

# Newton Parks & Recreation Commission

## Meeting Minutes On-Line Meeting

7:00 p.m. – Monday, February 22, 2021



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

*Meeting began 7:03pm*

### 1. Meeting Minutes -January – Approved 8-0

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

- Retirements
  - Paul Lomer, employee for over 30 years and Judy Dore, employee for over 40 years. Commissioner Banks stated Judy has been invaluable over the past year. Judy managed to open the Farmers Market successfully during Covid. The Commissioner introduced Judy to the Commission.
  - Judy commented she HAS loved working for the department it is all about the people and the staff. Judy has worked with 4 Mayor's and 5 Commissioners. Judy started the girls and women's sports in the department. Judy has enjoyed working with Commissioner Banks this past year.
  - Commissioner Banks agrees with the staff when they say Paul has a smile and positive attitude whenever you see him.
- Summer Camps will run this summer. Registration opens March 17 at 6pm
- Working on Lake and Pool opening plans. We are also waiting on state guidelines.
- Recently met with the Pickleball group, they are calling themselves "The Picklers". Working on dedicated court times at Warren and the Cove for Pickleball play.
- Farmers Market is scheduled for Tuesdays at NSHS and Saturday at NNHS
- Newton Community Pride is joining Cultural Development at the Centre Street location.

### 3. Committee Reports

- *Athletic Fields Committee*
  - Mr. Dunker reported the group met and voted on the fees for tier, 3, 4, and 5.
  - The discussion was a long one; several agenda items were postponed until the next meeting. Newton Youth Group (NYG) fees will be discussed and voted on. Once the NYG fees are voted on, the entire packet will be brought to the Commission when all items are voted on.
  - Mr. Dunker stated the fees are to be used to improve the fields.
  - Commissioner Banks stated Sheila Butts, Permit Manager, did a lot of research and presented the info. The key to this process is transparency. Once the NYG fees are voted on, a timeline will be given to the groups to incorporate into their registrations.
  - Chairman Magni commented a former Mayor said he would not tolerate tax on sports. Mr. Dunker replied, the same Mayor said there would be no lights at Newton South High School.
  - Commissioner Banks commented the fees are to be supplemental for field maintenance. The Department will report how the funds are spent.

- Ms. Connolly stated this is necessary funding, the P, R & C Department is woefully under-funded, and they are being transparent about their needs.
- *Community Preservation Committee (CPC)*
  - Mr. Dunker reported the CPC has been quiet. The last meeting was spent reviewing the guidelines
  - Commissioner Banks reported a pre-proposal for an existing facility study at Gath Pool will be presented to the CPC at the next meeting in March. We are requesting funds for the survey to be done. The estimated cost is \$60,000.00. Commissioner is requesting a vote on the proposal, a letter including the vote will be submitted to the CPC.
  - Mr. Dunker commented this proposal is important for the entire city.
  - Ms. Gavis asked the timeline of the project. Commissioner Banks stated the project will start in the fall and be concluded during the winter.

*Ms. Connolly made the motion to support the Gath Pool Memorial Renovation Project pre-proposal. Mr. Figler seconded the motion. Motion passed 8-0.*

- *Open Space – no report*
- *Urban Tree Commission*
  - Ms. Wilkinson reported stum removal is behind due to the snow. Tree plantings are behind due to Covid guidelines for staff. 800-950 trees are lost/year. Green Newton will be providing 170 trees for planting.
  - The tree crews can barley keep up with the street tree issues and the parks also need attention. Hopefully one day there will be money for a crew to take care of parks spaces.
- *Farm Commission*
  - Received a grant and have been doing on-line fundraising and they are \$6,000.00 ahead of budget
  - This year they would like to expand their offerings and they will be installing a new heated greenhouse.
  - They will also be going to the CPC for projects around the farm.
- *Commonwealth Golf Course*
  - Mr. Neville reported things have been quiet. Tree work is being done and there has been a lot of sledding and cross-country skiing at the course.
- *Off-Leash Area Working Group (OLAWG) – Commissioner*
  - We recently marked Hunnewell Playground with lines to show where the expansion will be. We have been receiving feedback form the users. In the spring the department will mark the field again for additional feedback
  - Mr. Johnson asked if the field could be marked with wooden stakes, so it is visible with the snow. Commissioner Banks replied there were discussions on the different ways to mark the field, we do not want the dogs to be injured, paint marking is the safest method.
  - Chairman Magni commented enforcement is the biggest issue and asked if there has been any movement on allowing the Off-Leash Specialist (OLS) citation powers. Commissioner Banks commented this would have to go through the Police Union. When the OLS is on site people will comply with the rules, there are signs with rules, but they generally do not help in people following the rules. Chairman Magni agreed it is like the “No Swimming” signs at Crystal Lake.

- Ms. Stapleton reported recently we have been to non- off-leash areas, Edmands Park, Auburndale Cove, and the trails at CSP regarding complaints of off-leash dogs educating parks users, it is a challenge.
- *Crystal Lake Working Group (CLWG)*
  - Commissioner Banks reported the department will be attending the April CPC meeting to present the Levingston Cove Project. A CLWG will be scheduled after the CPC meeting.
- *Arts & Culture*
  - Ms. Gavris reported Newton Community Pride has moved into the Centre St location with Cultural Development. Working together on Newton Alfresco and the outdoor project.
  - Discussing fundraising to support Newton Serves, 4th of July and Kids fest this spring and summer.

#### **4. New Business**

- No new business

Meeting Adjourned at 7:58 pm

Robin McLaughlin  
Commission Secretary