enterprise Fund received funds from the Town during the Covid timeframe. Dennis confirmed the pool received \$150,000 and some of those funds are still in the retained earnings.

Dennis offered he was in a meeting on Friday regarding the pool bids that came in higher than expected for work that is expected to start in August. The current plan is to review the project and rebid it to see if the bids come in lower and then decide if additional funds will be requested at Town meeting. Dennis expressed concern with value engineering out items in the bid and then not fixing all the problems which could lead into another shutdown.

Laurie watched the meeting and was pleased to see support for the funding of pool projects, but at times thought the pools existence was at risk. She felt it needs to be very clear how much the pool is used and the value associated with it being in the community and home to the LSRHS swim team.

Commission discussed the need for usage data, resident/non-resident use, and rental use.

Ben said the options discussed were a new pool, keep the current plan and ask for more money, re-bid the project and/or value engineer items out of the project.

Bobby said there are those who don't want to keep fixing the pool and are saying how much is too much, especially if the percentage of out of Town users are higher than in Town users. He said there are those in Town who don't want to pay for a pool if they are not using it.

Mara stated swimming is the one sport that can save your life and the Atkinson pool is affordable for anybody anywhere. She stated it was very important to keep it the pool open. She and Laurie will

gather data and be able to present a clear picture of how this pool is being used in addition to qualifying and quantifying the value of the pool by the next meeting.

Mara asked about retained earnings and if any of those funds could be used for pool work planned in August. Dennis wasn't against using retained earnings for renovation expenses. He would be concerned about using retained earnings at this time with the upcoming 3-4-month shutdown, since salary and other expenses will be incurred without any revenue coming in from pool activities.

Mara asked if there was a need for a pool stabilization fund. Dennis referred that question to the Finance Director.

Dennis mentioned the pool leaks. He is filling both pools regularly and then the staff spends time during the day testing to make sure the levels are acceptable. Lynne Ziffer, Aquatics Coordinator, is keeping a record of the data daily and calculating the amount of water loss since the auto fills are currently not working. It is difficult to know where the leaks are in the pool and there is currently no guarantee that the leaks will be fixed in the planned renovations. He said it is very difficult to balance the pool chemicals with the constant loss of water. The pumps are running longer because the new water has to be heated and there is always the question of where the water is going.

Mara asked how one or two of the Commissioners can get involved in the conversations on the pool renovations.

Laurie thought it would be a conversation with the Combined Facilities Director. Dennis said he heard the project was going to be rebid soon and perhaps Ben could reach out, get an update and express the Commission's concerns. Mara suggested Ben send an email to the Combined Facilities Director and the Town Manager and Finance Director communicating the Commission's interest in being involved in the meetings and conversations regarding the pool renovations.

Future Meetings and Topics: Ben said April 14th appears to be a good date for everyone. He will confirm that the date works for the Combined Facilities Director. He will wait to hear from Dennis regarding Gale Associates and a possible date for the field user groups meeting.

Meeting Minutes: Minutes will be approved at the next meeting.

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