



## NEWTON PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

Zoom Meeting

7:00 PM – Monday April 27, 2020

**Attending:** Chairman Magni, Commissioner Banks, Al Cecchinelli, Richard Tucker, Sam Figler, Andy Stern, Byron Dunker, Melissa Sommer, Midge Connolly, Jack Neville, Mark Feldhusen, Michael Clarke

**Also attending:** Carol Stapleton, Recreation Manager, Sheila Butts, Permit Manager, Stephanie Lapham, Recreation Manager

1. **Meeting Minutes** – March 2020 minutes – Approved 8-0

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

- *Covid-19 update:*

- Winter and Spring programs have been cancelled and refunds are being processed
- Programs have been switched to a virtual platform. The Athletes Unlimited group has had great participation
- Summer programs are being reviewed with the Executive
- Park usage is up as expected with the warmer weather. There are signs posted in all parks, tennis courts and basketball courts with recommendations from state guidelines. Ms. Connolly asked if the playground equipment is closed, Commissioner Banks replied yes and there is signage at all locations
- Staff schedules have changed. Maintenance staff are on a weekly rotation schedule. Admin/Program Managers are working remotely and on-site. Part-time staff are on stand-by status.
- The staff has been amazing throughout the day to day changes caused by the Covid-19 guidelines
- Events- Some are cancelled others are on hold. The Youth Awards are cancelled until the fall.

- *Projects:*

- NSHS Lights
  - Donated equipment has been accepted, a bid for installation is being put out with a summer start date
- Cold Spring Park Trail Renovation- work is in process
- Waban Hill Walking Path renovation is in process
- Tennis Courts- reviewing court conditions and prioritizing



- *Forestry*- Wind storm last week created extensive damage. Full crew and contractors were called in. Fortunately, due to the limited snow this season there is extra money to cover the storm costs.
- *Maintenance*- The Assistant Superintendent position has been filled with a promotion for Rob McClary
- *Budget* – Moving forward slowly but we do know there will be cuts due to the Covid-19 issues
- Mr. Stern asked if Camps start in late June? Commissioner Banks stated each Manager has put together a proposal on what they can run and what is required. Commissioner Banks is working with the Executive Office, State, MRPA and NRPA to tie in all guidelines for camps.
- Chairman Magni stated it is unsettling the department will have to make cuts.
- Mr. Stern asked if the Commission will be reviewing budget cuts. Commissioner Banks replied it seems there will be nothing controversial, but she will update during the May meeting.

### **3. St. Mary of Carmen Festival – Informational- Chuck Proia**

- Mr. Proia reported the festival proposal is the same as last year, but the date may be pushed to August. They will be following State guidelines.

*Mr. Clarke made the motion to move the proposal to a public hearing. Mr. Dunker seconded the motion the motion passed 8-0*

### **4. NSHS light/Field Policy – Special Event Policy**

- Commissioner Banks presented the policy to the Commission. The Policy has been reviewed and approved by the school and the neighbors.
- Mr. Stern asked if the policy applied to NSHS only and is this parks land? Commissioner Banks replied yes, the policy applies to NSHS only and yes this is Parks land
- Mr. Figler asked if the “lights off by 9pm” is a strict rule, what if there is overtime?
- Ms. Butts replied the 9pm shut off time is more for team practice
- Mr. Dunker commented the lights can also be dimmed
- Mr. Stern asked if there are lights in other locations. Ms. Butts replied Albemarle Playground-lights off by 9:30, Forte Park, Newton Highlands-lights off by 9:30. Albemarle Playground lights turn off has been flexible due to the age of the children.
- Mr. Stern asked if the “limit of no more than 25 games per year”, is that a calendar year or academic year. Commissioner Banks replied it is for the academic year and there are no restrictions for city groups.
- Ms. Connolly commented any ordinance in place should stay in place.



- Mr. Stern referenced an addendum referenced in the policy and commented he is not comfortable not being able to review the addendum. Commissioner Banks will forward the addendum, but the addendum is controlled by the school and she was not comfortable having it in a Parks & Recreation Policy

*Mr. Dunker made the motion to approve the policy with a review in a years' time. Mr. Figler seconded the motion. Motion passed 6-2*

## **5. Greenway Stairway-Informational**

- The City of Newton's Conservation Commission is seeking to construct a set of landscape timber box stairs that connect that Upper Falls Greenway (UFGW) and the foot path on the Conservation Restriction This connection will greatly increase ease of access from the heavily used UFGW to the Charles River Pathway to the south. The proposed location for the stairs is already used as an unofficial foot path connection, but foot traffic and stormwater have caused heavy erosion and dangerous conditions.
- The timber box stairs will traverse roughly 50 feet of planar length and span a grade differential of approximately 22 feet. The timber box stairs must include sturdy hand railings on both sides. Stone/rip rap must be installed beside the timber box stairs to manage stormwater runoff and protect the stairs from erosion. The timber box stairs must smoothly and safely connect to the existing surface of the UFGW and the natural foot path.
- Parks, Recreation & Culture has been asked to take on the maintenance of the stairway. We are currently reviewing the materials and asking Engineering to sign off on the construction and installation.
- Chairman Magni asked who was funding the project. Commissioner Banks replied Conservation is funding the project.
- Mr. Stern asked if the area is park land and does this need to be ADA Compliant. Commissioner Banks replied it is a shared space. Ms. Lapham replied with the steep slope it does not allow for ADA compliance.
- Mr. Feldhusen asked if the maintenance hours and cost has been reviewed by Mr. Mannion the Superintendent of Maintenance. Commissioner Banks replied yes Mr. Mannion is reviewing the project but there is not a high level of maintenance.



## 6. Committee Reports

- *Community Preservation Committee*
  - Having a joint meeting for 2.5 million dollars for rent relief
  - There is money available for parks projects
- *Open Space & Recreation Plan*
  - April 30 the draft will be posted for a two-week review by the public. P & R Staff, Luis Perez and Carol Schein were very knowledgeable and helpful during this process
- *Farm Commission*
  - No report
- *Commonwealth Golf Course*
  - Mr. Clarke reported the Newton Conservators approved the project for the Maintenance building renovation. The area needs to be cleared of the trash
  - Sterling Golf Course Management (SGM) gives Commonwealth Golf Course address as their headquarters. Is a private business running their business on parks land, is this parks land?
  - SGM has paid 25k per year to Parks & Recreation and Conservation for the past 30 years, should the fee increase.
  - Mr. Clarke asked if the maintenance building project will be appearing before the Commission and does P & R perform any maintenance at the golf course. Mr. Neville replied there is no scheduled date for them to be before the Commission and all maintenance is done by and paid for by SGM
- *Off-Leash Area Working Group*
  - Ms. Stapleton reported people are being more respectful with the current guidelines.
  - The new furniture is working well at Cabot off-leash area
  - Mr. Cecchinelli asked if we can request the Mayor allow the off-leash specialist to write citations. Ms. Stapleton replied it is not an Executive Office issue it is a Union issue. Mr. Stern asked if the Mayor has emergency authority to allow for citation powers
- *Crystal Lake Working*
  - Signs are being put up to notify neighbors of water treatment and social distancing. The lake could become a Covid-19 hot spot. Chairman Magni commented the Police may have to be more aggressive with citations. Mr. Stern stated the Executive Office will have to be involved.
- *Athletic Fields*
  - Ms. Butts reported she is updating the policy and application



## 7. New Business

- No new business

Meeting adjourned the meeting at 8:48 pm.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Robin McLaughlin*