

Newton Parks & Recreation Commission
Meeting Minutes-Hybrid Meeting
7:00 p.m. – Monday, November 20, 2023

Attending: Arthur Magni, Chair, Byron Dunker, Vice-Chair, Commissioner Banks, Beth Wilkinson, John Rice, Gloria Gavis, Randy Johnson, Midge Connolly, Sheila Butts, Dr. Michael Richardson, Jack Neville, Ted Chapman

Meeting began: 7:03pm

1. Meeting Minutes – October 16, 2023

- Approved 8-0

2. Cold Spring Park – Little Seed Library Proposal

- Commissioner Banks introduced Ahron Lerman, Assistant Director of Parks + Open Space. Mr. Lerman is the project manager for the Little Seed Library.
- Alan Noguee, Friend of Cold Spring Park presented the proposal for Sophie Turney, Eagle Scout, BSA Troop209. Mr. Noguee reported the pollinator garden recently planted in Cold Spring Park is a success, it has filled in quickly with an abundance of bumble bees and a diversity of butterflies, hummingbirds, and native bees. The pollinator garden has been educational for the community. Pamphlets have been handed out at the Farmer’s Market.
- Commissioner Banks asked if the garden has been easy to care for. Mr. Noguee replied yes, it is a community effort, Katherine Howard has provided significant help, Marc Welch City Forester/Deputy Commissioner has provided access to a water tank.
- To build on the garden’s success Ms. Turney is proposing a Little Seed Library be installed next to the pollinator garden away from the driveway. The library would disperse seeds from the garden and other native plants, increase biodiversity, support bumblebees and butterflies and increase climate resilience.
- Mr. Chapman asked if the drawers holding the packets of seed, of the library, slide out for easy access and is there any concern for vandalism. Mr. Noguee replied, the drawers do slide out and there have been no reports from other groups of any vandalism.
- Mr. Noguee commented, The Friends of Cold Spring Park have committed to the garden stewardship, working with Parks, Recreation and Culture Department, maintaining the library box, supply and monitor seeds in coordination with Newton Community Pollinator Project & Mystic -Charles Pollinator Pathway Group. Stock with brochures and books in the off-season, and publicize through newsletter, Facebook, and co-sponsor groups.

Ms. Wilkinson made the motion to approve the proposal. Mr. Neville seconded the motion. Motion passed 8-0

3. Commissioner’s Report

- Levingston Cove project ribbon cutting was well attended with over 100 people in attendance. The renovation allows for more space on the pathway, additional seating and the multi-level design protects the lake from erosion and storm water run-off. A temporary fence will remain in place to protect the newly planted grass and plants while they establish over the next year.
- Wellington Park Play structure ribbon cutting was also well attended with over 150 people in attendance. This project brought the community together. The neighbors raised around \$110K for the play structure.

- Mr. Rice commented in previous budgets there was money designated for playgrounds and asked if this is still in place. Commissioner Banks replied yes, there is \$150K in the budget for playgrounds. Next up for replacement is Forte Park and Memorial Playground. Playground money was in the override that was rejected, and with the cost of play structures, we must allow the funds to build up to purchase a play structure and fundraising by the community helps as well.
- NNHS light project is complete.
- Washington redesign project is being presented by the Planning department this week and PRC will have a few slides including a proposal for a new off leash area, Walker Dog park.
- Gath Pool Project is underway; the concrete is scheduled to be poured in a couple weeks before the cold weather. Mr. Dunker asked if there have been any issues. Commissioner Banks commented the water table continues to come in and has been an issue for the contractor. Mr. Chapman commented the high-water table tells us of the history and flooding of the Cheesecake Brook. Commissioner Banks commented the pool deck footprint is expanding and was required to have flood mitigation built into the project. Mr. Chapman asked if this has any implications for the pool structure. Commissioner Banks stated water did not drain below the water filters and the drainpipes are built to handle the ground water pressure.
- Cultural Development is having a gingerbread house contest. The houses will be displayed 12/4/23-12/15/23. The Commissioner, Public Buildings Commissioner and Mayor Fuller will be the judges.
- Mr. Neville commented during the recent the area council meeting it was noted the Northland Splash Pad project was moving up a year. Commissioner Banks confirmed yes, once the final review is done by the PRC Department, Northland can apply for the development permits and the splash pad will be built.
- **Committee Reports**
 - Community Preservation Committee -*B. Dunker*
 - The second church's request has been reduced, they are now asking for historical preservation of roof and façade.
 - Urban Tree Commission – *B. Wilkinson*
 - A discussion with the Law Department is scheduled next week regarding the proposed ordinance.
 - Farm Commission – *B. Wilkinson*
 - Allyson MacKenna, the new Executive Director was introduced.
 - Off-Leash Area Working Group (OLAWG) – *Commissioner*
 - At the recent Washington St. redesign meeting the Walker Park proposal was discussed, and revisions made.
 - The Edmands Park neighbors group presented a proposal for off-leash on open trails. The neighbors are researching how it will work and how it will be managed. Ms. Connolly commented she has been using the park for over 50 years, things work well at the park and now they are trying to control it. Commissioner Banks commented as a public park a leash is required. The group is asking to define use and access resources. There is a similar issue in some conservation areas. Ms. Wilkinson commented, walking with kids in the park, and they are approached by dogs off-leash it can be terrifying for the kids, and adults. Mr. Johnson commented he agrees

with Ms. Connolly and the issue Ms. Wilkinson brings up; he can see how it could happen.

- Arts & Culture – *G. Gavis*
 - Things are quiet right now. Winterfest is scheduled in January.

4. New Business

- No new business

Meeting Adjourned 8:11 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Robin McLaughlin, Commission Secretary