

Recreation Advisory Board  
Tuesday, September 29, 2021  
Rec Building and 10 Hampton Road  
6 PM  
Final Minutes

1. Call to Order

Members Present: Stephanie Papakonstantis, Jenn Harrington, Dan Provost, Mike Wissler, Brinn Sullivan, and Dick Matthews; Julie Gilman, Select Board rep; and Tara Barker, David Tovey, and Greg Bisson of Parks and Rec.

Members Absent: None

Ms. Papakonstantis called the meeting to order at 6 PM.

2. Tour of 10 Hampton Road

Board members went on a site visit of the 10 Hampton Road property.

3. Reconvene Meeting

Ms. Papakonstantis reconvened the meeting at the Rec Building at 7 PM.

4. Public Comment

There was no public comment at this meeting.

5. Minutes Approval

a. June 29, 2021

**MOTION:** Mr. Wissler made a motion to accept the minutes of June 29, 2021 as presented, Ms. Harrington. All were in favor and the motion passed 7-0.

b. May 25, 2021

**MOTION:** Mr. Wissler made a motion to accept the minutes of May 25, 2021 as presented. Ms. Harrington seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed 7-0.

c. March 30, 2021

**MOTION:** Mr. Wissler made a motion to accept the minutes of March 30, 2021 as presented. Ms. Harrington seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed 7-0.

6. New Business

a. Skate Park Fundraising

Todd and Robert Cambio, and Mark and Deb Miller, speaking for their son Jackson Miller, were present to discuss a proposed skate park renovation.

Todd Cambio said the goal is to revamp the skate park to get it up-to-date with surrounding towns. Exeter's is old, and would be used a lot more with an update. Kids can stay out of trouble and off the streets. The older kids teach the

younger ones tricks. It's great for the community. Robert Cambio said with Rye closing, the community doesn't have a lot of places to go. Exeter's skate park is crowded. We could make it bigger and better.

Mark Miller spoke on behalf of his son: he has seen more little kids at Exeter Skate Park (ESP), with scooters and skateboards. If a new skatepark is built, people from all around will come to skate, which can bring business to restaurants and stores. The current parks are metal and plastic, slippery, could deter kids. Metal heats up a lot and could be dangerous for the kids. Plastic is not good for grinding, it's dangerous and not ideal for skating. The little bench is the only area to sit and watch kids skate, from afar. They should offer more and better seating for parents and those who need a break.

Mr. Miller said he agreed with his son that ESP is advanced, so it's not attractive to younger kids. Rye was a great facility for families but it has closed. At ESP, we had a little bit of a rough time when the kids were younger, it's not the greatest crowd. An architect could design it and add seating areas to encourage more skaters rather than the other activities that are going on there.

Mr. Bisson said the ESP was fundraised in 1993/4 by high school students. This is version 2.0 of the skate park; it was renovated because some elements were crumbling. He agrees with the residents that a renovation is necessary, but it's not cheap. He would like to get grassroots together and have them work with the Friends of Rec. This is an LWCF property, so it's eligible for a grant, with a 50/50 match.

Mr. Miller asked if that site is the best place for a skatepark, and Mr. Bisson asked Ms. Gilman if there are other town locations that could be considered. Ms. Gilman said maybe one parcel on Kingston Road. Mr. Provost said there's more room at the current site than they're currently using, although there may be water issues. Ms. Sullivan said it's nice that it's near Gilman Park.

Ms. Sullivan asked about next steps. Mr. Bisson said we would get a group together and plan how to fundraise. Getting the funds to engineer it correctly is the first obstacle, and that piece is not eligible for grant money.

Ms. Papakonstantis asked if the project has to go to the Select Board. Ms. Gilman said if it's paid for from the General Fund, yes; if it's from the Rec Funds, it would still need approval, but the decision would already be made. Anything over \$25,000 would be a warrant article. Mr. Bisson said any fundraising donations would have to be accepted by the Select Board as well.

Ms. Sullivan asked if there would be value to forming a Skate Park Committee, and Mr. Bisson said absolutely. Dave Short of the Swasey Park Trustees would be interested in helping as well.

**MOTION:** Ms. Sullivan made a motion to give power to the Rec Dept to work with the Friends group to create a Skate Park Subcommittee that can move forward with this proposal. Mr. Wissler seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed 7-0.

Mr. Provost offered to Chair the subcommittee. Mr. Bisson suggested that it meet at the HS just after school.

b. RPC Senior Survey

Mr. Tovey said RPC and Meals on Wheels got a Tufts grant to conduct Senior surveys in several different communities, to answer questions such as “What services do seniors value?” “What needs aren’t being met?” Within the communities, there would be a local steering committee with town staff and residents. We would hold a few community forums to share survey results, have open discussion, and get more feedback. The time requirement is between 12 and 20 hours starting in Dec/Jan and finishing in June.

Ms. Sullivan said the Southern NH Planning Commission has already done this, and it was successful in helping them understand the needs and wants of the aging population. RPC got a grant to do the same thing. If Exeter participates, we will have a report that allows us to confirm with data what we already know, which gives more oomph when asking for money.

Ms. Papakonstantis asked about the age span, and Ms. Barker said 57+. Mr. Bisson said he’s looking for an endorsement to send to the Select Board.

Ms. Sullivan said she is on the Regional Committee for this and she recommended Exeter, since they’re working so hard on Senior issues. No money has to come out of Exeter to do this. Ms. Barker said they could use this to create a strategic plan for that population. Ms. Sullivan said they could apply to be an AARP age-friendly community

**MOTION:** Mr. Wissler made a motion that the Rec Board endorse that Exeter participates in the Rockingham Planning Commission Senior Survey. Mr. Matthews seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed 7-0.

c. Santa’s Block Party

Mr. Bisson said the Exeter Chamber of Commerce has approached Parks and Rec about becoming a partner on Santa’s Block Party. A lot of Rec Departments do evenings with Santa. The Town Manager doesn’t have a problem with the Department taking this on. It wouldn’t cost anything but time. Maybe we could eventually grow the event. Ms. Sullivan asked if the Department has the capacity and time, and Mr. Bisson said yes.

**MOTION:** Mr. Wissler made a motion to recommend that Parks and Rec help the Chamber with Santa’s Block Party. Ms. Harrington seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed 7-0.

d. Summer Programming Recap

Mr. Bisson said the pool was somewhat successful this year. There were a lot of patrons, and it was an all-time high for season passes. Morning swim was very popular. We need to bring back swim lessons, since they are a revenue generator that helps Rec break even. This year, the pool lost \$15,000, which the Rec Revolving Fund could absorb. We will be going to the Select Board for a

water abatement. It's a 200,000 gallon pool, and they typically use about 300,000-350,000 gallons in the summer, but due to a leak the consumption was over a million gallons, which was a \$20,000+ bill.

The pool was also short staffed. Dave Tovey will assume responsibility for the pool this year and become a certified lifeguard; we will also certify an employee to become a lifeguard trainer and train our own lifeguards. All the young kids will come back, but we will have to adjust all the pay scales, since we can't keep up with other jobs. A lifeguard starts at \$12.50/hour, pool managers at \$16/hour. Portsmouth's pool pays \$14/hour, and the lifeguards can get more by teaching lessons. YMCA is starting at \$14/hour and they give raises quickly.

Mr. Bisson said that in typical years the pool makes \$5,000-10,000 by the end of the season. Lessons can bring in \$30,000. Municipal pools aren't designed to make money, although the concession stand makes money.

Ms. Sullivan asked if we can now use 15 ½ year olds for lifeguards, and Mr. Bisson said yes, we just need responsible college-age managers at all times.

e. Fall Programming

Mr. Tovey said that Soccer and Flag Football are underway. There are 8 teams total, and he's working on scheduling games with Oyster River Youth Association. GG Esports League numbers are starting to dwindle; only one person is signed up for the fall league. Mr. Provost said the HS is planning varsity level e-gaming, so Mr. Tovey should coordinate with them.

Mr. Tovey said there are some new programs, such as Teen Mindfulness Yoga. A former intern is running a recycled gardening program, with some sign-ups already. He's working on a Halloween event, including a Halloween parade and scarecrow decorating contest. Mr. Bisson said we will partner with TEAM for a party at Town House Common after the Halloween parade.

f. Senior Programming

Mr. Tovey said there are some Senior trips with registrations. There's a Chair Yoga group which has been meeting on Swasey Parkway, but which will be moving back inside at Court Street. Ms. Papakonstantis asked how we will accommodate accessibility concerns. Mr. Bisson said it's an issue. A Tai Chi group is looking for a place, and were interested in Court Street until they found out it's not accessible.

g. Winter Programming

Mr. Tovey said regarding Winter Basketball, we got approval to use Lincoln and Main Street Schools. Mr. Bisson said we're planning to go back to the Lamprey, since we got feedback that the Rims didn't have enough space.

h. Powder Keg Update

Ms. Papakonstantis said that she and Mr. Wissler are volunteering for Powder Keg, and it could use more volunteers. Mr. Bisson said the event will

have 54 beer brands, down from 70. Ticket sales are not where we expected, but we will still make a good chunk of change. Some of the comments he's heard are complaints about having two sessions, that it's not family friendly, that it's not having chili, and some hesitation due to Covid. None of the other beer fests he's talked to have sold out. They've sold 827 tickets for session 1 and 1,054 for session 2. He expects to sell an additional 100+ tickets per day. We could make \$20,000 vs the \$40,000 from selling out. There will be no bracelets other than for DDs, but the numbers there are very low. We're doing stamps for everyone. It will be kept as contactless as possible.

## 7. Old Business

### a. Park Street Common

Mr. Bisson said the Department hosted a public input session at Park Street Common and 45 - 50 people showed up. We got a lot of good input. There was also a survey, which had 367 responses. We got feedback that there should be a fence around the playground and that the park should be ADA accessible. We also heard that there should be crosswalks, but that's not up to Parks and Rec. We are planning to regrade the park, put in irrigation, and redo the ballfield.

He sent info to four major playground manufacturers, looking for two options from each, something sustainable and something conventional. He will go to the Select Board in November and start the process. Public Works will remove playground elements and excavate in the Spring. This money is coming out of the Capital Improvement Fund, since it was already approved in March. We're trying to keep it to the \$100,000 allocated, but we also have some impact fees to tap into.

Ms. Sullivan asked if Exeter has access to Community Development Block Grant money for accessible playground elements. Ms. Gilman said the town has never applied for it; usually a developer gets the money for affordable housing. Mr. Bisson said we may focus on that for renovating the 10 Hampton Road property.

## 8. New Business

### a. Senior Games possible location

Mr. Bisson said that following the success of the Big Brother Big Sister pickleball tournament, he approached the NH Senior games, which has the same coordinator, and will have a site visit with them. We can have 16 courts going at the same time. The tournament attracted 200-300 spectators, and it was capped at 190 participants but there were at least 100 more applicants. NH Senior Games are like the Olympics, but the contestants have to be 50+. He's looking to have three pickleball tournaments. They could be a big economic driver in the town.

Mr. Matthews said he'll bring to the Board the idea of turning some tennis courts into permanent pickleball courts in the future. Tennis/pickleball lines criss-cross and make it difficult to play. Three tennis courts can be turned into 8

pickleball courts at a cost of \$35,000-40,000. Mr. Wissler said he thinks they could put in four pickleball courts at the 10 Hampton Road property.

Ms. Papakonstantis said they should focus on tournaments which could be a big source of revenue. Mr. Matthews said Exeter could easily raise its pickleball fee. Mr. Bisson said they'd put that money right back into the courts.

b. Board Assignments

**MOTION:** Ms. Papakonstantis nominated Jenn Harrington for Clerk. Mr. Wissler seconded. All were in favor.

**MOTION:** Ms. Harrington nominated Brinn Sullivan for Vice-Chair. Mr. Wissler seconded. All were in favor.

**MOTION:** Mr. Wissler nominated Stephanie Papakaonstantis for Chair. Ms. Sullivan seconded. All were in favor.

Ms. Papakonstantis said there are still two openings on the Board. Mr. Bisson said he had two interested people.

c. Gilman Park

Mr. Bisson said the DPW cleared a path around the ballfield from the vines that were overgrown, and he asked Public Works to do it yearly. Organics First purchased a reverse rototiller to do the fields, and the owner of that company will donate his time to do Gilman.

Ms. Sullivan asked about the boat launch, and Mr. Bisson said we are thinking of putting kayak racks for rental there. The racks hold 8 kayaks each; they were built by SST, and we could go back to have more built for Stewart Park. As long as they're not permanent, SELT is fine with them.

Ms. Gilman asked if they had a ribbon cutting for Gilman Park, and Mr. Bisson said no, he wants to put in the picnic tables first. Mr. Wissler said Exeter Junior Baseball would be willing to host the ribbon cutting at Gilman and bring food.

9. Adjournment

**MOTION:** Ms. Sullivan moved to adjourn. Mr. Matthews seconded. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 8:24 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Joanna Bartell  
Recording Secretary