

Recreation Advisory Board
Tuesday, July 23, 2019
Senior Citizen Center
7 PM
Minutes

1. Call to Order

Members Present: Courtney Marshall, Dan Provost, Mike Wissler, Stephanie Papakonstantis, and Val Castonguay; Molly Cowan, Select Board rep; and Melissa Roy, David Tovey, Alex West, Joe Choquett, and Greg Bisson of Parks and Rec. Ms. Papakonstantis called the meeting to order at 7:08 PM.

2. Public Comment

There was no public comment at this meeting.

3. CIP 2020

Mr. Bisson said that he met with Russ Dean and Dave Sharples. The CIP process has been simplified by creating the Capital Reserve Fund last year. The department must submit CIP sheets to the Budget Committee, Planning Board, and Select Board. One sheet will request \$125,000 for the Parks Improvement Fund in 2020, and \$150,000 for the next four years, to cover a list of projects. The next CIP item is the Rec Park. This project will happen in three phases. There's no estimate on cost yet. The department is also requesting a handicap accessible van, which would have a wheelchair lift and fit 8 people with 2 wheelchairs, for \$60,000. They may be able to take some money from the Transportation Fund. Also on the CIP list are a new tractor, the Kids Park, and an RFP for the Senior Center and Rec Center in 3 years. It will take \$75,000 just for the design and engineering to make 32 Court Street (the Rec Center) ADA compliant.

4. Budget Requests

Mr. Bisson asked the Board if there were anything they'd like to request in the FY20 budget. He suggested a line for Senior Services, but didn't have an amount in mind. He said that offering \$12 hour for lawn mowing had been a failure. In a survey of surrounding communities and landscapers, the starting pay was more like \$14+. The town's maintenance guys only make \$16-17/hour, but they get benefits. He suggested that they reinstate the Parks Foreman position, and they could promote one of the existing workers. Currently there are two full time maintenance workers, Jim Mahoney and Jay Perkins Jr. They've also been using contractors and volunteer companies, such as Yankee Clipper and Yeti Landcare. Keith Whitehouse of Yeti Landcare has donated extensive services to the town, including the maintenance and cleanup of the Town Offices, the historic cemeteries, and Brickyard Pond, and Pickpocket Dam. Ms. Cowan suggested they pay him, and Ms. Papakonstantis suggested donating to a charitable cause on his behalf.

Mr. Bisson asked the Board whether they should make a budget request for contracted services or for proper manpower. Ms. Papakonstantis asked what they're spending now. Mr. Bisson said it was \$27,000 but that includes fertilizer, mulch, and other supplies. They put

\$11,800 into that account from the salary line, for \$38,000, but that's still not enough. Mr. Wissler asked what the two full-time guys do. Mr. Bisson said they mow the Rec Park twice a week, all traffic islands, Townhouse Common, the Safety complex, and Founders Park, a total of 56 acres of parkland, not including the cemeteries. They split up for efficiency, and only do the Rec Park together, although he would prefer two workers together on all projects for safety. He suggested they move someone to foreman and hire two seasonal workers. The Budget Committee approved \$12/hour, so they'll have to bring in the data to request more. They have three mowers and a new push mower, so there's enough equipment for four workers. He'd also like to put in for a covered trailer this year. There's not enough room for the mowers inside the maintenance shop; with a trailer they could lock them in.

For Senior Services, last year they had no budget. Ms. Roy felt that \$10,000 this year would be reasonable. They will also be looking for outside funding, and \$10,000 would help with a grant match. The long term goal is for this budget to be much higher. They provide 90% of senior programs for free or at cost. They'd like to offer more exercise classes, social programs, and educational programs. Right now they are only doing activities with a sponsorship or run by volunteers. They've started a senior tea/coffee social on the second Wednesday of every month; the first one had eight attendees, who had fun and talked for hours. On Monday, they took seven seniors to the beach. This kind of program can help fight the isolation of that population.

Ms. Roy said the Senior Counsel has had 15-20 attendees each time. For the listening forums, there were no attendees the first time, 30 the second time, and 20 the third time. The town has a population of 60 - 75 year olds who are very active, and she would like to hear from them as well. Mr. Tovey added that they'd like to print a senior services brochure too. Ms. Roy said there was an opportunity for a grant through Tufts. Ms. Papakonstantis said that local printers may offer discounted services, and she has a few names to suggest. Ms. Roy said that some assisted living facilities have money in their marketing budgets to buy ads. Ms. Papakonstantis asked if they are advertising in the Exeter Newsletter, and Ms. Roy responded that they send the paper information, but are not paying them.

Mr. Wissler asked if they should create a Rec Advisory Board position of Senior Representative. Mr. Bisson said they have an alternate opening, and two seniors are interested in applying.

MOTION: Mr. Wissler moved to create a voting position on the Rec Advisory Board for a Senior Representative. Ms. Castonguay seconded. All were in favor. Mr. Bisson said he will pass the senior applications to the Select Board for review.

5. Completed Project Updates

a. Recreation Park

Mr. Bisson said that the survey is done, but they're waiting to hear back on the geological studies. Gordon Leedy from Tighe and Bond is coming to the department soon to discuss ideas for the building, and will come to the Rec Advisory Board in August to talk about the Board's vision. There are only two pieces of wetland on the property, which is less than anticipated.

b. Townhouse Common Fence

Mr. Bisson said that Townhouse Common now has new fencing on one side. There's a proposed phase two next year to extend the new fencing up the Court Street Side.

c. Kids Park

Mr. Bisson said they'd had two quotes, from Themed Concepts and Gametime. Themed Concepts is more sustainable, all GFRC [glass fiber reinforced concrete], which lasts 50 - 75 years, has few parts, and requires less maintenance. Gametime proposed plastic with a treehouse motif, and would resemble Main Street and Lincoln Street School. Either way, the purple dinosaur would be staying. Wear mats will go under the slides and swings. The existing fencing stays, but they will remove the caps from an old line of fencing. The small tree in the middle will be removed, but everything else will just be pruned back. They will recycle the existing swingsets to Gilman Park. They will leave the basketball hoop, and there's a group that wants to do a mural on the court. He would also like to see a splash pad or a gaga pit.

Either renovation will not be cheap; both came in around \$125,000. They do have the money in the Capital Improvement Fund and from impact fees.

Mr. Provost asked about the timeline. Mr. Bisson said he will go to the Select Board this August, and there's a 6 - 8 week construction period, so it could be complete by the end of October. Mr. Wissler, Mr. Provost, and Ms. Roy liked the GFRC product for durability. Mr. Provost wanted to see linked elements, like an adventure course. Ms. Castonguay asked about the age range for this equipment, since toddlers go there. Mr. Bisson said 2-12 years. Ms. Papakonstantis said that the earthy tones of Themed Concepts are better for imaginative play than colorful plastic.

MOTION: Mr. Wissler moved to support Themed Concepts or another company that uses GFRC for the Kids Park. Mr. Provost seconded. All were in favor.

Mr. Bisson said there's another quote coming in they may consider.

d. Gilman Park Pavilion

Mr. Bisson said they got a good deal on the pavilion design for Gilman Park, and they're going to move forward. It will be 20'x30'. They've been talking to Public Works about piping in water. They will put the pavilion close to the parking lot to avoid ADA issues. They're going to remove the basketball court and a new playground will go in that space. They are also adding a ball field, lights, and a camera. The pavilion could be rented out for noncommercial uses as long as the money goes to maintaining it. The Community Garden has been approved by SELT, but needs to go to the attorney general because of a change in the Trust, and they're waiting on that approval. Conservation has the money to do the garden. Tenants can't grow food to sell but can donate their produce, for example to Saint Vincent de Paul. Ms. Papakonstantis said that Main Street School is working on composting, and could partner with the Community Garden. Ms. Roy suggested that the garden could host an intergenerational program.

6. Summer Update (Camp Sign Up)

Mr. Bisson thanked Mr. Tovey for doing a great job in his first year running summer camp. Mr. Tovey said that the counselors and campers seem happy. It would be nice to see the Rec Park get a building. He's happy with the Camp Director Emily Baker. There have been no major concerns, just one physical altercation and little things.

Regarding camp sign ups, Ms. Roy pulled rosters and looked at how many new kids joined camp each year between 2017 and 2019. In 2018, there were 350 campers, of which 99 kids were not on the roster in 2017. In 2019, there were 130 new kids of about 350. Mr. Provost said that $\frac{2}{3}$ return each year, so setting up early registration would take $\frac{2}{3}$ of the signup traffic out of signup day.

MOTION [rescinded]: Mr. Wissler moved to adopt early bird signup for 2021; the returning camper is automatically registered, and gets the opportunity to confirm by just paying. Ms. Castonguay seconded. Ms. Papakonstantis said she would prefer to do this for 2020 and not delay an additional year. Mr. Wissler rescinded his motion, and Ms. Castonguay rescinded her second.

MOTION [rescinded]: Mr. Wissler moved to adopt the early bird signup for 2020. Ms. Castonguay seconded. Mr. Provost said this is not really an early bird period, but rather a returning camper deadline. Mr. Wissler rescinded his motion to work on the language, and Ms. Castonguay rescinded her second.

Mr. Bisson asked if they could hand out notification at camp rather than mail it for a cost savings. Ms. Castonguay suggested the parents sign for it at camp. Ms. Papakonstantis said she doesn't want anyone to miss it. Mr. Wissler said they have to be clear on the language and deadline: "returning Rec campers are automatically registered for the next season, and this is the payment date." Mr. Provost suggested a "returning family" option, and they reserve their space by paying. Ms. Castonguay asked if families can pay earlier, but Ms. Roy said not before Jan 1, or it won't carry over into the correct fiscal year. She suggested payment be due January 15th. Until then, they expect a piece of paper with their signature saying they will come back. She prefers to register them within the department; if they send families online, she worries that campers will end up in the wrong grades or sessions.

MOTION: Mr. Wissler moved to approve the concept of returning campers of having the option of being registered for 2020 pending the Rec Department's determination of how to implement the process. Ms. Castonguay seconded. All were in favor.

Ms. Roy said she will email members a process proposal prior to the next meeting; per rules about public meetings, they can't have a group discussion via email, but can make individual comments back to her.

7. Powder Keg Update

Mr. Bisson said they've been working on this year's Powder Keg event for the last three months. Foy is their new underwriter. Newburyport Bank is the glass sponsor. Chamber has been soliciting new sponsors. 34 breweries are registered, including nine new ones. Four tents will be reduced to three, so they can spread them out more. The Liquor Commission audited the event last year, and he expects them again this year. They're looking at ways to have a quicker line. Chief Poulin and Chief Comeau will meet with him in August to create an emergency action

plan. They're looking for a new way to bring in the beer, since they can't have Bayside hold it for other brewers. They could rent a refrigeration truck. He's hoping they sell out 4,000 tickets again.

8. Senior Update

Ms. Roy said that she's been working with the intern Alex on a survey that Ms. Roy hopes will help them request more funds for Senior Services from the Select Board. She'd like to distribute a paper and online survey to all of the 60+ population in Exeter, asking what services they currently use and what would they like to see in the future.

9. Program Update Fall Sports

Mr. Tovey said that flag football and youth soccer registration are live. A Constant Contact email will go out tomorrow, since the numbers are a little low. They're starting to create teams and order equipment.

10. Recap of Permit Process

Mr. Bisson said that Ms. Roy has done an outstanding job on the permit process, which needed a lot of tweaks. Ms. Roy said that the process is currently very time consuming, and she brought suggestions for improvements to the Select Board. She also met with the Police Chief and Fire Chief who had good suggestions. They were asked by the Town Manager to give suggestions for changes to Swasey Parkway, which is a contested issue, but she found the current policies for Swasey didn't really need a lot of tweaking. Ms. Roy is going to Swasey Parkway Trustees meeting tomorrow to talk about potential changes.

11. Approval of Minutes

- a. Mr. Bisson requested that the minutes be tabled.

12. Adjournment

MOTION: Ms. Castonguay moved to adjourn. Mr. Wissler seconded. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 8:52 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Bartell
Recording Secretary