

Recreation Advisory Board  
Tuesday, October 25, 2022  
Town Offices, Wheelwright Room  
7:00 PM  
Final Minutes

1. Call to Order

Members Present: Stephanie Papakonstantis (Chair), Brinn Sullivan, Mike Wissler, Dan Provost, Jenn Harrington, and Bob Dudra; Molly Cowan, Select Board Rep; and David Tovey and Greg Bisson of Parks and Rec.

Members Absent: None

Ms. Papakonstantis called the meeting to order at 7 PM.

2. Minute Approval

a. March 29, 2022

**MOTION:** Mr. Provost moved to approve the minutes of March 25, 2029 as presented. Mr. Wissler seconded. Mr. Dudra abstained, as he was not present at the March meeting. The motion passed 6-0-1.

3. Public Comment

a. There was no public comment at this meeting.

4. Role/Charge of the Advisory Board Discussion

Mr. Bisson read the RAB Mission Statement:

*The Recreation Advisory Board's role is to promote a vibrant, sustainable Recreation Department by providing ongoing support and recommendations to the Parks and Recreation Director, responding to the needs of the community, promoting collaboration, and by fostering a culture of service to all community members both youth and adults of all ages.*

Mr. Bisson read the RAB charge, which was created by the Select Board:

*The charge of the Exeter Recreation Advisory Board is to work with the Parks and Recreation Director, Conservation Commission, YMCA, Town Manager and Select Board to plan and implement a wide range of civic, cultural and recreational opportunities for all residents of Exeter.*

*Study the general recreational development in the Town of Exeter, advise and recommend to the Parks and Recreation Director as to such items which would result in a general improvement of the entire recreational system.*

*Study the entire general recreational programming of the Town of Exeter and recommend to the Parks and Recreation Director such additions or deletions that should result in an improved recreational program.*

*Aid and assist the Parks and Recreation Director in the formulation of future plans, facilities and programs for the ultimate benefit of all users of Parks and Recreation.*

*Study and recommend methods for financing proposed recreation developments.*

Mr. Dudra asked how the committee is involved with the Conservation Commission. Mr. Bisson said we have been promoting each other's events. This past spring, we developed a trail behind Brickyard Park. When the Raynes Barn work is complete we'll do more educational programming with them.

Mr. Dudra asked if Rec helps builders turn land into trails. Ms. Cowan said the Planning Board has regulations they impose, but we're trying to do infill development in town rather than develop open space. Mr. Bisson said there are wetland regulations that limit trails, and we may not want to disturb wildlife.

Mr. Dudra asked if the town works with other communities on interconnected trails. Mr. Bisson said not right now. We have an active railroad which makes a rail trail difficult. After the 10 Hampton Road acquisition, the DPW wants to extend sidewalks in that direction.

Ms. Sullivan asked if the LWCF works with the Conservation Commission. Mr. Bisson said yes, ConCom has purchased several properties with LWCF money. Ms. Papakonstantis said we can look to collaborate more in the future. Mr. Bisson said we're partnering with Kingston to offer a Pickleball clinic in November.

#### 5. Planet Playground Update

Mr. Bisson said we've tabled the Planet Playground project for this year, since we're still in negotiations with the property owner. The land is owned by a company in Manhattan. We're looking again at designs and scaling them back, since they came in a little high. LWCF is anxious for us to submit this project. They're looking for communities to have a Parks Master Plan, which we started last year. Any Federal projects will now fall under the Build Back Better plan, which requires materials sourced from the US. Planet Playground is functional but very worn. We're trying to band-aid it until it can be replaced. The earliest would be 2024. We would have to get the owners to subdivide off an acre. The property is an L shape off 8 Hampton Road. They own it and could say "get it off our property" because they don't want the liability.

Ms. Papakonstantis said voters just approved 10 Hampton Road, so it would be tough to ask for more money this year. Mr. Bisson said if we can find a design the community will buy into, we can look for sponsorship and go into budget season saying we raised x amount of dollars. Ms. Papakonstantis said we

had a good public input session, but she would have liked to look at the designs prior to the session. Because of the public's requests, it was a lot more money. Mr. Provost asked about putting the playground at 10 Hampton Road. Mr. Bisson said we could do that, or we could put it in the green space at 4 Hampton Road. Moving it may be the best case scenario because then we can keep it open during construction.

Mr. Provost asked about the Parks Master Plan. Mr. Bisson said he's creating a draft and will bring it to the Board. Planning is doing a Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan that we want to tie into. Hopefully by the end of 2023 we'll have a Parks Master Plan for the Select Board to adopt. Mr. Provost said he can help.

Mr. Provost mentioned that his wife is on the Arts & Culture and would like to bring murals into town. Mr. Bisson said at the National Conference, he heard about designing parks for the 21st century, and there was a lot about integrating art. Parks should become more equitable. Parks are being designed to accommodate public protests.

Ms. Sullivan asked if the town has a Master Plan. Mr. Bisson said there's an all-encompassing Master Plan. There's no specific chapter for Rec, but it's scattered throughout. Ms. Cowan said the Master plan lets us get buy-in and feedback from the town. Mr. Bisson said his draft of the Parks Master Plan is at 43 pages. It will need public input.

## 6. Powder Keg Update

Mr. Bisson said the Powder Keg Festival was an outstanding event. We sold 3,000 tickets, 1,000 more than previous year. We're still closing the finances but it looks like we'll make \$30,000 each for Parks and Chamber. We sent surveys to the vendors and volunteers, and they said we should go back to one session. There was not enough time, and people felt rushed. Mr. Provost said with the shorter session, people don't want to "waste time" in the chili lines. Mr. Bisson said the goal is 3,000 attendees again, but in one session.

Mr. Bisson said we're going back to a chili judging. Ms. Papakonstantis said we should have a best beer or best 10 beers judging. Mr. Bisson said brewers hate when people rank beers, because a few bad reviews on Untappd [a beer app] can affect sales. Ms. Sullivan said we could have fun categories instead of "best."

Mr. Bisson said we will have a VIP session that allows people to go in early. There will be 500 VIP tickets for an extra cost. The new hours for the session will be 12 - 4, not 12 - 5. The 2023 event will be on Columbus Day weekend. Other towns are doing beer fests now so we have competition.

Mr. Provost asked if the VIP could be a lottery, not pay to play, for equity. Mr. Bisson said we're looking to generate revenue.

Ms. Papakonstantis said she thinks we will get more volunteers if there's only one session. Mr. Bisson said we were short staffed as well as Chamber.

Mr. Wissler asked the ticket price, and Mr. Bisson said \$35 this year, \$45 next year and \$60 for the VIP. Ms. Sullivan asked about cost in other communities, and do they have to pay for parking? We could charge more and there might still be a savings. Ms. Papakonstantis asked what percentage of tickets would be VIP, and Mr. Bisson said 500 out of 3,000. Mr. Bisson said we had a raffle for a lifetime ticket, and there was one winner from Rochester who was very excited. Mr. Wissler said we could reserve 100 VIP seats to raffle off for early purchasers of tickets. Ms. Sullivan asked if we sold swag, and Mr. Bisson said we will bring in vendors. This year we had “vintage” glasses and t-shirts and asked for donations. The band “Matty and the Penders” had former Chief Munck, and all of their tips went to hurricane relief. They will come back next year.

Ms. Papakonstantis said there were some entrances to the event that should be blocked off or have someone stationed there. She’s worried about underage drinking.

#### 7. 10 Hampton Rd Update

Mr. Bisson said it’s hard to get a contractor, but we do have some quotes. We applied for a Community Development Block Grant at \$750,000 for renovations, which would allow us to do the whole thing at once. We will know next week about that grant. There was \$7M available, but there were \$9M of requests. The Governor announced that he’s asking to put up \$20M for community centers from the State ARPA funds, but the proposal needs to go through the Finance Committee and Executive Council. That money would require a match. We need more because just redoing the HVAC would be more than the \$750,000.

Ms. Papakonstantis asked if we had to put in a plan in order to get the grant, and Mr. Bisson said no, creating a design would be part of the \$750,000 project.

Mr. Bisson said we have internet there, so we could move in now if we had to. We had to fix a sewer pipe that was leaking into the pool and the kids used 10 Hampton Road for the bathroom, and one pipe cracked. The FD had to patch it. We can’t use that office. We have to remove the old server room for storage. The CDBG funds become available in January, but we could get D&E going before that. Contractors didn’t want the smaller project of just doing first floor ADA compliance.

Mr. Wissler suggested hiring a design/build firm; there’s a big savings if the key players do the design. Mr. Bisson said we did Level 1 environmental when we purchased, but CDBG requires Phase 2 environmental and we need to have a set of designs. Starting work before Phase 2 is done would disqualify us from CDBG. If we get CDBG, we also have to follow Davis-Bacon [a Federal regulation about paying locally prevailing wages].

Mr. Dudra asked if we will get public input on design. Mr. Bisson said it will be stuck on what we can do. There are some walls that can come down. We’re trying to be multi-purpose. Any public input would be welcome, but the

application is contingent on senior programming, since seniors are automatically considered low-income without verification.

Ms. Papakonstantis said we planned to phase this in. For Phase 1, we wouldn't take too much public input, because it's more to get Rec up and running. Phases 2 and 3 are potential expansion and would have a lot of public input. Mr. Bisson said we're not doing a full elevator, just a lift for three people. We're going to one heating and cooling source and it's more energy efficient. We have to anticipate the energy needs for the existing structure for the next 15-20 years.

Ms. Papakonstantis said last weekend she was glad to see that people with walking challenges were parking at 10 Hampton Road and having a very short walk. Mr. Bisson agreed, but said we have to keep people from parking on the grass. We're planning to put up a temporary barrier.

Mr. Tovey said he's heard interest from the public about a community garden. Ms. Sullivan said she heard public input in Portsmouth and heard constantly about gardens.

#### 8. Summer/Fall Programming Recap

Mr. Tovey said we had another great summer, with good weather, and a busy pool and concession stand. We started selling season pool passes which were popular. Summer camp went well. We would like to see more fundraising for summer camp scholarships. We did have some funds available for a few families, which provided 50%, and other families matched the rest.

Mr. Provost said the teacher's union gives out scholarships by asking teachers to give \$2 from their paycheck. When you register for camp, you could donate \$2 to the scholarship fund.

Ms. Sullivan asked about "Are You In," and Mr. Bisson said we're using that program for everything but summer camp. We don't turn anyone away from any other program.

Mr. Tovey said the pool was busy. We had an issue with the pipes. Swim lessons are back and went well. We maximized the efficiency of the pool during lessons. We also offered private lessons. Next year we're looking to add adult swimming lessons. Golf camp numbers are doing well. Flag football camp numbers were down, and we canceled fall Flag Football. Ms. Harrington said there's an outside league now. Mr. Bisson said we charged that league to use our fields, which makes up for the revenue loss. They never shut down during Covid, so a lot of families gravitated toward them. We're seeing that in basketball as well. Mr. Tovey said we could have gotten registration open earlier for fall flag football.

Mr. Tovey said we put out a soccer survey and heard that there are inconsistencies with coaching. Ms. Papakonstantis suggested setting up a syllabus for Rec sports to make everyone consistent. Ms. Sullivan suggested a coaches' clinic. Mr. Tovey said Mojo Sports provides a lot of resources and practice plans. Mr. Wissler said in baseball, the Red Sox foundation has a ton of

training videos. Ms. Papakonstantis said she uses YouTube videos for ideas to vary her drills.

Mr. Tovey said the Senior Council is back, with a lot of different organizations at the table. We're also looking for residents to join. In March we did an age-friendly community survey, and have the results posted on the town website. Mr. Bisson said Mr. Tovey got an award from NH Governor's Council on Seniors Physical Fitness plan. We'll print his resource guides and distribute them to seniors who sign up for them in 2023.

Mr. Bisson said Bob Glowacky helped us do an intro to pickleball video, which got a lot of interest. We're still waiting on semi-permanent pickleball nets, they're 8 weeks late. Over 200 people signed up this year. Mr. Bisson said USTA accepted Pickleball and similar sport "Padel."

Mr. Tovey said we're planning an overnight trip to Nashville for "Country Christmas", which is bringing in about \$1,000. We're working with Langdon Place on doing Aqua Zumba in the winter.

Ms. Harrington said Rec does an amazing job in summer. She's proud to be part of it. Mr. Dudra said he saw young people and old people together in a vibrant community. Mr. Bisson agreed but suggested he use a word other than "old."

#### 9. Park Improvement Projects update

Mr. Bisson said we've had supply chain issues with the water fountains, so they will be up in the Spring. Park Street Common is our first ADA compliant park. The Kiwanis Club donated two benches. The Budget Committee put out a challenge to do a lot of little things. We put in the Town House Common Gazebo and irrigation. ADA Access to lower courts will be ready next week; the ramp is in. Pickleball nets have been ordered, and we put out a temporary net. We will go to the Select Board in November and ask to trim the trees at the Rec Park. We put two storage bins out there with brooms so people can sweep off the courts. Those trees are too close to the courts. In 2023, there was a warrant article appropriating \$100,000 to the Parks Improvement Fund. The benches around the pool are warped and need to be replaced. There will be brick repair at Townhouse Common. There's a pathway there from the municipal lot but it's hard to see, so we will add safety lighting. At Gilman Park, we'll install a water line, and eventually do irrigation and a water station. We replaced the town dock in 2018 but the gangway was not replaced, so we'll put in one that's lighter and more stable. We need to do door replacement at the pool, since some are rusted. We'll line the Kids Park fencing with fabric, because the fence has sharp jagged edges. For pocket park renovations, we'll start at the municipal lot, which right now is taken up by flower beds. There will be informational kiosks at all parks. We're repainting the pool ourselves. Our Parks Foreman worked in Water Country maintenance for 20 years. Mr. Provost said the [high school] senior service day could do it. Mr. Bisson said all of those projects total \$109,000, and we have \$113,000 in the fund.

Mr. Dudra said that we should look at the tennis/pickleball courts for cracks which are developing. Mr. Bisson said the crew will be patching them in the spring. It's been 18 years since we put them in, so we need to grind them down, but this will mean we lose the courts for the summer.

#### 10. Old Business

Mr. Bisson said Tara Barker now works in Portsmouth, so we have a Rec Coordinator position open. There are people interested but it hasn't yet been posted.

#### 11. New Business

Ms. Papakonstantis said we've gone to quarterly for these meetings, but she proposes going back to once a month and at the end of each meeting seeing if we need to meet the next month based on what's on the agenda. If we have it quarterly, we could lose six months. A lot of us didn't have input on the playground proposals. Part of our role is to educate the community. We'll probably still end up meeting quarterly, but we can be more flexible. The goal is to avoid fire drills at the last minute. Proposals have to be ready for primetime.

Ms. Sullivan asked why the Board went to quarterly. Ms. Papakonstantis said we finished with 10 Hampton Road and didn't have a lot going on, but we felt the repercussions over the next few months.

Mr. Bisson said we also need more members, since we have 3 vacancies.

**MOTION [not voted]:** Mr. Wissler moved that the Rec Advisory Board go back to scheduled monthly meetings on the last Tuesday of every month. Ms. Cowan suggested adding that we plan to skip December and March.

**MOTION:** Mr. Wissler moved that the Rec Advisory Board go back to scheduled monthly meeting on the last Tuesday of every month, eliminating December and March. Mr. Dudra seconded. The motion passed 7-0.

Mr. Bisson said the NH Senior Games and Big Brothers Big Sisters want to come back this year. There will be a different drop-off and pick-up so as not to interfere with camp. Mr. Dudra said he thought that the Senior Games would move the date. Mr. Bisson said no, there are only two certified pickleball refs in all of New England, and Joe is the only one available, and only weekends, and he takes a week or two off in between. We talked to Darren Winham and heard that the tournaments brought in hundreds of people to Exeter. The Police will be there, as well as five or more parking lot attendants. Big Brother Big Sister had attendants in July and there was no issue.

Ms. Papakonstantis said she's doing a fundraiser double header at the Rec Park. The event has already raised \$1,000 from parents.

Mr. Bisson said on Saturday morning, the Halloween parade is back. We haven't had it since pre-Covid. We're looking for volunteer judges. 12-3 is downtown trick or treating.

12. Adjournment

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

Respectfully Submitted,  
Joanna Bartell  
Recording Secretary