

Newton Parks & Recreation Commission
Meeting Minutes-Hybrid Meeting
7:00 p.m. – Monday, January 22, 2024

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

Meeting began: 7:04pm

1. Meeting Minutes – December meeting was cancelled.

2. Meeting Format

- Chairman Magni informed participants, under the guidance of the City’s IT Department, public meetings using Zoom will be in the webinar format. The webinar format allows the facilitator to better manage unwanted and inappropriate behavior.

3. Commissioner’s Report

- Projects update:
 - Gath Pool Project: concrete pouring is in progress and will be for the next six weeks. Weather has impacted the project, but the contractor has worked extra days to make up for lost time.
 - Spears Garden Project- CPC application has been submitted.
 - Marty Sender Path Project – Request for bid is back out to bid. First request for bid did not receive any submittals.
 - Fields Projects – In the final design stage and preparing bids. Mr. Dunker asked when the construction is expected to begin. Commissioner Banks replied, the construction would begin in the fall. Mr. Feldhusen asked about borings at Albemarle Playground for this project. Commissioner Banks explained soil samples from deep in the ground will be examined to determine the best materials to use to have stable light posts.
 - Forte Park –
 - Athletic field lights retrofit has begun.
 - Playground installation is underway.
 - Ms. Butts asked if the building with the restrooms will be open for use. Commissioner Banks commented the staff will investigate this option, items to consider; staff would need to be onsite when the building is open, building cleaning, supplies and utilities.
- ***Employee of the Year- Derek Mannion, Superintendent of Maintenance*** was awarded Employee of the Year by Mayor Fuller. Mr. Mannion manages the fields maintenance and fees collected for use on the fields. He is a great leader, communicates well with all groups, is always willing to meet and discuss options.
- Programs
 - The Program Managers are running camp programs at Lower Falls Community Center (LFCC) and Emerson Community Center to help families affected by the NTA strike. Mr. Chapman asked if the after-school program at LFCC is running. Commissioner Banks replied no, the after-schools follow the school schedule/calendar. All after-schools closed last Friday when the strike began. Mr.

Johnson asked if PRC is feeding the participants. Commissioner Banks commented the parents were asked to send lunch and snacks, and PRC is providing lunches as needed. Mr. Chapman asked how PRC is notified if the strike is continuing. The School Superintendent notifies the families, The mayor sends a newsletter, PRC contacts the participants.

- Commissioner Banks credits the staff for a great job. They found out Thursday the programs were needed, by Friday the programs were scheduled staffed and open. Both locations are full, with waiting lists.
- Commissioner Banks presented the recurring 2024 Outdoor Special Events. The public hearings will be scheduled in the following months.
 - Lions 5K Road race – NSHS- 05/19/24
 - Nonantum Village Day –Coletti-Magni Park - 06/02/24
 - St. Mary of Carmen Festival- Pellegrini Playground-07/17/24-07/21/24
 - Susan G. Komen Walk – 08/23/24 – City Hall Grounds-lunch stop.
 - Indigenous People Day -Albemarle Playground – 10/14/24
- Pedro Arboleda, an abutter of Hyde Playground reported last summer there were 41 events at Hyde Playground and most events had amplified sound. There were sound readings over 75 decibels. He enjoys the events but requests the sound be at a lower level. Mr. Rice commented he and Pedro have met with Hattie Kerwin Derrick in the Executive Office to discuss this request. Commissioner Banks commented she will contact Pedro to discuss this further, there is a special event permit process and a noise ordinance waiver request. If the event is expecting 500 or more people to attend, the event would be required to appear before the Commission for review and approval.

4. Committee Reports

- Community Preservation Committee -*B. Dunker*
 - No meeting last month
- Urban Tree Commission – *B. Wilkinson*
 - New ordinance was approved by the Council and scheduled to go into effect March first. There are a couple of amendments that have not been approved.
- Farm Commission – *B. Wilkinson*
 - No meeting last month
- Off-Leash Area Working Group (OLAWG) – *Commissioner*
 - Meeting this Thursday. A resident group is presenting a proposal to allow off-leash activity on the Edmands park trail system. The group has held community meetings. Once they present to OLAWG they will work on a final proposal to present to the Commission.
- Arts & Culture – *G. Gavras*
 - Winterfest is scheduled this weekend, beginning with a walk at Cold Spring Park and a soup social at Hyde Playground. Sunday there will be activities at Newton Centre Green.

5. New Business

- Commission Elections
 - Chair & Vice-Chair
 - Chairperson: Ms. Butts nominated Mr. Magni as Chairperson. Mr. Rice seconded the nomination. Nomination passed 8-0
 - Vice-Chair: Mr. Rice nominated Mr. Dunker as Vice-Chair. Mr. Neville seconded the nomination. Nomination passed 8-0

- Community Preservation Committee
 - Mr. Dunkers term on the CPC committee has expired a new appointment is required.
 - Mr. Johnson nominated Mr. Dunker as the CPC representative. Mr. Chapman seconded the nomination. Nomination passed 8-0

Meeting Adjourned 7:55pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Robin McLaughlin, Commission Secretary