

**PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
TOWN OF NEEDHAM, MASSACHUSETTS**

**Minutes of Meeting  
February 28, 2022**

- PRESENT:** Cynthia Chaston, Christopher Gerstel, Michelle Geddes, Dina Hannigan
- ABSENT:** Bruce Williams
- STAFF:** Stacey Mulroy, Fabien Desrouleaux, Kristen Wright
- GUESTS:** Paul Pasquarosa, Steve Deroian, Andrew Baker, Suzanne Baker, Steve Ferrera, Henry Ching, Cass Chroust, Lee Koska, Robert Lewis, Edward Olsen

Ms. Chaston completed a roll call for all members of the Committee and members of staff and the results of the roll call are noted above. Ms. Chaston called the hybrid meeting to order at 7:02. Ms. Chaston reviewed the rules of the meeting that was being conducted remotely and online in line with Governor Baker’s order regarding Public Meetings. Ms. Chaston covered meeting ground rules for the meeting.

**1. Open Forum – Public Comment**

Resident came and spoke to the Department staff and Commission about the location of the pickleball lines that will be installed on Mills Field Tennis Courts once the weather permits.

**3. Claxton Field Update**

Ms. Chaston introduced the project and provided an update on the site conditions that were found during the design process. Ms. Chaston shared that the goal of the Park and Recreation Commission and the Town staff remains the same and that we are investigating options to move forward on creating a premier field for softball within the Town of Needham.

Ms. Chaston shared that the Claxton field will have maintenance performed to be used for this Spring including topical treatments and a new fence. Ms. Chaston shared that the testing will continue but footings for lighting, which is a main part of the original scope of design, cannot occur at the Claxton site. Ms. Chaston state that they will continue to find ways to improve lightening but in the meantime they will look at other avenues to create a premier softball field.

Mr. Gerstel stated that a lot of work has been done between each Commission meeting and is encouraged by the user groups that are here tonight as well as the Superintendent of Parks and Forestry and the design firm of Weston and Sampson and looks forward to have a clear path to move forward by the end of this meeting.

Ms. Mulroy added that while this initial project we began is not what we wanted, the Park and Recreation team is committed to getting a great field for softball within the borders of Needham.

Ms. Chaston stated that the Commission and Department share the disappointment of this news.

Mr. Olsen shared that the Town is investigating parallel tracks to both improve conditions at Claxton as well as use design funds for improvements at McLeod to create a softball field at DeFazio. Mr. Olsen stated that there is continued safety at Claxton field for continued use.

Mr. Baker state that he is disappointed in the outcome of the project to this point and is ready to move forward. Mr. Baker further stated that it does not make any sense to continue to spend any money on improvements at Claxton.

Ms. Chaston stated that Claxton will be

Mr. Ferrera shared his disappointment that a sport that is only for the girls does not have a premier space to play.

Mr. Deroian reviewed the plan that was outlined in September 2021 and implored the Commission to find a way to get the project back on track for the FY23 season.

Mr. Deroian asked about moving the soil. Mr. Chroust stated that the soil will need to be removed from the site and it cannot be moved elsewhere on site to mitigate it. Mr. Koska stated that when the borings were completed that there was a minimum of 12" of good topsoil but much further than that it was a mixture of materials from the previous life of the field as a burn site. Mr. Koska stated that that type of material would need to be trucked off site and would require a DEP permit among other things. Mr. Koska stated that it cannot be transferred to the Transfer Station as it is a closed site. Mr. Baker asked if this was a known issue, why did this project move forward at all. Mr. Olsen stated that this is what the design portion of this and any project that the Town moves forward with is for, along with the topical design of features. Mr. Koska stated that when the site was capped originally it was the 1950s when regulations were different than they are today. Mr. Koska stated that due to the record keeping of the time there was no way to know the condition of the site without the design testing. Ms. Chaston stated that this outcoming was not anticipated. Ms. Chaston stated that during the design and construction of the DeFazio complex that softball was not advocated for and in hindsight it should have been.

Mr. Gerstel asked Mr. Olsen to discuss what has been down to prepare Claxton for the 2022 season. Mr. Olsen stated that they have been performing betterments inclusive of laser grading the fields and brining in new soils. Mr. Olsen stated that there is also a new fence and will working on moisture management and is committed to making it the best field possible. Mr. Gerstel stated that there will also be inground bases.

The group discussed the scoreboard and a storage unit. Ms. Mulroy stated that there will be a storage unit on site.

Mr. Deroian asked what can be done to get the project at McLeod completed by FY24. Ms. Chaston stated that reaching out to the Select Board is always an option.

Mr. Olsen discussed the next steps for the McLeod project including discussion with the Select Board and input the design. Ms. Mulroy stated that they will be creating a timeline for both projects. Mr. Deroian asked about setting up a meeting with Town Management to ensure that the project continues to move forward. Ms. Chaston stated that the support is welcome as the Commission has many other priorities that it has to remain focused on as well scares resources within both the Park and Recreation and Parks & Forestry departments that have smaller staffing levels.

Ms. Hannigan stated that advocating for sports, especially female based sports is something that the Commission is behind and continuing to advocate for them is important as we continue to move forward.

Mr. Ferrera asked what else can be done at Claxton in the meantime. Ms. Mulroy stated that additional testing will be completed, look at concrete slabs for tents, pathways to bathrooms, and the seating.

Ms. Chaston thanked everyone for their input including Weston & Sampson, Mr. Olsen, and the user groups.

**2. Chair's Update**

No updates presented

**4. Director's Report**

Ms. Mulroy reviewed the Director's Report.

The Commission discussed the storage units at DeFazio and the next steps. Ms. Geddes asked to discuss the parking layout and determine if the barriers are working the way they were intended.

**5A. Fees**

The Commission reviewed the fees.

**Ms. Hannigan made a motion to approve the fees as presented. Mr. Gerstel seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously 4-0.**

**5B. Capital Projects**

The Commission reviewed the Capital Projects and the Asset Planning document. Ms. Mulroy stated that a further conversation is required to review them.

**5C. CPC**

Mr. Gerstel provided an updated on the remaining CPC projects. Mr. Gerstel stated that the CPC is asking for a list of Park and Recreation's priority list.

**5D. Playgrounds & Facilities**

No additional updates.

**5E. Scholarships**

Moved to the next meeting.

**5F. Storage Containers**

Discussed earlier in the meeting.

**6A. Special Event Approvals**

Needham Baseball and Softball Opening Day Ceremony

The Commission discussed allowing the track club use the parking lot and track for their weekly permit.

**Ms. Hannigan made a motion to approve the Needham Baseball and Softball Opening Day event be held by Needham Baseball and Softball with the understanding that all normal user groups of the facility can hold their morning practices at DeFazio on Sunday May 1, 2022 from 8:00am – 4:00pm. Ms. Chaston seconded the motion and it passed 3-0-1.**

Relay for Life – American Cancer Society

**Mr. Gerstel made a motion to approve the Relay for Life event be held by American Cancer Society on Saturday, May 21<sup>st</sup> and Sunday, May 22<sup>nd</sup> from 8:00am on 5/21 to 11:00am 5/22. Ms. Hannigan seconded the motion and it passed 4-0.**

4<sup>th</sup> of July Event – Needham Exchange Club

**Ms. Hannigan made a motion to approve the 4<sup>th</sup> of July event be held by Needham Exchange Club. Ms. Geddes seconded the motion and it passed 3-0-1.**

Super East Baseball HS Baseball Tournament

**Mr. Gerstel made a motion to deny the HS Baseball Tournament be held by Super East Baseball. Ms. Hannigan seconded the motion and it passed 4-0.**

Jog Your Memory 5K

**Mr. Gerstel made a motion to approve the 5K be held by Jog Your Memory. Ms. Hannigan seconded the motion and it passed 4-0.**

#### **5B. Meeting Minutes**

January 24, 2022

**Mr. Gerstel made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from January 24, 2022. Ms. Geddes seconded the motion and it passed 3-0-1.**

February 14, 2022

**Ms. Hannigan made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from February 14, 2022. Mr. Gerstel seconded the motion and it passed 3-0-1.**

#### **6. Topics for Future Meetings**

**3/14**

- DeFazio Parking
- Mark Miskin discussion
- Scholarships

**3/28**

- Meeting with the Director of DPW Carys Lustig to discuss priorities
- Review the Playground priorities

#### **7. Issues Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair within 48 Hours**

- An update was provided regarding the bird feeder at Town Hall.
- Ms. Chaston congratulated Commissioner Hannigan on the great news coverage she has been receiving for her great efforts with a residential family.
- Mr. Desrouleaux discussed the Park and Recreation Commissions appointee for the Trails Committee.

**8. Next Meetings**

The Commission reviewed the next meeting dates.

**9. Adjournment of Business Meeting**

**Mr. Gerstel moved to adjourn the February 28, 2022, Park and Recreation Commission meeting at 9:10pm. Ms. Geddes seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at 9:10pm.**

Respectfully submitted,

Kristen Wright  
Administrative Specialist