



Setti D. Warren
Mayor

Newton Parks & Recreation Commission
Meeting Minutes
City Hall - Room 209
7:00 p.m. –Monday, May 19, 2014



Robert J. DeRubeis
Commissioner

Attending: Arthur Magni, Chairman, Richard Tucker, Vice-Chairman, Commissioner Robert DeRubeis, Peter Johnson, Don Fishman, Bethel Bilezikian Charkoudian, Byron Dunker, Andrew Stern, Michael Clarke, Jack Neville, Peter Kastner, Robin McLaughlin, Secretary

Meeting began at 7:04 pm

1. Meeting Minutes – April 28, 2014 - Approved 8-0

2. Commissioner's Reports on Programs, Forestry and Maintenance

- Coaches Consortium has had the kick-off meeting last month to determine a plan to renovate the playing fields. The Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday evening.
- Parks & Recreation assisted in the planning of the Veterans Day parade.
- There have been a few issues with the abutters of NNHS field with balls being hit into the neighbor's yards. The issues are being addressed with the abutters.
- There was a "Picnic & Play in the Park" event scheduled at Auburndale Cove. The event was very successful and there will be others planned this summer.
- The department, along with Ms. Charkoudian, will be holding the first annual Plant Exchange at the Recreation office on June 14th, 10am-12pm.
- Playground builds are very busy. A policy is being developed regarding playground replacement.
- The Newton Highland Playground project and Farlow Park projects are moving forward.
- The 1st annual Seniors "Over 55" Prom took place at the Post 440 and it was a huge success.

3. Waban Hill Reservoir – Presentation- Waban Hill Reservoir Advisory Group

- Gail Silberstein, Co-Chair, Waban Hill Reservoir Advisory Group presented the process and content of the Waban Hill Reservoir proposal.
- Process:
 - Goal: what does the city want from the Advisory group
 - Vision: best use of property
 - January – April 2013, public meetings with comments
 - A survey was completed of the area
 - A friends group has been formed with a lot of support from the community
- Content:
 - The reservoir is has a unique topography including a body of water.
 - When you are at the reservoir you feel removed from the hustle and bustle of the city.
 - The main feature is the water, the group has suggested removing the existing fence and install a new fence and make the area handicap accessible.
 - Cost: the group has created a feasible plan through phases so this will remain a quality project.
- Chairman Magni stated the Commission needs to take an initial vote to move the project forward.
- Mr. Stern asked if the Parks & Recreation Department would be a co-sponsor for the project. Commissioner DeRubeis stated Katie Holmes from the Planning Department has done the work on the project to date. P & R may become a co-sponsor. Mr. Stern asked what the schedule is to get on the agenda for CPC and MWRA.
- Alderman Baker commented the city has first refusal to purchase the property from the MWRA. This is a special project that can be proposed to the CPC.

- Mr. Clarke stated the biggest feature is the water, there is no source feeding the water. Is there any aquatic life in the water feature? Ms. Silberstein stated there are geese in the area. Commissioner DeRubeis commented he is not sure if there is aquatic life in the reservoir. Mr. Tucker commented it could be lined to prevent foliage.
- Mr. Clarke asked how many handicap parking were proposed. Ms. Silberstein stated possibly 6 spaces.
- Mr. Tucker commented the proposal is for open space and not athletic fields. Safety around the water feature is a constant issue along with the height of the berm. How will the area be policed to make it safe?
- Ms. Silberstein commented there has been lots of discussion regarding safety. A suggestion to have a fence installed on the interior of the berm. If someone wants to climb the fence they will. The neighbors, friends group and community would police the area.

Mr. Tucker made the motion to move the proposal to a public hearing. Mr. Stern seconded the motion. Motion passed 8-0.

4. Bowen PTO- Thompsonville Playground- Basketball court –Jessica Brooks

- The Bowen PTO is proposing halfcourt basketball court in Thompsonville Playground.
- Bowen Elementary School is overcrowded and modular buildings are being installed. The play area currently used has drainage issues and is referred to as the “mud pit”. There is an issue getting the kids outside for recess. A comprehensive plan is being developed which includes use of the upper field (Thompsonville playground).
- The PTO was made aware of a proposal for an off-leash site in the same location. The PTO members met with the Parks & Recreation staff, Mike Cronin, NPS, NSELL and NYS representatives. The group discussed all uses of Thompsonville Playground and came up with a compromise.
- The Bowen PTO is requesting the Commission consider the needs of the school so the group can move forward with the proposal.
- Mr. Stern asked if the modulares are going on school property. Commissioner DeRubeis responded yes. Mr. Stern asked if there is room for a basketball court on school property.
- Ms. Brooks stated there is a basketball court on school property; a second half court is needed for the older children.
- Mr. Stern commented a few years ago that a lot of money was spent to correct the drainage issues. Commissioner DeRubeis stated the area was repaired but it is a low point and a heavily used area so the grass area has become compacted.
- Mr. Ken Temkin, abutter asked what the plans are to expand the school. He stated that the Bowen PTO has not spoken to the abutters. The proposed location, near the water bubbler, is a good location for the half court.
- Mr. Stern asked what the cost is and who will be paying for the half court. Commissioner DeRubeis stated the P & R Department will pay for the halfcourt, DPW will do the work and the Commissioner is not sure of the cost. Mr. Stern asked how this ranks compared to other needs of the department and will the Bowen PTO contribute to the cost?
- Mr. Clarke would like some visuals, costs, etc. for this project to better understand what is being proposed.
- Mr. Stern would like to see where the school property lines are and the P & R property lines are. He would like to see a better presentation with more information to make a good decision. The school created the problem and now the school problem becomes Parks & Recreations problem.
- Mr. Fishman agreed he is not comfortable moving to a public hearing with the information that was provided tonight.
- Chairman Magni requested the Bowen PTO come back with a detailed presentation for the Monday, June 16 P & R Commission meeting.

~~5. Ernst Herman Mayor E. O. Childs Memorial –Michael Clarke~~

- No proposal submitted. Rescheduled for next meeting.

6. New Business

- Mr. Kastner is an alternate on the Farm Commission and reported Angino Farm is doing well. They had a seedling sale this past weekend and were sold out on the first day.
- Mr. Clarke asked where the drain is located in Waban Hill Reservoir to release the water. Commissioner DeRubeis will find out.
- Commissioner DeRubeis reported there is a meeting Wednesday night with Janice Bourque and Josh Morse to discuss the Crystal Lake Bath House master plan possibly going to the CPC.
- Commissioner DeRubeis reported the sad news that the mother of Nancy Scammon, Seniors Director passed away.

Meeting Adjourned 8:30 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Robin McLaughlin