

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

**Minutes of Meeting  
June 22, 2020**

**PRESENT:** Christopher J. Gerstel, Cynthia J. Chaston, Michelle S. Geddes, Bruce R. Williams  
Stacey Mulroy, Angela O'Connor, Kristen Wright

**ABSENT:** Matthew M. Toolan

**GUESTS:** Chris Burnham, Kim Parsons, Kirsten Allen, Sam, Margaret Jackson

Mr. Gerstel called the meeting to order at 7:09 PM remotely using Zoom.

Mr. Gerstel read a statement regarding public meeting process due to COVID-19.

**1. Open Forum – Public Comment**

None presented

**2. Director's Report**

Ms. Mulroy reviewed the items outlined in the Director's Report (*Attachment A*).

Mr. Gerstel asked if there was any response from the RTS regarding the Big Belly trash receptacles at the high school. Ms. Mulroy stated that she would reach out the RTS, but the main complaint is that people are placing the trash next to the receptacle and not in it or taking it with them. Ms. Mulroy noted that with the increase in use due to outdoor dining that the RTS is looking at changing their schedule but currently does not have the staffing to increase service.

Mr. Gerstel asked if our Playground Maintenance staff

**3. Program Report**

Ms. O'Connor reviewed the items outlined on the Program Report (*Attachment B*).

Ms. Mulroy stated that the intention of the drive-ins originally was to have a June drive-in but with the amount of guidance that has come out in the past few days, the focus of the department is on how to implement these to both summer programs and the opening of the Pools. Mr. Toolan stated that he would like to see this roll into the fall instead of being a standalone event. Ms. Wright stated that it is not a halted effort but just a slowed effort and it provides an opportunity to see how it works for the community and move forward from there. Mr. Gerstel asked the location of this drive-in. Ms. O'Connor stated that DeFazio would be the location we would be looking to host it.

**4A. Pool**

Ms. Mulroy discussed the new guidance that has been released by the stated regarding programming, public pools, and outdoor playgrounds and that with the released guidance confirmed that there are options. Ms. Mulroy reviewed options with the Commission including the logistics of lap swimming. Ms. O'Connor discussed the logistics of family swim. Ms. Mulroy discussed the number of spaces we can offer and expressed the need to ensure we had equitable opportunities for all members of the community to attend the pool. Mr. Toolan discussed the number of opportunities and the number of families that could attend the pool in a 4-week season under this model. Ms. Wright provided background on how many memberships were sold for the 2018/2019 season and how many were currently sold for the 2020/2021 season and expressed that if sales were to come to an end, there may be a larger increase in memberships.

Ms. Chaston asked several questions (1) if we reduced the number of people allowed in a family slot to 4 instead of 6, would more opening become an option (2) regarding the 45-minute time frame and if reducing it would be an option as well as if 15 minutes was required to clean between lap swimmers (3) if both pools would be utilized during the lap swim times (4) how long would be allocated to cleaning between family swim times (5) for more clarity on the 20% reserved for scholarship or families that living in housing. Ms. Mulroy stated that 6 member families versus 4 member families was to ensure there was enough space to accommodate families and not create multiple sized spaces that could entice families of 5 to try and register for spaces created for families of 4. Ms. Mulroy stated that limiting the swim time to 30 minutes would be difficult for typically lap swimmers. Ms. Chaston stated that it could potentially allow for more swim times if it was reduced. Ms. O'Connor stated that it could also be true that once the staff becomes accustomed to the cleaning procedures there could potentially be more time gained in that area as well. Ms. Mulroy stated that it will be both the staff and the community will have to become familiar with the new processes and this may take more time, especially in the beginning, to implement effectively. Ms. O'Connor stated that the 20% of space would be blocked off during registration and held for those families that have do not have easy access to register online. Mr. Gerstel asked if there would be a time that they would be opened to the general public.

Mr. Toolan asked if we will be using both pools. Ms. Mulroy stated we would be using both pools for lap swimming, and family swimming. Ms. O'Connor stated that the depth would be shown during registration. Ms. Mulroy added that the lap lanes would be designated as well. Mr. Toolan stated that we could also consider offering dryland workouts to give master swimmers more of a complete workout and agreed that anything under an hour would be difficult for those swimmers looking to get a workout in.

Ms. Geddes asked about the entry and exit points of the pools. Ms. O'Connor stated that outside the pool there is a one-way trail. Ms. Geddes shared that a one way path may be problematic to families of four to bring their entire family around the entire pool to use the restroom. Ms. O'Connor stated that this is a part of the guidelines that are required for us to open with Board of Health approval. Ms. Geddes stated that during family swim the lap lanes would be out of the pools and they would not be used as laps. Ms. O'Connor confirmed that the lap lanes would be removed during family swim. Ms. Geddes asked if the pools could potentially open sooner. Ms. Mulroy stated that the opening procedures will take at least 3 weeks for both Weston & Sampson

and the pool staff to complete all tasks in addition to the hiring process and training. Mr. Williams asked when the closing date would be. Ms. Mulroy stated that during a non-COVID season we start losing staff around the middle of July. Mr. Williams questioned the amount of money and effort to open the pools for just a 3- or 4-week season. Mr. Gerstel stated that it may not make sense fiscally but for the benefit of the community it is worth it. Ms. O'Connor stated that the Pools have be open and run for maintenance purposes regardless if we opened to the public.

Ms. Gerstel asked if there would be a diving board. Ms. O'Connor stated that it would not be. Mr. Gerstel asked if the water features would be up. Ms. O'Connor stated that they will be install but it is unsure if they will be turned on. Mr. Gerstel asked about the capabilities of our registration system. Ms. Wright stated that it will come down to the decisions that are made and the restrictions that will be in place, however the current system we use should be able to accommodate the functions we need to open this summer. Mr. Gerstel asked the 6-week lead time and how much more time is needed than a typical summer. Ms. O'Connor stated that typically 1-2 weeks of training is necessary. Ms. Mulroy stated that because we must limit group sizes during the trainings, more time will be needed to accommodate the training as well. Ms. Mulroy and Ms. O'Connor discussed the logistics of training and all the opening tasks. Ms. Chaston asked if we have an executed contract with Weston & Sampson. Ms. Wright discussed where the contract was in the process. Ms. Chaston and other members of the commission expressed the desire to help get this and other things fast tracked to get the pool opened sooner. Ms. O'Connor stated that it is not only the Pool Start up contract but also the Pool Chemicals contract that need to be executed. Ms. Wright stated that the contracts are will the vendors and because they were issued via docusign, the hope is the process could be completed at the same time as the Pool Start Up contact which was completed with hard copies. Mr. Williams asked when the pools open in a typical year and Mr. Gerstel stated that we aim annually to open on Memorial Day. Ms. O'Connor stated that the start-up usually would be around May 1 and this year it was originally slated for April 27. Ms. Wright stated we were about 5-6 weeks delayed overall. Mr. Toolan stated that this year we were in a bit of a holding pattern waiting for guidance from the state.

Mr. Gerstel asked if we were still under a hiring freeze and Ms. Mulroy stated that we were not. Mr. Gerstel asked how many of the guards would be returning. Ms. O'Connor said we had most of our guard staff and a strong supervisory team.

Mr. Gerstel asked the commission to provide their opinion on which option they would like to move forward with. Ms. Chaston stated she would like to move forward with option #3. Mr. Toolan would like to move forward with option #3. Ms. Geddes stated she would like to move forward with option #3. Mr. Williams stated that he would like to move forward with option #3. Mr. Gerstel agreed that he would like to move forward with option #3. Ms. Mulroy stated that that we will move forward but would like keep in mind that the lifeguards will have to increase and discussed the level of staffing. Ms. Mulroy stated that mandatory face coverings add another level of training. Lastly Ms. Mulroy stated that we are prepared to implement a plan, but we need to be a unified front that if we need to pull back because of restrictions or the state of COVID, we need to do it as early as possible. Mr. Toolan stated he can understand but more communication will be needed from the staff moving forward.

#### **4B. Programs**

Ms. Mulroy discussed the program options. Ms. Geddes asked if the groups were limited to 1 group per location. Ms. Mulroy discussed the requirements for indoor space. Mr. Gerstel asked about how far from the shelter the groups could be. Ms. Mulroy stated that we would have to be close enough to walk which limits us to the schools and outside fields at the school. Mr. Toolan stated that we should move forward with the programs as well based on community need. Ms. Chaston stated that we need to move forward and asked that we go with the option that serves the most people. Ms. Geddes asked if we can do have both physical sessions and virtual session. Ms. O'Connor stated that we could do both depending on how which physical option we move forward with because of the staffing restriction. Mr. Williams stated that the more kids that can be served the better. Ms. Mulroy stated that like the pools, protocols are great on paper but we will also be creating many contingency plans.

#### **4C. Project Updates**

None presented

#### **4D. Events**

Presented earlier.

#### **4E. Walker Pond**

Ms. Mulroy gave a brief update after a meeting with one of the members of Walker Pond Association and the new Assistant Town Manager Katie King. The member of the Walker Pond Association brought both her and Ms. King up to speed on the project and discussion of future steps.

Mr. Gerstel stated that we agreed that we would set up a focus group for this project. Mr. Gerstel stated that we should move forward with setting up the working group and let them know that its will be slowed down due to the current state. Ms. Chaston stated that we committed a working group and get it on the capital plan.

#### **4F. Staffing**

Discussed earlier. Ms. Chaston asked about getting staff on board. Ms. Wright stated that there is a meeting set up with the HR Director, Director of Accounting and our Director Stacey to discuss the process.

#### **4G. Town Meeting**

Mr. Gerstel stated that Town Meeting went well. Ms. Wright stated that the dedication to Commissioner DiCicco was very nice and thanked Mr. Gerstel for asking two four legged friends to be removed from Memorial during Town Meeting.

#### **4H. Board Members**

Mr. Gerstel congratulated Mr. Williams on being elected to the Commission and reminded him and Mr. Toolan to get sworn in at the Town Clerks office.

#### **4I. For-Profit Organizations & Field Usage**

Mr. Gerstel stated that we need to remind people at our fields. Ms. Geddes asked if we could communicate something more broadly. Ms. Mulroy stated that we are reaching out to individuals and that have been seen. Mr. Toolan would like to also rethink some of these field uses.

#### **5A. Meeting Minutes**

**Ms. Chaston moved to approve the minutes from the March 30, 2020 meeting. Ms. Geddes seconded the motion and they were approved 3-0-2.**

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

Ms. Mulroy stated that she would like to discuss Playground openings.

#### **7. Topics for Future Agendas**

Ms. Mulroy asked that playground re-openings be a future topic. Mr. Gerstel stated that he would like to put the next meeting dates on the calendar of June 22, July 13, July 27, August 10 and August 24. Mr. Gerstel asked if we should do the re-organization meeting on June 22 or July 13 and concluded that it will take place on July 13.

Ms. Chaston thanked Mr. Toolan for staying on for one last year to complete Mr. DiCicco's term.

#### **8. Adjournment of Business Meeting**

**Ms. Chaston moved to adjourn the June 9, 2020 Park and Recreation Commission meeting at 9:40pm. Ms. Geddes seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at 9:40pm.**