

Exeter Recreation Advisory Board
Tuesday, May 28th, 2019, 7 PM
Senior Citizen Center
Draft Minutes

1. Call to Order

Members Present: Stephanie Papakonstantis, chair; Courtney Marshall, Dan Provost, Mike Wissler, Jen Harrington, Val Castonguay, and Brinn Sullivan, Rec Advisory Board members; Molly Cowan, Select Board rep; and Melissa Roy, David Tovey, Alex West, and Greg Bisson of Parks and Rec. Ms. Papakonstantis called the meeting to order at 7 PM.

2. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Ms. Harrington moved to approve the minutes of October 16th, 2018 as submitted. Ms. Sullivan seconded. All were in favor.

MOTION: Mr. Wissler moved to approve the minutes of December 5th, 2018 as submitted. Ms. Harrington seconded. All were in favor.

3. Review and Acceptance of Mission, Vision and Values

Mr. Bisson presented the Mission and Vision statements for approval.

MOTION: Ms. Castonguay moved to accept the Mission and Vision Statements as written. Ms. Sullivan seconded. [This motion was not voted on.]

Regarding the list of Core Values, Mr. Wissler supported *affordable*. Ms. Harrington liked *health* or *wellness*, but Ms. Sullivan suggested combining those to *health & wellness*, and Ms. Papakonstantis agreed that including both was important to show support for both physical and mental health. Ms. Cowan liked *fun*, *affordable*, and *inclusive*. Mr. Wissler supported *community* and *enrichment*. Ms. Sullivan suggested *sustainable*, which could help them focus on that aspect in planning events. She added that *fun* is not necessarily encapsulated in the Mission Statement.

Mr. Provost said they should use Core Values to vet a proposed activity. Ms. Papakonstantis said that they can't have a Mission Statement separate from their Core Values; Core Values could be the checkboxes to ensure items meet the Mission Statement. Ms. Sullivan suggested that in that case, they should not narrow down the list, but instead make sure a plan matches three or four of the Core Values. Ms. Marshall said there could be Core Values of the Rec department, as separate from the programming.

MOTION: Mr. Provost moved to accept the Mission and Vision Statements as written and further discuss the Core Values. Mr. Wissler seconded. All were in favor.

Ms. Papakonstantis said there were 15 - 20 Core Values that came out of the meeting, but they were whittled down to the current selection. Four or five would be manageable and attainable. Ms. Marshall said that if something isn't ADA compliant, they can look at the Core Values and say that's not inclusive. Mr. Bisson added that they can take the Core Values to the

Budget Committee this year in support of proposals. Ms. Papakonstantis suggested that Board members take the packets home and get the list down to three or four for the next meeting.

MOTION: Ms. Castonguay moved to table the discussion on Core Values until the next meeting. Ms. Marshall seconded. All were in favor.

4. Senior Counsel review and update

Ms. Roy said they'd hosted a second community forum, where 33 seniors showed up. There was a two hour dialogue about communication, transportation, services, and information. There will be another forum in June at the Senior Center.

Parks and Rec received a \$2,000 sponsorship from Newburyport Bank for senior programming. \$1,000 will be used for a senior BBQ catered by Sea Dog. It's also paying for one or two health & wellness classes and a once a month tea/coffee social.

There will be two beach trips this summer, free to seniors.

They're working with PEA to have PEA staff volunteer with Parks & Rec for a week as a community project. They're trying to create 10 - 15 projects that PEA staff can choose from. One idea is a BBQ. Mr. Bisson added that PEA may also have money to help them with other projects.

They're planning to offer Senior Aqua Zumba at the pool, hosted by Ms. Marshall.

Ms. Roy intends to continue to talk to people and find out how Parks and Rec can serve this population. A lot of seniors are ok with getting information by email, but she would like to seek a grant to create and mail a quarterly senior brochure.

Mr. Provost asked if as a future agenda item they could brainstorm how PEA might give back. Mr. Bisson mentioned that he plans to get Parks and Rec back on the Timberland worklist, and they could have a playground ready to go in the near future.

Ms. Sullivan suggested bringing photocopied fliers for events to the Rec Advisory meetings and have the Board members distribute them. She added that since *sustainable* is a potential core value, they should think about how to make programming sustainable and environmentally friendly.

5. Program Update

a. Spring - Field Availability

Mr. Bisson said that scheduling the field usage seasonally has been an issue, especially since it's been a wet spring. SAU has a strict policy of those sports in season getting the priority. Mr. Sullivan asked if Rec already has a policy that needs adjustment, but Mr. Bisson said no, a policy needs to be created. They don't want to exclude anyone, but some groups are not flexible. He sat down with all the league presidents a month ago and thought they had ironed it out, but there are still misunderstandings. Softball should have priority at the Rec Park in the spring. Soccer may need to find a different location. Ms. Papakonstantis said that soccer has to come up with a definite schedule and stick to it. Mr. Bisson concurred, saying that Soccer expanded their offering without notice. He's reviewing MOUs with each league; in the original MOU for Soccer, they reserved Tuesday and Thursday 3-5 and Saturday and Sunday 1 - dusk, but somewhere they picked up Monday through Friday 5 -8, and Saturdays from noon to dusk. Ms. Harrington asked if the MOUs need to be revisited on a yearly basis, and Mr. Bisson said

the agreements haven't been redone in 15 years. He added that soccer invested \$150,000 initially, but Ms. Papakonstantis said that that money was used long ago. Mr. Provost said that sports in season should have priority. Mr. Wissler suggested they make a list and define the fields, then give each field a primary focus in season and hierarchy.

Ms. Sullivan asked if they are able to prevent fields from getting destroyed, and Mr. Bisson said they've been closing fields as necessary; it's not written, just an understanding. Ms. Sullivan said that the ability to close fields should be an element of the policy.

Ms. Roy said the wet spring forced them to work on the schedule and make the leagues talk to each other. In-season sports don't have to take over everything, but they need to be able to support leagues that don't play year round. Ms. Sullivan suggested they define "in season", as well as add layers of priorities such as resident/nonresident. Ms. Papakonstantis said that leagues should have a deadline for submitting their practice schedules.

Mr. Bisson will word a policy and bring it to the next meeting.

Ms. Marshall suggested that they have the leaders of the leagues sign off on the policy. Ms. Papakonstantis said they may have to sit down with them regarding fees too.

b. Summer - Camp Registration Process, Pool Programs

Ms. Papakonstantis discussed the issues with the camp sign up process. This year the system crashed four minutes into signups. They have some ideas to improve the process, such as allowing returning campers to secure their spot before opening registration, or doing blocks of age groups for signup.

Ms. Harrington asked for data on the amount of returning campers compared to spots available, saying that she is concerned that returning campers might prevent there being space for new kids. Does it fill up? Mr. Bisson said that this year, camp filled within a week of opening registration. Ms. Harrington said that there's a perception that you're not going to get in.

Ms. Sullivan suggested they do something low tech on the day and have staff enter the information into the online system later. She added that the process is not inclusive when you have the signup during work hours; it should be on a Saturday or at night. Ms. Castonguay felt families could request time off from work in advance if they knew about it. Ms. Harrington said that families need to have faith that the system will work, and they shouldn't need to take time off.

Ms. Sullivan suggested they reach out to camp families for feedback on how to improve. This would show that they're listening and may also give them some new ideas.

Ms. Castonguay asked how other camps handle signups. Ms. Sullivan said that in her experience, it's always one day, one time. They take a paper registration and cash or check, a low tech process. There's always the rush and it's always in person. Ms. Roy added that one organization she worked at was online-only for the first week, then people could come in. In Wellesley, they had the same online system but had a seven person IT team to support it. Mr. Bisson said that IT knows there's a problem and is working on increasing the bandwidth for the town. Ms. Marshall said they need to put in the infrastructure to meet people's needs. Don't make people who need low-cost summer camp wait in that kind of line, they can't take time off work. Ms. Cowan said she does see the need for IT improvements, but it has to go on the ballot where the voters have to decide.

Ms. Papakonstantis said that since it was a disaster this year, next year it will be worse because everyone will come down in person.

Ms. Harrington asked if they could allow returning campers to preregister; at the end of the camp sessions, they could announce preregistration to potential returning campers and could include new siblings of those returning campers. Mr. Wissler cautioned that they're not a private camp. Ms. Papakonstantis said that might be making it exclusive, and suggested they ask the town attorney.

Ms. Sullivan thought they should table this discussion until they seek feedback from camp families. Mr. Provost suggested a quick SurveyMonkey survey. Mr. Wissler countered that they already know the problem. It stinks to register, and it's going to get worse in the future, since there will be an influx of apartments with school-age kids and no increase in property taxes. Ms. Papakonstantis said that having families feel heard could help the department gain back trust.

Mr. Wissler asked if they could go back to registration by mail. Ms. Sullivan suggested they have a signup event in the evening. Ms. Marshall wondered how they could make the line fun, and Ms. Harrington responded that fun is getting in and getting out.

Ms. Papakonstantis asked that they table the discussion until they can check with legal counsel about the legality of returning campers. Ms. Cowan said they should find out if it's possible, look at other towns, and hold a public hearing about it. Mr. Bisson said that no other towns do returning campers, since they're not private camps.

Ms. Marshall suggested the line would move faster if more people were inputting the registration. Mr. Bisson responded that there are only so many licenses for using the software.

Ms. Roy said that regarding the Pool Programs, WeSwim filled up fast, and Zumba is starting June 21st. There will also be Aqua Aerobics in the morning.

c. Fall - Football Partnership

Mr. Bisson said that Faisal Usta of Exeter Seahawks Youth Football reached out to him about a partnership. The Seahawks have seen their numbers drop for tackle football, and are interested in expanding their flag football offering. Parks and Rec has 200 kids, playing the same teams the Seahawks are playing, Hampton and Dover. There were sixteen or eighteen teams last year, they don't need to go outside Exeter to play, and parents don't want to travel. Exeter went up to 8th graders with flag football last year because parents wanted them to play; they could expand it to high school.

d. Winter - Basketball Partnership Rims

Mr. Bisson said that Rims in Hampton approached him about sending basketball teams there. They have access to quality refs. It would free up gym time in Exeter. Rims would offer something financially rewarding, and Exeter wouldn't have to pay a gym supervisor overtime \$35. 5th through 8th grade would go there, 3rd and 4th grade would be here, and they could go back to full court with the younger teams. Ms. Sullivan asked how it would be inclusive for families for whom it's difficult to travel, and Mr. Bisson responded that they already play half of their games on the road.

Mr. Wissler asked if that cost is an introductory offer, and Ms. Sullivan said even if they went up, the facilities are very nice. Mr. Wissler and Mr. Provost agreed that opening up the

courts would be a good thing. Mr. Bisson said it seems like a win-win, but it's a conversation Rims should have started six months ago. Ms. Papakonstantis said that she supports this partnership; this group is very town-oriented, they want to make sure the town program succeeds.

6. Recreation Park RFP - Tighe and Bond

Mr. Bisson went to the Select Board last week, and Tighe and Bond was awarded the contract for the Rec Park design. Five good firms came in, but Tighe and Bond the best and the lowest. Some contingency funds could be used for testing, but it would have to go back before the Select Board. The contract is in legal's hands and with Primex. Ms. Papakonstantis said they will have to plan public hearings and listening sessions.

Ms. Marshall left the meeting at this time.

7. CIP Project update: Gilman, Pool, Tennis Courts, Softball Field Upgrades, Townhouse Common Fence, ADA Lift, Dock-Wetland Permit

Mr. Bisson said that the rookie baseball field at Gilman Park now has a fence. They're looking at a second field in that green space.

The pool filter system renovations have been delayed, they're getting the new pump tomorrow. The pool opening has been pushed back to June 8. DPW will be installing the ADA lift.

Tennis court resurfacing starts next week, the courts will be down for a week and a half. The crooked basketball stanchion has been fixed. The softball fields have been finished. The park will be in rough shape for summer camps.

They're installing a new fence in Townhouse Common, across from the police station. It will match what's there now.

The kayak cradle and dock expansion project is ongoing. They started the wetlands permit in July last year. The dock was given to the Town by the State of NH, but no engineering plans were ever submitted to the State, so NHDES required new ones. They have to show the current conditions and future conditions.

8. Upcoming CIP: Kids Park Playground, Picnic Pavilion-Gilman Park

Mr. Bisson is hoping to announce in June that they got a NRPA grant for \$30,000 for the Kids Park, but they have enough to support a renovation anyways. The only thing that's staying is the purple dinosaur, there will be new swings and a climbing structure. They will repurpose the swings down to Gilman Park. If they don't get the grant, they'll need to go to Select Board, and equipment takes 6 - 8 weeks to build after ordering, so it won't start until around September.

There's a pavilion to go down at Gilman park. They will also take out the decrepit basketball court, put in swings and picnic area, the community garden if it happens, and another baseball field. Mr. Wissler asked if there will be a light at Gilman Park, since it could be a dangerous area. Mr. Bisson said he'd recently talked to Town Manager Russ Dean about getting a light and a security camera.

9. Year Schedule

The next Rec Advisory Board meeting is June 25th. It will conflict with Rec Softball.

10. Old Business

Ms. Roy said that regarding permitting, people now come to Parks and Rec for everything. It's not online yet, they're still tweaking the process. Ms. Sullivan said it's helpful that Parks and Rec are in charge of the master calendar. Mr. Bisson said they will have to come up with new policies for facility use. Ms. Sullivan asked them to keep accessibility in mind.

11. Adjournment

MOTION: Ms. Harrington moved to adjourn. Mr. Wissler seconded. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 9:08 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Bartell
Recording Secretary