

Recreation Advisory Board  
Tuesday, March 7, 2023  
Town Offices Nowak Room  
7:00 PM  
Final Minutes

1. Call to Order

Members Present: Chair Stephanie Papakonstantis, Brinn Sullivan, Mike Wissler, Dan Provost, and Nick Nordin. Greg Bisson and David Tovey of Parks and Rec were also present.

Members Absent: Bob Dudra, Jenn Harrington, and Molly Cowan, Select Board Rep

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

2. Public Comment

- a. There was no public comment at this time.

3. Minute Approval

- a. November 29, 2022

**MOTION:** Mr. Wissler moved to accept the minutes of November 29, 2022 as presented. Mr. Provost seconded. The motion passed 6-0.

4. Basketball Recap

Mr. Tovey said everything went smoothly at Main Street School with the “Little Shooters.” The Travel League was unorganized and we got some angry phone calls about it. We will be looking at other league options. Mr. Nordin, who was a coach, said his focus was on kids helping their teammates. We weren’t really keeping records. Mr. Nordin added that Mr. Tovey did a great job with communication, and the Mojo app helped us to communicate. Parents were enthusiastic. There were other coaches more focused on winning. Overall he had a positive experience. Mr. Bisson said we’re going to work with the school district on when they do gymnastics, because having it at the same time as basketball was an issue this year. Ms. Papakonstantis asked if there would be gym availability at Tuck. Mr. Bisson said no, Kensington and East Kingston use that as their home gym. We have more control over using Lincoln Street School and Main Street School. Mr. Wissler asked if the coaches that were an issue were in our Rec League, and Ms. Papakonstantis said no, they were part of the Stratham and Greenland Rec Leagues. Some were wonderful but it was a whole season of 6’5 men yelling at her. She didn’t like the girls watching a man talk to a woman that way.

5. Summer Camp Enrollment

Mr. Bisson said 140 campers are signed up for session 1 and 142 for session 2. The max per session is 185. We’re in the midst of interviewing staff. We have 8 or 9 returning Lifeguards. There are 3 Manager positions, with one already full and an interview tomorrow. There's a returning Assistant Manager but no Managers are

returning. Ms. Sullivan asked about the minimum age for a Lifeguard, and Mr. Tovey said the American Red Cross says 15. We try to do at least 16 but did hire a few 15 year olds last year. Ms. Papakonstantis asked about training. Mr. Bisson said they have a couple weeks of training for 2-3 hours in the afternoon and one all-day training. Last year we paid a camp specialist to come and do a training, but we're hoping to find someone locally this year.

Ms. Papakonstantis said when her son was younger the Counselor engagement with the kids was greater. The perception now is that counselors are on their phones or not paying attention to the kids. Mr. Wissler said the phone thing is the nature of the beast. Even 10 years ago kids weren't as glued to their phones. Ms. Papakonstantis said phones should be only for emergencies for both Counselors and kids. Mr. Bisson said we do encourage staff to take pictures with their phones. It's a balancing act. We're adding a component of DEI training, since we did have some issues last year. Ms. Sullivan suggested using the acronym JEDI instead of DEIJ to be more engaging. Ms. Papakonstantis suggested training venues like ropes courses. Ms. Sullivan suggested that we could collaborate with other Rec Departments and split costs.

#### 6. 10 Hampton Road

Ms. Sullivan asked if changes to the property such as 10 Hampton Road and Planet Playground will change the flow of camp pick-up and drop-off. Mr. Bisson said if we do drop-off at 10 Hampton Road, getting kids to the playground is tricky. We're doing parking lot improvements for both sites. Ms. Papakonstantis suggested that parents could line up in traffic for drop-off rather than getting out. Mr. Bisson said don't want to back people up down Hampton Road. The first day is the most hectic. We need to remind parents that drop-off starts at 8, not before. Ms. Papakonstantis asked how many bike racks are available at the Rec Park. Mr. Bisson said there's one rack that can accommodate 20 bikes.

Ms. Papakonstantis asked about rain days. Mr. Bisson said at last night's Select Board meeting, he reported that he put out an RFP to do basic renovations to 10 Hampton Road to get the Admin staff in there and create two programming spaces on the first floor. This would require an ADA egress and entrance on the back and fixing the bathrooms for ADA compliance. That should be done by May 31st and would be able to get them into the first floor. It has more square footage than the pool bathrooms, at least.

Mr. Bisson said he also presented to the Select Board last night about the Community Center Investment Program for \$20M. They will fund projects between \$100,000 - \$1M with a 15% match. The Rec Revolving fund has \$185,000, of which we can contribute \$100,000 to the match. \$25,000 is left over from the warrant article. The Rec Impact fees have \$36,000. To have a stronger application, we should have more than the 15% minimum. We're hoping to use some ARPA funds. This grant would allow us to do more, such as replace the HVAC system, add ADA accessibility to the 2nd floor, replace the flooring through the entire building, make programming space renovations, enhance the entrance, create a second means of egress from the second floor, do drainage work around the building, and make electrical upgrades. We'll also have a level 2 energy audit of the building done to identify areas where it could be more efficient. The

timeline for the grant is aggressive; the application is due April 21st and the evaluation will be in May. We only have an RFP out now for minor stuff; two bids were submitted last night and the Select Board sent it back to us to review. A local contractor came in low, but the timing may not work out. Mr. Wissler asked if the grant has to be very specific on the nature of the projects. Mr. Bisson said no, the process just needs to be started within six months of the award. Ms. Sullivan said if you can't quantify your readiness, they wouldn't want your application. Mr. Bisson said we do have the numbers, since we put them together for the Community Development Block Grant. The big thing is the accessibility of the building. You need to have the matching funds. Ms. Papakonstantis said the Select Board wants precise numbers. Mr. Bisson said a letter from Rec Advisory in support would also help.

**MOTION [not voted]:** Ms. Sullivan moved to support the Parks and Rec Director in moving forward with the Community Center Investment Program grant application. Mr. Provost seconded. Ms. Sullivan asked if we need to add "and write a letter of support to the Select Board."

**MOTION:** Ms. Sullivan rescinded the previous motion and Mr. Provost rescinded his second. The motion passed 6-0 and the motion was rescinded.

**MOTION:** Ms. Sullivan moved for the Rec Board to support the Parks and Rec Director in moving forward with the Community Center Investment Program grant application, and to include a written letter of support from the Rec Board to the Select Board. Mr. Provost seconded. The motion passed 6-0.

Mr. Provost volunteered to write the letter. Mr. Nordin asked what should be included. Mr. Bisson said he requested a technical assistance meeting, so he can ask those kinds of questions. For the energy audit, we got a quote for \$4,800, but we can hit up a local company to help offset the cost. Ms. Papakonstantis asked if Friends of Rec can help, and Mr. Bisson said we have to re-engage with them. That group doesn't have a Chair now. They had trouble with finding a goal after the big project a few years ago.

## 7. Planet Playground Update

Mr. Bisson said there has been open dialogue between the company [that owns the Planet Playground property] and the Town Manager's office. Hopefully we will have some news next month. The grant application for LWCF is open, and if we can nail down the sale of the Planet Playground property we can apply. There's a bill in NH that will require any playgrounds built after Jan 1 2024 to have poured-in-place flooring, but that's already part of our design.

Ms. Papakonstantis said we want to sit down with these planners and reset expectations. In previous designs, there was too much space. They were too theme-based and too expensive. We can keep it fun but more generic. Mr. Bisson said the spacing of the design is compliant. Mr. Wissler said the equipment has to have a fall radius. The current Planet Playground would be deemed extremely dangerous.

Mr. Bisson said the company that built Planet Playground re-engaged. He's open to it but it would have to be design and full construction, not a community build.

#### 8. Spring/Summer updates

Mr. Tovey said this summer we're adding new swim lessons, including a parent-child class that would go down to six months old. We got feedback from the swim instructor last year that we could be going younger. We're also adding adult learning to swim classes. The adult volleyball program may need some new equipment. We have portable nets at Talbot Gym, but the group that approached us is intermediate to advanced so they're looking for better equipment. Ms. Papakonstantis suggested doing a triathlon prep club at the pool.

Mr. Tovey said this spring, we're looking to host an Exeter Senior resource fair to launch our new resource guide. It's 32 pages and most of the resources are free. Different agencies will give this out. He's going to work with Bob Glowacky on an electronic version. Ms. Papakonstantis asked about advertising in the resource. Mr. Tovey said there's a Meals on Wheels monthly calendar; they're interested in printing this for us, but they would add a few pages of paid advertising. The guide will continue to grow. We can add information about the Community Fridge. We're looking to do a press release about the guide.

We're planning our Senior Summer BBQ for May 25 at Town Hall. Ms. Papakonstantis said we should try to get younger volunteers for that event in order to integrate the generations. Mr. Provost said there's a "Seniors Serving Seniors" event at the end of the school year. Ms. Sullivan said we should be careful with age-friendly wording to put it in an uplifting way. We don't want to speak as if the senior is helpless.

#### 9. Park Improvement Capital Reserve Funds

Mr. Bisson said town election is next Tuesday, so please vote. There is some deferred maintenance, so we're hoping that the \$100,000 Park Improvement Fund allocation passes. We ran fiber to 10 Hampton Road and left a spool at 4 Hampton Road to connect it, which will increase our security cameras. We're working with the Fire Department to put a year round AED at the ball fields. We have to buy special cabinets to keep it cool in summer and warm in winter. It's wired to our alarm system, so if opened it wires Dispatch and takes a picture of who opens it. We have had a lot of internet problems, so having it in the town network will be more reliable. We're putting the last touches on the ADA ramps at the tennis courts. We will need to contract out the concrete work. We will cut away a portion of the upper courts for the ramp. We're working with Northeast Passage on adaptive pickleball, so we will have wheelchairs there. The pool needs painting this year; our Parks Foreman was the Director of Maintenance at Water Country and we have a new laborer also worked at Water Country. They will save us \$60,000 by doing it in-house. We're looking to do that in late April. We'll be laser regrading the softball fields at the Rec Park. That work is recommended every 3-4 years. We have to go with a certified Dura Edge contractor. They will sod cut the perimeter of the infield and make sure we don't have that lip

anymore. We're planting 6-8 trees at Brickyard Park. Ms. Papakonstantis suggested dedicating those trees to people in town who have given service.

Mr. Bisson said we're adding windscreens to the lower tennis courts. We're adding irrigation at Park Street Common and renovating the infield there with a native infield mix. That will be in the fall. We'll also be doing a Gilman Park infield renovation. We'll connect the new gazebo at Townhouse Common to the existing sidewalk to make it ADA compliant. We'll replace the gangway at the Town Dock. Ms. Sullivan asked who manages the boat launch ramp, and Mr. Bisson said DPW and the State. It gets washed out every year. The town should apply for a permit to replace it with a concrete log ramp.

Mr. Bisson said we'll be doing fence replacement and repair between 4, 8, and 10 Hampton Road. There's an Eagle Scout project to build a permanent gaga pit at 4 Hampton Road. We'll put temporary fencing at 10 Hampton Road so people don't park on the grass. At the Gilman Park pavilion, we're looking to mimic the guardrail to go around. We're planning to put a new playground there in the future. There will be new benches in front of the PEA boat house. We're looking at possible ADA matting at Kids Park.

Mr. Wissler said EJBSL will turn over Gilman in the spring. Regarding the AEDs, the FD will train coaches on first aid, CPR, and AED. Mr. Bisson said he suggested pickleball regulars get certified as well.

#### 10. Old Business

- a. Ms. Papakonstantis said Powderkeg tickets have been on sale since last year. We're doing one full session this year, not two. Mr. Bisson said we're starting planning meetings this month to work on sponsors.
- b. Mr. Bisson said we're looking for a water bottle sponsor for summer camp. Ms. Sullivan asked about using plastic. Mr. Bisson said the proposed plastic ordinance is now a warrant article by petition, so the Select Board decided not to make a decision yet. We're looking at having Pepsi putting in a fountain system at the concession stand, which can do Gatorade syrup. The profit margins are better than currently. Pepsi wants to sponsor umbrellas for our pool and some events.
- c. Mr. Wissler asked if there had been any movement on the skate park project. Mr. Tovey said our goal was for them to take the lead on that, but it fizzled out. Ms. Sullivan said it's millions of dollars for what they're looking for, with repairs, safety, and better lighting. Mr. Bisson said we need more buy-in because we clean up lots of debris there.

#### 11. New Business

- a. Ms. Sullivan asked about the bike-walk survey. Mr. Bisson said it's closed but we haven't got the results back.
- b. Ms. Sullivan said the April meeting is during school vacation week so we should think about bumping it. Mr. Bisson said we will do a doodle poll about a date of May 2nd.

- c. Ms. Sullivan asked if the Board could get a printed out schedule of 2023-2024 meetings. As a group we could say when we're not meeting. We could be more strategic about it. When we meet, we're at the 2 hour mark; could we take a few items off? Mr. Bisson said we hadn't met since November. If we met monthly it would have been shorter. Mr. Provost suggested adding estimated times to each agenda point. Ms. Sullivan suggesting adding sample motions.
- d. Ms. Papakonstantis asked about the Sweetheart dance, Mr. Bisson said we had good numbers and lots of sponsorships. Ms. Sullivan asked if there's pushback looking to bring back a father-daughter dance. Mr. Bisson said no, we were inclusive from the beginning. Mr. Tovey suggested an 80s prom night for parents. Mr. Bisson suggested providing childcare at future events.

#### 12. Adjournment

**MOTION:** Mr. Wissler moved to adjourn. Ms. Sullivan seconded. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 8:47 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Joanna Bartell  
Recording Secretary