

Recreation Advisory Board  
Tuesday, October 16, 2018  
Parks and Recreation Office  
Upstairs Meeting Room  
Final Minutes

1. Call to Order

Members present: Stephanie Papkonstantis, chair; Mike Wissler; Jen Harrington; Anne Torrez; Courtney Marshall; Brinn Sullivan; Dan Provost; Molly Cowan, Select Board rep; and Greg Bisson, David Tovey, and Melissa Roy of Parks & Rec.

Ms. Papkonstantis called the meeting to order at 6:59 PM.

2. Public Comment

There was no public comment at this meeting.

3. Approval of Minutes

**MOTION:** Ms. Sullivan moved to approve the minutes of August 7th without amendments. Mr. Wissler seconded. All were in favor.

4. Capital improvement Updates

Mr. Bisson said that Russ Dean will present the budget to the Budget Recommendation Committee on October 24th, and they have made some changes; projects have been downsized or put on the back burner. There is one article for \$250,000 for the design and engineering of the recreational park. Property and other funding are still in play.

The capital improvement funds have been downsized since the discussion at the Aug 7th Recreation Advisory Board meeting. There is an article to create a Parks Improvement Capital Reserve Fund, so that they can save up for projects and won't have to put each one on a warrant. Ms. Papkonstantis asked how each project would be approved in that case; Mr. Bisson responded that they would get Select Board approval. The fund would be for \$100,000, which does not cover a lot of projects. The Budget Committee is to debate it; if passed, the Budget Committee will shape where they do park improvements, whether it's Planet Playground or a lot of little items that need work.

Mr. Wissler asked where he could find the details of the budget proposal. Ms. Cowan said the information is online, or they could attend the open budget meeting on October 19th. Mr. Bisson said that at the first meeting on October 24th they will talk about the budget. Last year CIP was a second night because it was a large project, so he's not sure if they will bring up CIP on the 24th.

Mr. Bisson continued that he met with a budget subcommittee on Friday and presented a case for the Parks and Rec admin going full-time (currently 26 hrs), and adding two seasonal staff members. If approved, the admin will focus on senior programming, which the town is interested in developing. This presentation went very well, and Mr. Dean believes that the subcommittee looked favorably on the request. Mr. Bisson mentioned that Parks and Rec is

only 2.8% of overall town budget; if the changes are approved, that would go up to 2.9% of budget, so not a big piece overall.

Ms. Papkonstantis asked for clarification on the numbers. Mr. Bisson responded that their budget is \$545,000, plus \$250,000 for engineering, and \$100,000 CIP. The \$250,000 is just the plans, just enough to bid for construction. Ms. Papkonstantis asked if the development plan will allow them to design in phases. Mr. Bisson said that the engineer will break it down and put priorities on each piece to be economical. Ms. Papkonstantis thought that was a good idea, saying that the project as a whole would be amazing, but they stand a better chance doing it in phases.

#### 5. Budget Updates

Mr. Bisson said that he had addressed the budget in the previous section.

#### 6. Softball Renovations/Turf Drainage Review

Mr. Bisson said that two softball fields at the Rec park have been renovated since the last Board meeting. The company who did the work also maintains Fenway Park and PNC Park, so they did it right. There was a slight cost overrun, as they encountered several large boulders and had to pay for infield mix. It's now more of a multipurpose field, with a 65 ft arch for mens' softball, and the base paths are set for youth. The U14 softball team practices there. Ms. Papkonstantis commented that drainage had been an issue. Mr. Bisson said that it wasn't a drainage problem, it was a compaction problem; the fields hadn't been aerated since they were expanded eleven years ago. Now they've been aerated, had a sand topper added, and over-seeded. They'll be doing it again in the spring. EYSA paid for half of it (\$8000) for youth soccer.

Mr. Bisson is also meeting on Thursday with the Exeter Youth Softball Association, who will fund field renovations for all three fields for their youth tournaments in the summer. They will give \$56,000 for the first field, and almost the same amount for 2&3. Field 1 is more work; the lot needs to be dug out. They will stockpile the fill for future expansion.

#### 7. Senior Citizen Committee formation

Melissa Roy said that Parks and Rec has a goal of increasing adult/senior programming. She's been meeting with organizations with the intent of forming a group of citizens and organizations where everyone can compare offerings and find gaps in their programming. For seniors, there's no one place to go to learn about senior activities and services; the goal is for Rec to be that hub of information. She's talked to 277 Water Street, the Senior Center (which primarily offers Meals on Wheels), Sterling Hills, St. Vincent's, Exeter Hospital, the Public Library, and Exeter Adult Education, and they all had good feedback. She is planning to reach out to Riverwoods and Langdon Place, and asked for further suggestions. Ms. Marshall suggested the group "The Village" in the Mills. Ms. Sullivan explained that in the Village model, people pay to subscribe to support one another, so they can age in place better and longer. Ms. Marshall also suggested reaching out to older teachers at PEA.

Ms. Roy mentioned that the NH State Plan on Aging will be conducting a survey which could give them information about senior wants and needs. She also suggested hosting listening sessions where they invite seniors and ask what they want in Exeter. She mentioned

the upcoming “Prime Time” evening, where Parks and Rec are hosting a dinner for adults 50+ at Exeter Inn. 35 people have signed up. They could potentially gather feedback there.

Ms. Roy asked for suggestions on naming the council. Ms. Papkonstantis suggested “Active Seniors”. Ms. Roy said she has 13 people willing to be on a council.

Mr. Wissler asked how the Rec department reaches out to the whole senior community. Ms. Roy responded that there’s not a good mechanism now, only the website and a Constant Contact Email list. Maybe an active adult brochure would be helpful? Her plan is to have lots of meetings and build relationships. The subcommittee could potentially meet in November or December.

Ms. Papkonstantis suggested a seniors-only Christmas house tour; her neighbor runs these tours so she has a connection. Ms. Sullivan was concerned that this event always sells out, and said they might plan it for next year rather than this year. Ms. Roy will look into it. Ms. Roy also mentioned holiday house decorating. Last year, participants paid \$20 to register; this year, the idea is to register and have someone, possibly Santa, drive to the participant’s house, collecting canned goods for St. Vincent.

Mr. Bisson mentioned the push towards 501C3, which project he said was still stagnant. They need five people to be on a Friends board. Ms. Cowan suggested tapping the circles of influence of the Recreation Advisory Board and having them reconnect with people, even just as an exercise. Ms. Papkonstantis said she’d like that to be an agenda item for the next meeting, and asked Ms. Cowan to help them prepare. Ms. Sullivan suggested another agenda item should be how to accomplish a Friends group. Ms. Roy said this would help the senior program, which doesn’t have a budget. Mr. Bisson suggested that crowdfunding may be another avenue of fundraising; there is a special Parks and Rec crowdfunding site they could use. Ms. Papkonstantis said there’s a precedent for crowdfunding, since that was how Planet Playground was built.

#### 8. Program review and updates

Mr. Bisson said that soccer ends next week. They had the highest number of soccer registrations ever. They will be transitioning older players to EYSA in spring, there will be no gaps missed this year. Ms. Papkonstantis said that last year, they pulled the Rec team but it was too late for kids to try out for EYSA; the kids didn’t get to play this year and there were unhappy parents. Mr. Bisson said that one problem with EYSA last year was a miscommunication about them being full. There were two programs, an academy program and EYSA/travel program, and only one was full. The Academy program doesn’t compete, it’s skill-based. He said they should find out exactly what EYSA’s offering is.

Ms. Papkonstantis said that the 1st and 2nd graders this year are skilled and need a place to go. At EYSA, they get burned out. She asked for the creation of a survey to find out if there is enough interest to field Rec teams for older grades. Mr. Bisson said that over the summer, their intern set up surveys, and they can easily add that question. Ms. Papkonstantis suggested they send it in the next few weeks, while soccer is still on parents’ minds. She also proposed an email to coaches to tell people to look for it and fill it out. Mr. Wissler added that any survey should include prospective coaches, since a successful registration without enough coaches would be a problem.

Mr. Bisson asked if she would want to have a Rec program with only two teams. Ms Papkonstantis said that they made it work last year, but there should be more interest this year. Mr. Tovey asked if the numbers were small, should they play other towns? Ms. Papkonstantis liked the idea, saying that basketball does that and it's amazing.

Mr. Bisson said that flag football had the highest numbers ever this year. They added 8th graders, so it's now 6th through 8th grades. It will be even bigger next year. They will possibly add a HS level flag football program, but he's not sure what to do for referees. Ms. Harrington said that there were complaints that the flag football referees didn't know the rules of the game. Mr. Bisson said that they're all high school kids, and the coaches and parents have been rough on them.

Mr. Bisson said that basketball registrations are open. They close November 9 for 3rd through 8<sup>th</sup> graders, and on November 21st for younger kids. On November 10th there will be evaluations, but they are taking it out of the coaches' hands this year; Mr. Bisson, Mr. Tovey, and Ms. Roy will form the teams. New this year, there will be an in-house 3rd and 4th grade girls' league. Brochures are about to go out. Ms. Papkonstantis suggested the new girls' league have a separate promotion. Ms. Roy said that a Constant Contact email could be an option. Ms. Marshall said they should post around town, like at the Y or Me & Ollie's. Mr. Bisson also suggested the Exeter Baby Troop, which is a private Facebook page; Ms. Torrez agreed that that's a good place to get the word out.

Ms. Roy said that they moved the Halloween Trick or Treat from Friday to Sat Oct 27th to better serve working families and to alleviate the weekday gridlock of past years. The parade is at 10:30, and from 11:30 to 2:30 there will be trick or treating. There's also pumpkin carving for those that register, a DJ, and a costume contest for Pre-K through 8th grade, for which they need volunteer judges. Ms. Papkonstantis asked if the event was coming up too soon to add food trucks, and Mr. Bisson said he can call Lexie's. Mr. Provost said his high school kids were asking for volunteer opportunities, and will he send out an email.

#### 9. Powder Keg Review

Ms. Papkonstantis said that the Powder Keg Beer and Chili fest was awesome and had record attendance. She wants to talk to Chamber about allowing more volunteers next time, since they had to turn some away. Mr. Provost asked why they didn't use the whole Parkway for the event, since he felt it was too crowded. Mr. Bisson responded that if it extended too far, people may not walk there. Mr. Provost suggested they should at least spread out the beer vendors. Ms. Roy explained that they had to condense those tents because of mud, and Mr. Bisson said there may be a leak in the irrigation system there. Ms. Cowan mentioned that Don Clement said the event was rough on the grass. Mr. Bisson said it gets trampled every year, but the established grass will come back, and they'd already pledged to help reseed.

Ms. Roy said they raised about \$20,000, and the Chamber gets \$20,000 also. Mr. Bisson said they sold 3600 tickets; with vendors and volunteers, there were about 4000 attendees. Mr. Bisson said that at the next meeting they'll have a final total of how much was raised. Some costs went up, such as the tents, which were up \$3,000.

#### 10. Future Special Events

Ms. Papkonstantis asked for ideas for special events, such as a food truck event in spring, or a gourmet and wine event. Mr. Bisson suggested that for a food truck festival, they could partner with the Independence Museum to use the Tavern as a beer area. Ms. Papkonstantis said spring is a fun, family-friendly time for an event, it could be a “kickoff to summer.” There could be a game area for the kids.

Ms. Roy said that Ms. Sullivan had suggested taking on a middle school dance, since Exeter schools do not host them. Ms. Harrington said that the 7th grade is having a dance, but the High School doesn’t do any except for proms. Ms. Sullivan mentioned that in Portsmouth, Rec takes on the middle school dance responsibilities, and she felt that it would be well received if Rec hosted it in Exeter. Ms. Papkonstantis suggested Town Hall as a venue, and Mr. Bisson agreed that this was a good idea. Ms. Sullivan said that kids are looking for more social opportunities, and if they could get one group of kids going, all will follow. She said that the Exeter Sweetheart Dance is in February, so maybe March or April, a “Spring Fling”?

Mr. Provost said that there’s a new regime at SAU and it’s possible that they’d be interested in reopening the dance issue. Ms. Brinn reported that they’ve said absolutely not. Mr. Provost said that it’s a liability issue for them, and they had complaints 5 years in a row. Ms. Roy said that if parents volunteer for the dance, they can’t be of the age of the kids, not their parents or their friends’ parents. Ms. Marshall suggested High School seniors be the chaperones. Ms. Cowan suggested former summer camp counselors.

Mr. Bisson said that they could have a Sock Hop dance for seniors, and they could challenge them to dress up in their old school colors. Or, they could host an 80’s Prom. Ms. Papkonstantis and Ms. Sullivan liked the idea of an 80’s Prom, and said that this type of event had been successful elsewhere. Ms. Marshall asked if these events would be alcohol-free. Ms. Roy thought the Sock Hop would be alcohol-free because it would likely be in the daytime. Ms. Marshall said that the recovery community is looking for things to do that don’t involve alcohol. Ms. Sullivan added that it may be a contradiction for Parks and Rec to promote healthy lifestyles but also promote alcohol use.

#### 10. Collaborations

Mr. Bisson said that this was an old item on the agenda.

#### 11. Old Business

Mr. Bisson presented an EYSA memo which Parks and Rec had been asked to sign. He explained that when they first expanded the soccer fields, there was an MOU written, which was signed but may not hold up to scrutiny by legal counsel. They’re now looking for a similar agreement, but he is not in total support and is asking for board feedback. The agreement could be reworded. For example, they use the language “annual donation,” which he would want changed to “fee.”

Ms. Sullivan asked if Parks and Rec have any other agreements like this. Mr. Bisson said no, but that EYSA had put \$50,000 into those fields, so they feel ownership. Ms. Papkonstantis asked if other teams and leagues were not permitted to use fields, and Mr. Bisson responded that they were not supposed to make it exclusive. Ms. Sullivan asked about the MOU, but Mr. Bisson said they tore it up a few years back; they wanted exclusive access to fields on Saturday afternoons, Sundays, and any time before 5 during spring.

Ms. Sullivan asked about the fee structure for other field rentals. Mr. Bisson responded that he has submitted proposed fees to the Select Board, which is working through them. The past Rec administration didn't believe in charging, but Mr. Bisson feels there needs to be a fee. Rec has to pay for maintenance; they've used \$8,500 from revolving funds for drainage problems; they lacked overseeding yearly; and the PH of the soil dropped, since it should have been limed. There needs to be a return to help keep and upgrade facilities. Mr. Provost asked, if they charge higher fees, will they need better facilities? Mr. Bisson said they need to put more money into the fields.

**MOTION:** Ms. Sullivan moved to deny this letter as written and give power to the Rec director to enter into negotiations with EYSA. Mr. Wissler seconded. Ms. Marshall asked if they enter into letters of agreement for a certain time or in perpetuity, and Ms. Papkonstantis suggested they add a timespan into the revised agreement. Mr. Bisson said that as there was progress and expansion the cost may go up, or their usage may go up. Ms. Papkonstantis asked if this memo is the same terms as the MOU; Mr. Bisson responded that this was more detailed, the MOU was only six lines. There was a vote, and all were in favor. Mr. Bisson will respond to EYSA.

#### 12. Adjournment

Ms. Sullivan moved to adjourn, Ms. Marshall seconded. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 8:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Joanna Bartell  
Recording Secretary