

Minutes, Park & Recreation Commission Meeting

January 12, 2026

Attendees: Mara Huston (P&R Chair), Granger Atkeson (P&R), Bobby Beagan (P&R), Ben Carmel (P&R), Laurie Eliason (P&R), Victor Garofalo (Ass't Town Manager and Finance Director), Vivian Zeng (Director, Health & Community Services), Sandra Duran (Facilities Director), Amy Hamilton (Interim Recreation Director)

Public Commenters: Kay Bell, Liesje Carrigan

Meeting called to order at 6:30PM

Meeting minutes generated by AI, reviewed for accuracy by Amy Hamilton and Mara Huston.

Quick recap

The Park and Recreation Commission meeting began with introductions of new members and the presentation of an Eagle Scout project proposal for a native plant pollinator garden. The Commission discussed various park improvement projects including landscape master plans, field upgrades, and accessibility concerns, with particular focus on Haskell and Fairbank developments and Feeley Field Phase 2. The conversation ended with discussions about project funding, timelines, and the need for community engagement, while addressing concerns about playground repairs and pool system calibration issues.

Summary

New Commissioners and Community Engagement

The Park and Recreation Commission meeting began with introductions of new members Amy Hamilton as Interim Director and Vivian as Director of Health and Community Services. Commissioners greeted Amy and discussed her background with recreation commissions, while Mara provided an overview of her recent meetings with Amy and a driving tour of recreation properties. The commissioners shared their experiences and roles within the community, highlighting the diverse range of perspectives they bring to the commission.

Eagle Scout Project Proposal Presentation

Brandon Ma of Scout Troop 61 in Sudbury presented his Eagle Scout project proposal for a native plant pollinator garden along the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. The garden will feature two 48-square-foot raised beds with 48 native plant plugs, and will be accessible via a 3-4 foot mulch path. The project's estimated cost is \$270-500 for materials, and Brandon plans to start construction in March. Several questions were raised about the project's location, with Victor noting that the town hasn't yet received ownership of the rail trail, and Laurie suggesting that Brandon should consult with the Conservation Commission and Rail Trails Advisory Committee. Sandra also asked about making the garden ADA accessible.

The commission discussed Brandon's proposal for a pollinator garden, focusing on accessibility and maintenance concerns. Sandra raised issues about the raised bed design not being fully accessible, while Mara suggested exploring alternative locations like Grinnell Park, where the Thursday Garden Club could potentially maintain the garden. Victor offered to help coordinate with Lori Capone from the Conservation Commission to determine if the proposed location is suitable. The commission agreed to support the project in principle, pending confirmation of the location and a maintenance plan, with Bobby Beagan making a motion to that effect. Motion: "I move to support Brandon's project with the understanding that the location will be ok with the Town and that Brandon will follow up with Conservation." Laurie seconded the motion. The Commission voted 5 – 0 in favor of the motion.

Haskell and Fairbank Landscape Master Plan Update

The group discussed a landscape master plan for Haskell and Fairbank, which includes funding for a pavilion, multi-sport court, and circuit path. Sandra explained the project's phases, which involve community workshops and design development. The group has selected a vendor for the project, and Sandra will share the fee proposal with Laurie and Bobby. They plan to start the community process in the spring to create a concept plan for grant applications.

Sandra provided an update on the Haskell Master Plan, highlighting the need for community workshops to determine preferences for amenities like a dog park and athletic equipment storage. She emphasized the importance of the internal working group's collaboration with the designer to move the project forward. Mara mentioned the upcoming Open Space and Recreation Plan presentation in February, which will guide the location of a potential dog park. The group discussed the timeline for storage construction, aiming for a start after summer camp ends in August 2027. Laurie and Sandra agreed on the need for a small working group to manage the project once it transitions to the Town's responsibility. They also discussed the importance of community engagement and potential funding sources, including CPC and grants.

Feeley Field Phase 2 Update

Kyle presented the Feeley Field Phase 2 project update, focusing on the schematic design phase. The project aims to extend ADA access to the east field, address drainage issues, add new dugout structures and backstop fencing, and install irrigation. The project will involve importing new material and adjusting the slope to meet ideal playing conditions. The proposed ADA access route will go around the retaining wall instead of through the dugout, as originally planned. Kyle explained that this change was made to improve circulation and accessibility. The project will require Conservation Commission approval due to work in buffer areas, and the team is considering a 6-foot chain-link fence for protection along the walkway.

Victor clarified that construction is scheduled for summer 2026, which will temporarily close the fields in the fall; however, the fields will not be impacted during the spring 2026 season. The commission discussed the impact on user groups and the need to find alternative arrangements during the construction period.

Ben raised questions about fencing options, user group input, and potential future lighting, with Kyle confirming that while lighting wasn't in the current scope, it wouldn't prevent future installation. Mara emphasized the importance of listening to user groups, particularly after issues with net heights at Feeley 3, and noted that while bathrooms weren't in the current scope, accessibility might require future consideration.

The meeting focused on the design and accessibility of a new accessible path at a softball field complex. Kyle presented plans for an ADA-compliant path that avoids the dugout area, using potable water for irrigation instead of a well system due to cost considerations. Public Guest Kay Bell, an accessibility advocate, raised concerns about the route around the second field and suggested adding companion seating. Kay suggested the need for portable restrooms and accessible picnic tables. Mara and Victor agreed this is important to address. Victor said the Town would look into these ideas. The group agreed to add a connecting path between the existing dugout path and the new accessible route to prevent users from getting stuck on the grass. Public Guest Liesje Carrigan inquired about handrails for the accessible path and asked about making the tennis court accessible. Kyle said the hand rails were not needed because of the low slop and he confirmed making the tennis courts accessible is not part of the current project scope.

The meeting focused on discussing issues with tennis courts accessibility and project funding. Sandra raised concerns about inaccessible tennis courts due to poor transition and grade issues. Mara inquired as to how this accessibility concern was overlooked and advocated for addressing the concern. Victor clarified could not be addressed with remaining Phase 1 funds but would be considered in future projects. Victor explained that Phase 2 funds were used to hire Kyle and Gail Associates for design work, with irrigation potentially being an add-on if costs exceed estimates.

Director Update

The commission discussed the need to address accessibility issues and improve programming, with Amy (interim director) seeking input on programming gaps and community needs.

The meeting discussed pool system issues, with Vivian explaining that recent calibration problems with the automated chlorination system were due to new equipment in the filtration room, which required staff training and adjustments. Victor clarified that two computer systems were replaced as part of ongoing maintenance, not as part of the original project, with the replacements costing around \$10K each.

The group discussed the Haskell playground situation, where high impact readings on the PIP surface required closure of certain areas, with repairs expected in March or April under warranty.

Laurie suggested programming ideas for after-school activities and school vacation periods, while Granger inquired about the status of the Fairbank center room booking system, which Victor confirmed would be discussed in an upcoming meeting.

The meeting covered several key topics, including safety precautions and playground repairs at Haskell Field, which Victor explained would be closed until spring due to weather conditions not being conducive to material setting.

The group discussed the temporary roles of Amy and Vivian in the park and recreation department, with Victor emphasizing the importance of tapping Amy's expertise while supporting Vivian in her new position.

Granger presented a visual timeline of capital projects, which sparked a discussion about the circuit path and its funding status. Laurie clarified that the circuit path was already funded through a prior CPC article for ADA accessibility, while Bobby confirmed that Sandra had secured funding for this project. The conversation ended with a brief mention of the Open Space and Recreation Plan, which is currently in progress with Davis being prioritized over Broadacre for future development.

The group discussed the prioritization of park development projects, with Davis being identified as a higher priority than Broadacres. Victor explained that design costs for the projects were estimated at \$1.7 million for Davis and \$3.2 million for Broadacres, with the funds needed for design work rather than construction. The team emphasized that these were design proposals, not final commitments, and Victor confirmed that if drainage issues were discovered during design, the project would stop before construction. The group also discussed the timing of Community Preservation Committee deadlines, with Mara raising concern about the deadlines. Specifically, she feels that a September deadline is too early and that the deadline should revert back to its prior October date, giving user groups more time to submit their applications.

The Park and Recreation Commission discussed several key topics, including the use of Parkinson's Field. They also addressed the solar project at Haskell, with Granger expressing concerns about the lack of renderings and Bobby questioning the town's ability to build on Commission land without approval. In regard to the Haskell (Smile) playground, Victor indicated that he is continuing to work on the design for the playground and he requested that discussion of this proposal be deferred to March. He noted that he would be unable to attend the February meeting. The Commission indicated that this would be acceptable, and the Chair stated that a Doodle poll would be circulated to identify available dates. The Commission on Disability will also be invited to participate in the March discussion. For the March meeting, Victor will present the next iteration of the playground design, incorporating feedback received at the December meeting and from the Commission on Disability. The Commission also agreed to follow up on questions about field usage and programming, with Mara planning to work with Amy to gather more information before the February meeting.

Liaison Updates

The team discussed the timeline for building requests to CPC, with Laurie emphasizing the need to prioritize projects and ensure designs aren't shelved. They addressed concerns about the Feeley field infrastructure upgrades. Bobby suggested adding a column to indicate previously funded projects by CPC. The group also discussed feedback from a recent CPC meeting, where Granger represented their interests. Laurie and Granger shared their impressions of the meeting, highlighting concerns about

drainage issues at Davis and the need for a baseball field at Broadacres. They agreed to reiterate these points in the upcoming PRC meeting and consider moving a baseball field from Haskell to Broadacres.

Next meeting: February 9, 2026.

Meeting adjourned 9:50pm.