

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

**Minutes of Meeting
July 13, 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: Kim Parsons, Rick Merson

Mr. Gerstel called the meeting to order at 7:02 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 report with the Commission.

Mr. Gerstel thanked the staff for getting the pool in shape so quickly and commended the staff for the new field scheduling process. Mr. Gerstel stated he likes the digital system and the simplicity of the new form.

Ms. Chaston echoed what Mr. Gerstel stated and asked the staff to share the thanks of the commission with the rest of the staff. Ms. Chaston asked for the status for Greene's Field playground. Ms. Wright shared that Greene's needs more fibers to open safely and it is on the priority list. Ms. Mulroy stated that the playgrounds that we are hosting programs at were prioritized to be completed first.

Ms. Geddes stated that she had also been asked about Greene's Field playground. Ms. Geddes asked what the maximum number of participants we can have at Summer Recess. Ms. Mulroy stated that we can have up to 90 participants a week.

Mr. Williams stated that he got a chance to visit some of the fields and saw many parents and small children playing and stated that the playgrounds look to be a work in progress still.

3A. Pool Membership Updates

Ms. Mulroy stated that membership sales ended on Friday the 10th and there have been some last-minute questions from residents that had trouble registering. Ms. Mulroy stated that we are working on getting the timeslots online by the end of the week, which is earlier than we originally anticipated but will give the staff time to work through any issues that come up during the first few days. Ms. Mulroy stated that there will be a digital sign board at the top of the hill that will

show the day the pool will open, the website to sign up for timeslots, and a reminder that we are residents only this year and the same messages will be shared on the RTS digital board.

Ms. Geddes asked if there was an increase in refunds. Ms. Parsons updated the Commission with feedback regarding refunds and other feedback on the reservation system. Ms. Mulroy shared that there have been many scholarship requests coming in. Ms. Wright stated that there are about 200 new memberships since the last meeting and about half of those could be identified to families that use the fee assistance program. Ms. Mulroy stated that there is some frustration with the fact that COVID has reduced what they have access too. Ms. Wright stated that most of the frustration stems from the fact that the families that utilize our fee assistance program tend to be some of the heaviest users of the Pools and our programming but due to the limited programs and the reservation system in place, it will limit the time they can have.

Ms. Chaston asked for a synopsis of the fee assistance program for the benefit of Commission Williams. Ms. Wright provided an overview of who is eligible for the program and what the members of the program receive in terms of membership and programming. Mr. Williams stated that there are families in Needham are in need programs of this nature.

3B. Summer Recess Registration Number

Discussed earlier in the meeting during the Director's Report.

3C. Field Permitting Process

Mr. Gerstel thanked the staff again for beginning the process and asked for any feedback. Ms. Mulroy stated that there has not been a lot of feedback. Ms. Mulroy stated that new to this year is COVID guidelines and there is some disconnect between what was submitted and what is begin done in practice so there is communication with field users to ensure compliance.

4A. For-Profit Organizations & Field Usage

Ms. Mulroy stated that some requests have come in and we are continuing to not permit to for-profits. Ms. Mulroy stated that if the state must roll back on some guidance then the request may increase.

Mr. Williams asked what the benefit to Needham is to let for-profits or non-residents permit the fields. Ms. Mulroy stated that in other towns the fees for non-residents or for-profits, but the downside is that the fields do not get as much resting time which causes more damage weekly. Mr. Gerstel stated that generally there is not any additional space after Needham Athletics and the non-profit user groups have been permitted.

4B. Boat Launch

Ms. Mulroy stated that the consultant, Tighe & Bond, and there has been an initial virtual meeting to discuss the project.

4C. Walker Pond

Ms. Mulroy stated that Town Engineer Anthony DelGazio will be providing an updated and the meeting will be recorded. Mr. Gerstel asked when a meeting will be scheduled. Ms. Mulroy stated she hoped to have a meeting set up by the end of the week.

4D. Playgrounds

Ms. Mulroy stated that we are still in process of installing more safety fibers and checking all the chains and bolts.

Mr. Gerstel asked about the playground projects that were looked at earlier in the year. Ms. Mulroy stated that after COVID looking at playgrounds to identify the needs.

4E. Events

Ms. Mulroy stated that the drive-in movie will be this coming Saturday and coordinating email will be sent out this week. A poll will go out this week to choose the movie.

Ms. Chaston moved that the Park and Recreation staff set the fee to cover the cost of the Drive-in Event. Ms. Geddes seconded the motion.

Ms. Chaston asked if there was any idea of the fee. Ms. Mulroy stated that other towns have ranged from \$20 to \$40 and it comes down to how many cars can fit. Ms. Geddes asked if the barriers would be used to identify where people can park. Ms. Mulroy will be asking DPW for input on how to arrange the parking lot. Mr. Gerstel asked for feedback from the Director of DPW Rick Merson. Mr. Merson shared feedback about the set up including room for ADA requirements. Mr. Gerstel asked who would be monitoring the parking lot. Ms. Wright stated that the company would handle the equipment, but P&R and other Town staff will handle parking and check in. Ms. Geddes asked if we would do it again. Ms. Mulroy stated that if it goes well, we can do one a month as weather permits.

The motion passed unanimously, 4 –0.

4F. Projects

Ms. Mulroy provided an update regarding Chambers Cove from the Rosemary Sediment Project.

5A. Field Permit Process

Mulroy asked that instead of holding a vote on field permitting that the Commission allow the staff to approve permit if it is a standard permit. Ms. Mulroy further stated that anything that is not regular would still come before the Commission.

Ms. Chaston asked if this would be just a limited amount of time. Ms. Mulroy stated that she would suggest for Summer and the beginning of fall but it would ultimately be up to the Commission.

Ms. Geddes asked if this was everything outside of special permits. Ms. Mulroy stated that this would just be for standing weekly practices for our user groups.

Mr. Williams stated that this sounds like a great idea but anything special should be reviewed.

Mr. Gerstel asked if the fields would be reserved for passive recreation Monday – Friday 7:30am – 4:30pm and allowing permitting after that. Ms. Mulroy stated that right now that is the schedule and would continue to allow for Eddie’s team to complete the maintenance they need to perform throughout the day. Ms. Mulroy stated that she can keep the Commission informed of the permits that have been approved.

Mr. Gerstel moves to allow the Park and Recreation staff to approve regular field use permits with any Special Events requiring further approval from the Commission. Ms. Chaston seconded the motion.

Ms. Chaston asked to amend the motion to include a timeline for this process.

Mr. Gerstel amended his motion to allow the Park and Recreation staff to approve regular field use permits with any Special Event requiring further approval from the Commission for the summer and early fall of 2020. Ms. Chaston seconded the amended motion and it passed unanimously, 4 –0.

5B. Virtual Program Pricing

Ms. Mulroy discussed offering a virtual program 1-hour a day, 5 days a week. The program would be offered by Park and Recreation staff and would include virtual escape rooms, arts & crafts, and online games.

Ms. Geddes asked about supplies for virtual programming. Ms. O’Connor stated that the participants would provide some and the department would provide other supplies.

Mr. Gerstel asked if there was a proposed fee for this program. Ms. Mulroy stated that the proposed fee would be \$75. Ms. Geddes asked if that would be depended on the amount of supplies the department would provide.

Ms. Chaston stated that \$75 seems expensive. Ms. Mulroy stated it is half the fee of our in-person program but the department is open to suggestions.

Ms. Geddes stated that it would be based on the amount of interaction and the amount of supplies that the participants would have to provide themselves.

Ms. Chaston stated that she would like to ensure that the cost of the program is covered. Ms. Geddes suggested a varying price dependent on the type of programming.

Ms. Chaston moved to recommend that the virtual programming pricing consistent with the current policy to breakeven and be set the Park and Recreation staff. Mr. Gerstel seconded the motion and it passed unanimously, 4 –0.

5C. Meeting Minutes

Ms. Geddes made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 27, 2020 meeting. Ms. Chaston seconded the motion and it passed, 3 – 0 – 1.

5D. Reorganization of Commission

Mr. Gerstel made a motion to nominate Ms. Chaston to serve as Chairman of the Park and Recreation Commission. Mr. Williams seconded the motion.

Ms. Chaston wanted to thank Mr. Gerstel for serving as Chairman for two full years and paid appreciation to his commitment to visiting the fields, visiting the staff, and visiting the Pool throughout both years that he served.

The motion passed unanimously, 4 -0 and Ms. Chaston was elected as the new Chairman of Park and Recreation.

Ms. Geddes made a motion to nominate Mr. Gerstel to serve as Vice-Chairman of the Park and Recreation Commission. Ms. Chaston seconded the motion and it passed unanimously, 4 – 0. Mr. Gerstel was elected as the new Vice-Chairman of Park and Recreation.

Ms. Chaston mad a motion to nominate Ms. Wright to serve as the Recording Secretary of the Park and Recreation Commission. Mr. William seconded the motion and it passed unanimously, 4 – 0. Ms. Wright was elected as the new Recording Secretary of Park and Recreation.

6. Issues Not Reasonable Anticipated by Chair within 48 hours

None presented.

7. Topics for Future Agendas

Mr. Gerstel stated that Mr. Toolan would like to discuss the upcoming Phase 3 guidelines especially regarding youth sports.

8. Adjournment of Business Meeting

Ms. Chaston moved to adjourn the July 13, 2020 Park and Recreation Commission meeting at 8:21pm. Ms. Geddes seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at 8:21pm.