

## **Park and Recreation Commission**

### **Minutes of the Meeting**

**February 7, 2024**

**Meeting called to order:** Chairperson Coursey called the meeting to order at 7:30 P.M.

**Commissioners in Attendance:** Jackie Balboni, George Caye, Genevieve Coursey, Michael Kelly, Mitchell Marks, Renee Powell, Miguel Proano, Toby Lewis

**Commissioners Absent:** Srinivasa Chalikonda, James Hennessey, William Nowak, Kristen Kozikowski, Braden Migneault

**Also in Attendance:** Molly Keays, Director of Parks and Recreation, and Jennie Tetreault

**Approval of Minutes:** Commissioner Kelly makes note of an error on minutes from January 3, 2024. The error is on page 3, in the first paragraph, under "Discussion Topics". It states that "Chairperson Nowak inquires about the need for a new chair of PARC...", instead it should read "Chairperson Kelly inquires about the need for a new chair for PARC..." A motion was then made by Commissioner Kelly to adjust the minutes dated January 3, 2024 and seconded by Commissioner Marks. Motion passed unanimously.

**Public Input:** No public input

**Report of Council Liaison:** Council Liaison Toby Lewis tells the commission that the Town Council approved the ADA monies for the Parks and Recreation Facilities.

**Report of the BOE Liaison:** Commissioner Marks reports that Dr. Carter presented the budget to the Board of Ed at the last regular meeting in January. Commissioner Marks says that the board of education subsequently supported Dr. Carter's proposed budget and they look forward to voting in favor of the budget on February 27, the next regularly scheduled meeting.

**Special Reports:** None

**Open Space Task Force:** Commissioner Caye reports no meeting this month.

#### **Report of Parks and Rec. Director:**

Director of Parks and Recreation, Molly Keays provides updates on winter programing.

- Adult Volleyball is still going strong with 300 active participants. Playoffs will be next month.
- Youth Basketball league began playing games this month. Games are every Saturday through March at the various town gyms. SWPRD's Mighty Mites program has expanded this year and coaches are meeting with rec supervisors this week to check in and work on lesson planning and ways to make Mighty Mites even more successful in the future.
- Creative Cardio, Kripalu Yoga, Jukido, Jujitsu, Self-defense are also still running successfully at our Recreation Department.
- Ski and Snowboard club. The program is an after-school opportunity that has 168 participants. SWPRD in collaboration with Mount Southington provide programs from varying levels of skiers/snowboarders. SWPRD is looking for ways to take on more kids in the future.
- 4<sup>th</sup> R continues to provide afterschool care while helping the kids get work done and/or expend some energy! This includes activities such as SPUD, Battleship, Defend your Castle, basketball, drawing and watercolors. 4<sup>th</sup> R also saw their first snow day of the year. We had 27 4<sup>th</sup> R participants join us for our Snow Day program at our recreation facility. There is a vacation day program coming up in February for anybody interested in registering. Director Keays notes that there really has not been much demand for the vacation days programs since COVID.

- SWPRD Preschool program is completely full for the C & D sessions.
- Dodgeball was back this year on January 19. There were a total of 81 parents and children that participated and 40 spectators.
- Parks and Recreation is hosting our first ever Family Game Night at our facility on Friday, February 19.

**Message from John Caldwell, Parks Superintendent** – Superintendent Caldwell is not present at this meeting. Director Keays gives an update on his behalf.

#### **Athletic fields and Grounds:**

- In late December, a dormant seeding of blue grass was put down at Rye Street Park. To enhance germination, the crews put down a “seed shield”. The purpose of the shield is to prevent the birds from eating the seed and mitigate the risk of seed washout.

#### **Parks and Open Space:**

- The winter months is time to focus on tree work in parks and open space. Given the rainy fall season we had, the crews were not able to complete the mowing of large open spaces. The recent cold spell provided a window for crews to complete the mowing.

#### **Current Projects:**

- Enhancements at the Town Garage are being made to help organize and preserve equipment. For this reason, the construction of a special backpack blower shelf was installed at the town garage.
- The boardwalk at the Major Michael Donnelly land preserve is being replaced this winter/spring. Over the course of the last 10 years the board walk has deteriorated. The crews will work to replace it, to keep the land preserve safe and accessible.
- New solar lights have been installed on Chief Ryan way. The installation was featured on the companies LinkedIn post.
- Zagorsky field will have their sign replaced. The sign will be displayed prominently on the backstop of the softball fields.
- The crew has installed wood rail fencing at the Farmers Market site. The purpose is to prevent unauthorized access by both vehicles and pedestrians on the private property.
- Director Keays applauds the Parks crew and the Public Works department for their tireless efforts to keep the roadways safe.
- Director Keays notes that a recreation supervisor has left SWPRD to pursue another opportunity and then acknowledges that the remaining recreation supervisors have stepped up to ensure the programs continue to run smoothly. Director Keays is hopeful that the vacant position will be filled by mid – March

#### **Discussion Topics:**

Director Keays and Chairperson Coursey met with the Public Building Commission to discuss 350 Foster Street and the challenges the building presents and what will be required to bring the building up to standard and ensure that SWPRD’s programs operate effectively. The PBC is using ADA money to have Colliers do a study to inquire as to the sustainability of the locations, and what the cost would be to bring the building to standard.

Director Keays shares that Capital Projects passed a proposed budget, which will go to the Town Manager, and then to Town Council for approval. Included in the budget is money for the proposed pavilion on the fairgrounds and a new pool cover for Veterans Memorial.

Chairperson Coursey discusses the Master Plan that was last edited in 2020. She asks commission members for their input on putting together a new Master Plan. Commissioner Kelly and Commissioner Caye mention that perhaps the best route would be addressing a little bit at every PARC meeting, as

opposed to putting together a subcommittee to handle the whole thing. It makes lighter work of a big project.

On the advice of Commissioner Kelly and Caye, Chairperson Coursey asks that the commissioners go through the first section of the current Master Plan and make notes to discuss at the next PARC meeting.

**Other Business:** Chairperson Coursey welcomes Jackie Balboni to the commission.

**Meeting adjourned** at 8:01 p.m. A motion made by Commissioner Kelly and seconded by Commissioner Marks. Motion passed unanimously.

**Next Meeting: March 6, 2024**

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennie Tetreault