

Newton Parks & Recreation Commission
Meeting Minutes-Hybrid Meeting
7:00 p.m. – Monday, October 16, 2023

Attending: Arthur Magni, Chair, Byron Dunker, Vice-Chair, Commissioner Banks, Beth Wilkinson, John Rice, Gloria Gavis, Randy Johnson, Midge Connolly, Sheila Butts, Mark Feldhusen, Jack Neville

Meeting began: 7:05pm

1. Meeting Minutes – September 18, 2023

- Approved 8-0

2. Commissioner's Report

- Paddy's Road Race- October 15- great success with over 2,700 participants and volunteers. This event helps to support the Athletes Unlimited Program.
- Harvest Fair- October 15 & 16, another great success, this event is growing every year. There were 140 vendors and over 1,000 in attendance. This year a special accommodation was made for a sensory quiet zone which was well attended. Green Newton is a big supporter of this event. Ms. Gavis asked if the Harvest Fair is a revenue generator. Commissioner Banks stated it does generate some revenue that supports other culture and arts initiatives throughout the year.
- Gath Pool is gone; the steps will be removed soon. The plan is to open the pool by June 2024. There will be a 30% increase in staff requirements. The department is looking at fees and the types of passes offered to off-set the increased staffing/operating cost, an example is to offer a non-resident season pass. Ms. Connolly suggested being careful with offering non-resident seasonal passes this could cause overcrowding on hot days.
- NSHS Turf project is complete.
- NNHS Lighting project- 3 posts are installed and working. The fourth pole is nearly complete. The NNHS Athletic Director turned on the three lights for a game last week and the kids were very excited.
- Levingston Cove Project- waiting for the delivery of the safety rails. The rails were ordered a few months ago. Project should be complete by the end of October.
- Public meetings to discuss Crystal Lake beach renovations are being scheduled soon. The left beach has eroded, we cannot put sand in the location as it will erode into the lake. The bath house will stay in the existing footprint and will not be part of the beach renovation.
- Cold Spring Park Waypoint signs have been installed on the trail. This was an Eagle Scout Project, by BSA Life Scout Owen Serra of Troop 209 in Newton. Owen did a great job! The signs look great and are a good template for other parks and open space.
- The Newton Centre Hut, and Farlow Park gazebo received a paint refresh, and they look great.
- The department will soon be scheduling public meetings to discuss the field renovation projects at Burr, McGrath, and Albemarle. If you stop by these areas, you will see the fields are in tough shape from overuse. Ms. Connolly agreed the areas are worn.
 - Mr. Rice asked if the artificial turf scheduled for the Albemarle field renovation is required to be approved by the Council? Commissioner Banks commented the funds for the Albemarle renovation are ARPA (American Recovery Plan Act of 2021) funds and do not need to be approved by the Council.

- Mr. Dunker commented the NNHS turf project will go before the Council for approval. Ms. Butts asked if the recent discussions/concerns about artificial turf will affect the request. Commissioner Banks commented there has been different opinions and ultimately support. The department cannot keep up with the grass fields at the use levels required. Ms. Connolly commented an example is the Newton Highlands Fields it is unsustainable keeping up with the grass fields, water, and seed. It would help to add trees and plants.
- Mr. Dunker commented if a grass field does not have lighting, this time of year when it gets dark early the grass field has a chance to recover. The trade-off with having the lights on a grass field is there is additional usage.
- Ms. Wilkinson commented additional information is required for an overall analysis comparing grass field to artificial turf.
- Commissioner Banks commented additional field space is needed, it is challenging to find green space, purchase the green space and keeping up with the additional maintenance costs. Trees may need cleared and parking lots paved to support a field complex.

3. Committee Reports

- Community Preservation Committee -*B. Dunker*
 - No meeting this month, no new requests.
 - Current requests: Warren House Windows and two churches requesting steeple replacement. Ms. Wilkinson commented she spoke with Representative Khan. Rep Khan received a \$100,000.00 grant from the state for the Newton Centre Church, the congregation is very small at the church. What happens if the church closes. Mr. Dunker stated the city has a lean on the location when CPC money is provided for a project.
 - Ms. Butts commented the CPC received 1% of the budget for projects, can the CPC request an additional 1%. Commissioner Banks commented additional money was requested, the override was not approved. Ms. Butts suggested the override items be broken down into more detail. People may approve the override if they have more info on where the money is going.
- Urban Tree Commission – *B. Wilkinson*
 - Ordinance is under review by the City Council, questions were forwarded from the Council to the Law Dept for review, the reviewed questions will be sent back to the Programs & Services Committee and then go to the full Council for a vote.
- Farm Commission – *B. Wilkinson*
 - No meeting last month.
 - There is a gathering this week to say good-bye to Sue Bottino
- Off-Leash Area Working Group (OLAWG) – *Commissioner*
 - Meeting scheduled next week
- Arts & Culture – *G. Garris*
 - No report, recent events were covered in the Commissioner’s report.

4. New Business

- Mr. Neville provided an update on the Golf Foundation. Mr. Neville has stepped down as Treasurer, Arlene Franklin is the current Treasurer. New members have been added to the Board. An Audit & Finance Review Committee has been created.
- Mr. Neville reported the maintenance building project is on hold after review by Public Buildings. There is a major water drainage issue. The building floods during heavy rain. Robert McNeil, Architect is working on the issue.
- Commissioner Banks proposed an update to the re-occurring Outdoor Special Event Permit Application process. Any re-occurring event required to appear before the Commission:
 - Ms. McLaughlin will reach out to the event managers in January and confirm the event is scheduled for 2024.
 - All confirmed events will be presented by the Commissioner during the January meeting.
 - Public Hearings would be scheduled in early spring.
- All members present agreed to this change for the 2024 special event season.

*Meeting Adjourned 8:15 pm,
Respectfully Submitted,
Robin McLaughlin, Commission Secretary*