

Park and Recreation Commission

Minutes of the Meeting

November 10, 2021

Meeting called to order: 7:34pm.

Commissioners in Attendance: George Caye, Genevieve Coursey, Ritu Goel, Michael Kelly, Jamie Hennessey, Toby Lewis, Renee Powell, Dan Rezende, and John Pelkey

Also in Attendance: Molly Keays, John Caldwell, and Kerry Macchi

Approval of Minutes: Motion made by George Caye and seconded by Renee Powell to approve the October 13th minutes. Passed unanimously.

Public Input: None present

Report of Council Liaison: None due to the absence of the liaison.

Report of the B of E Liaison: None due to the absence of the liaison.

OSTF: George Caye reported that there was no meeting this month.

Report of Parks and Rec. Director: Molly Keays, Director of Parks and Recreation, provided updates on the following:

- Capital Projects update: We need more funding to finish out the Dek Hockey/Pickleball courts, so we will be supplementing from the next years Capital Projects funds. We also need to unexpectedly update the lighting at Rye Street, because a significant cost each summer has been replacing the bulbs. The fixtures are over 10 years old and have become unreliable and a safety hazard when lights are out.
- Molly provided a program update on the things happening in the department. Our first ever Winter Farmers Market will begin on Saturday 11/13/21 and run for four Saturdays before the holiday season. Our Pumpkin Roll and Halloween Hullabaloo events were a great success and fun for many.

John Caldwell, Superintendent of Parks, provided updates on the following:

- We have a few staff members leave and have recently filled the positions. Two members from street services have transferred over to Parks and we have one new hire.
- The crew recently completed more work at Pepin field, adding drainage all around the perimeter. Doing the work in-house saved the department over \$100,000.
- The crew spread five tons of seed on various fields and open spaces this fall. Overseeding helps keeps the weeds down and avoid the use of extra pesticides.
- The new parking lot for Wapping Park on Ellington Road will be paved around December 1st.
- With the exception of 3 crew members, the rest are working on leaf cleanup.
- The studies that were done on VMP and the Wapping Tennis courts are complete, and we should be receiving reports on them soon.
- A few parks members repainted the lines in the gym in Wapping in another cost saving measure. It now will be able to be used for basketball this season.

Other Business: After recent discussions with the Board of Education, Molly was given an approximate timeline to vacate the Parks and Recreation Department from Wapping, which would be in 2023. The reason for this is because they will be needing more space to accommodate the high schoolers and their programming, due to the increased student enrollment and the population in general. Molly does not have a lot of information on it at this point, but will be meeting with the Board of Education next week. Molly and John have met with the Town Manager and he is aware of the situation, as well as some members of the council, and they have started discussing facility needs. They would like to look at what facilities they could potentially utilize within the town already, or the potential of constructing a new facility. Molly is really hoping, with the support of the commission, that she can go to the council and request a building committee be established for Parks and Recreation to determine the needs for the future. John Pelkey asked about how big of a facility we would like to build if possible, and Molly shared that they would shoot for somewhere between 50,000-70,000 square feet on 3-4 acres to accommodate our current programming and some additional. Molly also shared that it was the hope to add an indoor pool, which has been talked about for many years, which would be a great benefit to the town as well. Molly would love for the facility to support the community as a whole, while making the facility multi-generational. John is hoping that we can really strive for a permanent home for Parks and

Recreation, so we don't run into the same situation in a few years if we find a space to utilize temporarily. If the building committee is established, and they are behind the construction of a new facility, it would be a project that would be going to referendum. Many of the commissioners at this point are interested in being involved in the committee for the Parks and Recreation facility. John also wanted to share that if anyone was wondering why the high school would need more space before the middle school, it is because the Preschool Outreach Program (POP) will eventually be moved to the newly built Pleasant Valley School, which would free up a portion of the TE building. Some of the commissioners discussed the need and importance on having public input on the topic, and also some kind of pamphlet to educate the town of what the plan is for this facility.

SWW&WW: Nothing to report.

Meeting adjourned at 8:10pm – motion made by George Caye and seconded by Mike Kelly- passed unanimously.

Next Meeting: December 8, 2021

Respectfully Submitted – Kerry Macchi, Administrative Secretary