

Virtual Meeting 06:34 pm
June 9, 2025

Commissioners: Mara Huston, Bobby Beagan, Laurie Eliason, Granger Atkeson, Ben Carmel, Chair
Guests – Victor Grafalo, Assistant Town Manager/FD, Sandra Duran, Combined Facilities Director
Dennis Mannone – Park and Recreation Director

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

Public Comment: None

Atkinson Pool Bid Update: Sandra Duran, Combined Facility Director, informed the pool renovation contract has been awarded to JJ Cardozi and is in the final stages of approvals. Major equipment submittals are underway, with the dehumidification unit currently under review. The pool is scheduled to shut down on August 16th, with the completion of the project expected around December 1st. the HVAC unit has a 33-week lead time and will require a separate shutdown in May of 2026 for installation. The Commission discussed the potential impacts to swim teams, other renters and revenue lost, as well as plans to manage staff and expenses during the shutdown. Sandra stated they will attempt to do as much leak detection as possible before the shutdown on the 16th of August. Victor noted that Dennis has been part of the renovation plans. Mara asked if one of the Commissioners could be added to project team meetings or the emails. Victor stated normally just staff is on the project teams, but he is happy to attend Commission meetings to give project updates and Dennis is part of the team so he will also be able to give updates. Dennis stated there may have to be some modifications to swim team schedules and number of kids in the pool at one time due to the HVAC and air quality issues. The new HVAC will be the same size as the current one, so the pool may still have some air quality issues depending on how many swimmers are in the pool and on deck at one time.

Sandra added acoustical tile work has begun in the Park and Recreation offices and that it should be completed in about 2 weeks.

Laurie asked about the status of the Haskell/Fairbank CPC project that was approved at Town Meeting. Sandra explained she is working on several RFPs for various projects, including the basketball court and pavilion. She added plans for the pavilion could be worked on separately and suggested having a meeting with Dennis. The basketball court would require design documents, but space is already allocated. Mara stated discussions on adding lights to the second basketball court should be held in a public meeting. The Commission debated whether to make the second court a multi-sport court or just basketball and discussed the potential locations and impact on summer camp. Sandra stated the grassy area in the back of the Community Center is also available for camp use. She informed there are concerns about the electrical capacity limitations at the Fairbank Community Center building that may impact adding lights to a new court. Bobby was concerned there was any question about adding a second basketball court since it was previously approved.

The Commissioners agreed to move forward with plans for a second basketball court, but will investigate design options, electrical considerations and exact location. Sandra will be working on the RFP and look into design costs. Granger asked if CPC funds could go towards lights. Victor will confirm that CPC funds can cover lights.

Mara asked about solar on the Community Center roof and Sandra stated the plan has been put on hold until the new roof is installed at the Atkinson Pool, which is not set to occur until the end of September.

Director Update: Ben asked about summer camp. Dennis stated counselor training is set for the end of June and camp begins on July 7th. A summer concert will be held on Wednesday, June 18th. Day camps are planned at the end of June and end of August. The Haskell playground project is moving forward; playground will close June 23 and will reopen the middle of August. Bobby asked about pickleball use at the Fairbank basketball court and if it was monopolizing basketball play. Dennis hasn't received any complaints, but said there is only one net out now, and it will be removed in July when camp starts. Bobby suggested there may be a need to put up some signage specifying basketball or pickleball play times. The hope was the Field Assessment will help to address some of these concerns.

Mara mentioned the need for the Commission to have some votes on record stating the priority of projects. She thought it was important to be prepared for any funding that may be offered to Recreation. Dennis gave an update on Feeley Phase 2. The Commission agreed that Feeley and Davis were low-hanging fruit projects to prioritize. They also discussed the need to address field permit fees since they haven't been increased in several years despite rising costs. Dennis mentioned the possibility of increasing fees in January of 2026 since it takes time for all user groups to apply the increase into their registration cycle. Bobby thought it was important to look at Davis and see how that field could get back into the mix as a viable field for some of the user groups. Dennis said in the past Davis was primarily a youth football and soccer practice field, but is now underutilized due to lack of amenities and convenience. He has asked the Park and Grounds staff to see what fields could be put at Davis this fall.

The Commission discussed the challenges of improving Parkinson's Field, particularly the narrow entrance and the need for an easement from TI Sales to use their driveway. Victor explained that obtaining an easement would involve negotiations, potential costs, and liability concerns. Granger raised the idea of incorporating play spaces for children along the rail trail, which led to a discussion about the importance of Park and Recreation representation in the Open Space and Recreation Plan. The Commission discussed the limited easy options for field improvements and the need for another turf field in Town and where it might be located. Davis was discussed as a priority location for potential development.

Commission discussed the Crime Lab field and what might be able to be done with it to improve it. Sandra Duran suggested the possibility of putting a dog park at the Crime Lab field. The Commissioner's discussed school fields and the challenges of maintaining and utilizing the fields for recreational purposes. Dennis explained that Parks and Grounds maintains the fields, but fees are not paid to the Field Enterprise Fund for school use of the fields. Youth groups used to use Curtis Field more, but not too much at this time. The Commission stated the need to establish better collaboration between Town departments to make school fields more usable and cost effective. Sandra suggested revisiting the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) from 2012 to address these issues and improve shared services. The Commission also discussed the possibility of developing recreational spaces at Curtis Middle School, including a basketball court and accessible play area. Mara suggested that would be a good topic for a future meeting.

Victor Garofalo, Assistant Town Manager/FD, suggested having conversations with the superintendent, SPS school Committee, LSRHS school committee, the Town Manager, Select Board and of course Recreation about issues with the fields and how to best work together.

The Commissioners planned to have a more structured discussion in the next meetings about prioritizing projects, including consolidation of fields, turf considerations and establishing liaisons with school committees.

Broadacres was cited as a significant location for development. The Commission discussed costs and funding sources including CPC money and the Meadow Walk Mitigation funds. The Commission thought there might be a possibility to grade and seed a section of Broadacres for immediate use by soccer or lacrosse. Dennis will check with Park and Grounds to see if there are any immediate plans to mow the area on a regular basis. Mara mentioned once the Open Space and Recreation Plan is completed the Town can apply for Mass Parks grants. The Meadow Walk Mitigation Fund started at \$500,000 and it was thought that at least half of the funds were already allocated to field development. Victor will check on the exact amount left in the account for Recreation. Dennis mentioned having playgrounds in other areas of Town, not just at Haskell Field. He also said a splash pad has been discussed in past years as something that would be great to have in the Town. He said many of these ideas will get vetted in the Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Discussion on Dogs & Signage at Park and Recreation Parcels – Commission decided to move discussion on dogs and field signage to future meetings.

PRC Roles – Commission discussed Chair and Vice Chair positions and Committee appointments for the Park and Recreation Commission. Ben will be stepping down as Chair. After discussion Bobby made a motion that Mara be appointed as Chair of the Park and Recreation Commission, and Laurie to stay on as Vice Chair. Granger seconded the motion. Vote: Mara-yes, Granger-yes, Bobby-yes, Laurie-yes, Ben-yes. Vote passed in favor- 5-0.

Commission discussed the need to confirm Laurie's reappointment to the Rail Trail Advisory Committee.

Commission agreed to schedule a July and August meeting, but dates will be decided after a poll of members.

Motion to adjourn. Seconded. Vote: Laurie-yes, Bobby-yes, Granger-yes, Mara-yes, Ben – yes Passed in favor 5-0.