

Newton Parks & Recreation Commission

Meeting Minutes

On-Line Meeting

7:00 p.m. – Monday, January 25, 2021



Attending: Chairman Magni, Commissioner Banks, Byron Dunker, Midge Connolly, Melissa Sommer, Ellen Gibson, Randy Johnson, Gloria Gavris, Beth Wilkinson, Mark Feldhusen, Jack Neville, Sam Figler

Meeting began 7:00pm

1. Meeting Minutes -December – Approved 8-0

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

- Programs: We are finalizing budget proposals and COVID safety planning and should have an indication on the camp/program offering next meeting. We did notify families that we will be having camp in some form. The biggest question is whether we can safely run full day camps.
- Aquatics: Same as camps, we are doing safety review and compiling a budget to run under the guidelines.
- We had a meeting with a Pickleball group and are looking to bring them under our umbrella of programs so that we can schedule time on courts for them. We want to have a cooperative relationship where we have dialogue back and forth.
- Gath Pool Restoration: Some discussion and buzz within the community, we have finalized our plans for a facility assessment and are working on soliciting a Consultancy Firm. Mr. Johnson asked if this will be a band aide for the issues at the pool. Commissioner Banks replied there has been some work done on the deck and the pump system in the past few years. A full assessment of the facility is included in the cost
- Northland Splash Park: We continue to work with the Northland developer. We are hoping to have some water reclamation/reuse system in place to minimize waste. Staff review of operations and plans.
- Chairman Magni asked what the budget may look like due to Covid. Commissioner Banks commented this will be a tight budget. Budget meetings begin in the next couple of weeks.
- Ms. Gavris asked if there has been discussion of not hiring lifeguards at Crystal Lake due to the success last year without the lifeguards. Commissioner Banks commented the department recommends lifeguards to maintain a safe area for families, but it is challenging. Aquatics staff is difficult to keep and being closed a second season will make it even more difficult to recruit mature, experienced guards.
- Commissioner Banks introduced new member Ellen Gibson, Ward 1.

3. Committee Reports

- Athletic Fields Committee
 - Mr Dunker stated a petition is going around regarding filed improvements. There is a meeting Thursday to discuss projects. All groups have submitted projects that would help their organization. The list will be discussed, and a decision will be made on which project can be done right away and make the biggest impact. **Mr. Figler asked Mr. Dunker to describe the problem the Committee was trying to solve. Mr. Dunker replied that the problem concerns the quantity and quality of multi-purpose playing fields.**
- Community Preservation Committee
 - Mr. Dunker reported \$4million went to the Goldman House to extend assistance for rent/mortgage relief

- Open Space
 - Ms. Wilkinson asked what the timeline is for the ADA review. Commissioner Banks commented the review is almost complete and then will go to Jini Fairley for review and recommendations.
- Urban Tree Commission
 - Ms. Wilkinson reported there has been an increase in plantings but also an increase in loss of trees. The Forestry Division is behind due to the number of storms this winter
- Farm Commission
 - Ms. Wilkinson reported the next meeting is February 24.
 - There is a conservation restriction in place and will be moving forward.
 - Money is needed for capital improvements, the Council has discussed and said no to additional money and suggested the Farm go to the CPC for funds.
- Commonwealth Golf Course
 - Mr. Neville welcomed the new Commission members.
 - The golf course has had a great year, even with Covid. Usually they bring in \$400K-\$500K a year, this year the course made \$660K
 - The maintenance building project will cost around \$2.5 Million
 - The management contract is up for review, some adjustments need to be made. Mr. Figler asked if the “Youth on Course” was corrected. Mr. Neville commented the program was available but with limited hours. Mr. Figler commented the contract review would be a good time to include these types of changes. Ms. Wilkinson asked if a child needs to be accompanied by an adult. Mr. Figler commented at a certain age the kids can go to the course by themselves.
- Off-Leash Area Working Group (OLAWG) – Commissioner
 - Hunnewell: We had an Off-Leash Working Group meeting on Hunnewell. We have a modified plan that keeps a bit more space for passive, non-off leash recreational use. Derek’s team has marked the proposed boundary and we will be putting up info so that park users can submit input.
- Crystal Lake Working Group (CLWG) – Commissioner
 - Levingston Cove designs services: We reviewed Consultancy Firms and have gone with our top choice (who happens to be the most affordable) in Weston & Sampson. Their familiarity with the project will allow for a smooth transition into the next project phase
 - The updated topographic survey conducted by Newton’s DPW is being evaluated by Weston & Sampson’s team. Completed in December.
- Arts & Culture
 - Ms. Gavis commented she is the Chair of Newton Community Pride (NCP). Newton Community Pride provides financial support for Arts & Culture in the City, i.e. public gardens, fireworks and Newton Serves
 - Due to Covid large gatherings have been put on hold, the priority is visual art, a few upcoming projects include, Newton Outdoors and Murals on buildings, working with the Planning Department for art on vacant store fronts. NCP is working with and paying artists for these projects
 - Ms. Connolly asked Ms. Gavis if students were solicited for artwork. Ms. Gavis responded yes
 - Ms. Gavis asked the status of the mural at Pellegrini. Commissioner Banks reported a final draft has been submitted, to be reviewed with neighbors once approved the mural will be installed.
 - Ms. Gavis asked if there has been any discussion regarding Newton Serves or the 4th of July celebration. Commissioner Banks commented there has been no discussion.

4. New Business

- Commission Elections of Chair & Vice Chair
 - Chairman Magni turned the meeting over to Commissioner Banks. Commissioner Banks asked for nominations for Commission Chairperson.

*Mr. Neville nominated Mr. Magni as Chairperson.
Mr. Dunker seconded the nomination.
Nomination accepted 8-0*

- Chairman Magni asked for nomination for Vice-Chairperson

*Ms. Connolly nominated Mr. Dunker for Vice-Chairperson
Mr. Neville seconded the nomination
Nomination accepted 8-0*

- Ms. Gibson asked how Tennis and Pickleball fit into the budget. Commissioner Banks stated the staff is currently meeting with the Friends of Newton Tennis (FoNT) to discuss maintenance and review tennis court signs. Mr. Tom Friedman of FoNT commented like golf, tennis is very popular right now especially with Covid.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:18pm

Robin McLaughlin
Commission Secretary