

Recreation Advisory Board  
Tuesday, November 29, 2022  
Town Offices, Nowak Room  
7:00 PM  
Final Minutes

1. Call to Order

Members Present: Chair Stephanie Papakonstantis, Vice-Chair Brinn Sullivan, Mike Wissler, Dan Provost, Jenn Harrington, 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. Public Comment

- a. Ms. Cowan mentioned that her sons had seen graffiti at the Rec Park.

3. Minute Approval

- a. October 25, 2022

**MOTION:** Mr. Provost moved to approve the minutes of October 25, 2022 as presented, Mr. Wissler seconded. The motion passed 6-0.

4. New Business

- a. Single Use Plastic Ordinance

Chris Zigmont of the Sustainability Advisory Committee was present to discuss the proposed single use plastic ordinance.

Mr. Bisson said we need to consider how we can transition the concession stand to meet the ordinance. We need to find the products that will work for us. The Select Board pushed back the third reading of the ordinance to Dec 19 to allow the Rec Advisory Board and the Arts & Culture Commission to discuss the proposal. This ordinance means that anytime we have an event, vendors wouldn't be able to sell plastic water bottles.

Mr. Zigmont said that Parks & Rec is likely the largest Department by volume in managing single use plastic. Vendors who come into town and take out a permit would be affected as well. This is designed to be an opportunity, not a punishment. We can't recycle our way out of the plastic problem. We spend 48% of our \$1M trash budget on recycling, but only 5% of plastics can be recycled. Eliminating plastic usage is the way forward. Parks and Rec uses 1,500 or so single-use bottles every year. Canned water is available. Aluminum is recycled and recyclable. A refillable water station would make a dent in the number of single-use bottles required. We could make reusable plastic water bottles available.

Ms. Cowan said this ordinance has become more of an educational opportunity, rather than not allowing people who break these rules to permit events. This was modeled after the Portsmouth ordinance, and the Select Board had questions about Portsmouth's enforcement. Ms. Sullivan said the Portsmouth ordinance was modified, and it's now a recommended set of standards.

Ms. Cowan said we do want to educate and help, but this is a big revenue stream for the pool. There was a compromise about not making anything enforceable until we find economically viable replacement. A lot of this is changing peoples' habits. We don't want to punish people or make it so people can't come to the town. Farmer's Market vendors can use plastic wrap until something else is available.

Ms. Sullivan asked whether this affects town businesses, and Ms. Cowan said it only affects town property or events permitted by the town. Mr. Zigmont said it also won't apply to emergency responders and Meals on Wheels; we will work with them, but in a way that won't have a negative impact on their services.

Ms. Sullivan asked if we hope to implement something broader in the future, and Mr. Zigmont said yes, but we're currently not allowed to regulate other areas according to the State. We want the town to be a leader.

Ms. Papakonstantis asked about compostable cups. Mr. Zigmont said compostables are great but they need to make their way into compost, not recycling. There are organizations that come to events and manage the composting systems for you.

Mr. Dudra said he likes the idea, but can we integrate aluminum cans into the parks? Mr. Bisson said yes, but there's a price point issue. Proud Source water is 8 for \$5 at Shaws; he reached out to see the wholesale price but don't know yet. He would prefer to have a reusable and refillable bottle. Ms. Papakonstantis asked if we used to provide refillable water bottles. Mr. Bisson said yes, we stopped because of Covid but we're looking to bring it back with aluminum. We're looking for a sponsor for that. Kids do lose them. We don't want to push the kids to buy soda. The pool sold 1,400 cans of soda this summer, but we would rather have them buy water or Gatorade. They do sell canned Gatorade, but the price point is high. There are Gatorade packets, but we would also need water.

Ms. Cowan said the ordinance gives Parks and Rec a ton of flexibility. This is an important step to take in this crisis. This is the point of contact where you have the most impact with kids and families. Mr. Bisson said we'll see this summer if water bottles and filling stations would result in a dramatic decline in water sales.

Ms. Harrington said it's not practical to completely get rid of water bottles. Families come in that have nothing to do with summer camp, and we have to have something affordable for them. What's next to get rid of? Mr. Bisson said spoons are easy to get rid of. Compostable spoons are comparable in price, but they tend to get thrown away.

Mr. Wissler said there was \$4,500 income from the snack shack, that's not inconsequential. Has there been outreach to sponsors about replacing that? Mr. Zigmont said it's early, but we have talked about sponsorship. Brewers in town could can water. There's enough language and flexibility in the ordinance to accommodate these concerns. The reality of saving the planet is that it will cost some money.

Ms. Sullivan said if the town passes ordinance that will affect the Department's income, the town should also allocate money from the budget to sustain the service for the community. Why the urgency to pass this ordinance when the snack shack won't open for another 7 months?

Mr. Zigmont said the ordinance is not punitive at all. The Rec Advisory Board will work with every Department to find viable solutions. We could still make progress.

Mr. Provost said if increased costs are passed to children playing soccer, that's a hard thing to support. Ms. Sullivan said it should be paid for through the operating fund, not from people participating in the Rec. Mr. Wissler said he's concerned about pickleball tournaments not wanting to come to Exeter because they will have to follow this ordinance. The burden falls the hardest on the Parks and Rec Department. Mr. Zigmont said he will work closely with Mr. Bisson to preserve the revenue and make it a viable thing.

Ms. Sullivan asked about the long-term plan. Mr. Zigmont said for single-use plastics, this is as far as our purview could currently reach. We could lobby the State for more.

Ms. Sullivan asked why the school can't be considered as the town. Mr. Wissler said SAU 16 isn't town-owned.

Ms. Papakonstantis asked if we will force partners out if they're not willing to comply. Mr. Bisson said most tournaments use the town concession stand. Mr. Dudra said he doesn't recall the Pickleball tournament organizers selling any products themselves.

Ms. Papakonstantis asked if it would apply to giving items away or just selling them, and Mr. Zigmont said all distribution.

Mr. Zigmont asked that the members read the ordinance and come back with any questions. He hopes that the members will be on board. We'll find a way to do this without impacting revenue and it will be positive for our town.

b. 10 Hampton Road Update

Mr. Bisson said we did not get the CDBG. The Governor has proposed a \$20M community center fund, but we don't know where it is in the process. It would have a 50/50 match up to \$1M. We will end the year with a balance of \$190,000.

c. Sidewalks on Hampton Road

Mr. Bisson said Public Works and Planning haven't redone their sidewalk plan since we bought 10 Hampton Road, but Dave Sharples is open to applying

for a TAP grant for Hampton Road like the one we got for Kingston Road. The Kingston Road project took a very long time.

d. Planet Playground Update

Mr. Bisson said there's still no update from the current owner.

e. AARP Sponsorship - Townhouse Common

This summer, David Tovey applied for an \$18,000 AARP grant for renovations of Townhouse Common. We did not get the whole grant, but AARP NH reached out about excess funds and will sponsor our new benches for Townhouse Common at \$5,000.

f. Summer Camp Scholarship Update/Ideas

Mr. Bisson said the Kiwanis Club has offered \$2,400 for two sponsors. We sent out a call to nonprofits to match those funds. Pickleball is popular. Don Cloutier, the Pickleball coordinator, wants to do a small Pickleball tournament this spring to raise money for scholarships.

g. Powder Keg Update

Mr. Bisson said Rec and Chamber each made over \$33,000 from the Powder Keg Festival. 2023 tickets go on sale Thursday, including VIP tickets. We're going back to reusable cups, moving away from compostable cups to reduce waste.

h. Dog Park Inquiry

Mr. Bisson said there are over 2,300 dogs in town, and people are passionate about dog parks, but the town doesn't own land for it. No one wants one next door to their house. Mr. Provost asked if dog parks are a liability, and Mr. Bisson said no more than any other Rec activity, although there is a maintenance question. It would take a lot to develop one even if we found land, but this group would probably go out and fundraise. A dog park ranks under disc golf, but we would need 18 acres for a full disc golf course. Ms. Sullivan asked if any trails could have dogs off-leash, and Mr. Bisson said that would be a question for Kristin Murphy. It's hard to enforce anyways. We ask that people be respectful. We worked with Kristin Murphy on a Master Plan for the Parks, and a volunteer is now working on that.

i. Recreation Coordinator Hiring Update

Mr. Bisson said we started the process of hiring a Rec Coordinator today. We had 43 applicants, and over half were qualified with degrees or experience. 6 finalists are coming in for interviews.

j. Holiday Update

Ms. Papakonstantis said Santa's Mailbox is up. Please get letters in by December 18. Mr. Bisson said the Holiday Block Party is Thursday. The road in front of Town Hall will be closed at 2 PM.

5. Old Business

Mr. Bisson thanked Dan Provost for establishing the Community Fridge. Mr. Provost said it's outside the Y and follows a 100% mutual aid model, so there's no need to prove need. It's available 24 hours. We're getting the message out and trying to get volunteers for fridge checks.

6. Adjournment

**MOTION:** Mr. Wissler moved to adjourn. Ms. Sullivan seconded. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 8:20 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Joanna Bartell  
Recording Secretary