

Newton Parks & Recreation Commission

Meeting Minutes

Zoom On-Line Meeting

7:00 p.m. – Monday, August 2, 2021



**Attending:** Chairman Magni, Commissioner Banks, Randy Johnson, Ellen Gibson, Jack Neville, Sam Figler, Mark Feldhusen

Meeting began 7:00pm

1. **Meeting Minutes –June-**

- Item moved to September agenda

2. **Indigenous People Day (IPD) Proposal– Public Hearing**

- Kerry Prasad member of the IPD Committee reviewed the proposal. The event is to be held at Albemarle Playground on Monday, October 11. This event is a celebration and ceremony, including Indigenous artists, performers, vendors and educators. The elders will hold a talking circle, this was the ancient way of problem-solving. The event is contingent on Covid regulations and will be held rain or shine.
- Chairman Magni asked if there is concern of backlash due to the day the event is being held, previously Columbus Day. Will a Police presence be required? Ms. Prasad replied this is a family centered event and have met with the Police and the Mayor's office.
- Chairman Magni asked if police details are required for these types of events, like the Festa. Commissioner Banks stated the permit will be reviewed by the Police Department and asked Ms. McLaughlin when a Police detail is required. Ms. McLaughlin commented a detail is required if alcohol is served and if there are any traffic/parking concerns.
- Ms. Prasad added that she did speak with NPD and that she was told that police detail requirements would be evaluated after a permit is approved. She also responded to comment about the date, that Monday, October 11 is Indigenous People Day as voted on by Newton's City Council. The event is insured by the same company that insures 90% of the Pride events held throughout the country.
- Chairman Magni opened the meeting to public comment with a three-minute time limit.
- The following are a summary of each person's comment:
  - Virginia Gardner- 382 Watertown St
    - Ms. Gardner is a member of the Italian American Alliance. Ms. Gardener does not object to this proposal, only the date of the event. She pointed out that Columbus Day is a recognized State and Federal Holiday and feels this proposal is an act of aggression.
  - Steve Navaroli
    - Mr. Navaroli is opposed to a holiday for Columbus, a man who committed many acts of degradation.
  - Kate Carpenter –Prescott St
    - Ms. Carpenter's son has learned about indigenous people at school and is excited to learn more. This is a positive event, there should be no acrimony between the groups, and we should be a better model for our children.
  - Henry Barbaro – 111 Edinboro St

- Mr. Barbaro supports the proposal. There is an issue that something has been taken away from the Italian people. This is a day of celebration for all the Italian Americans have done for America. It is an unnecessary poke in the eye. Change the name of the holiday from Columbus Day to Italian Appreciation Day.
- Deb Griffin- Ashland, MA
  - Support this IPD proposal
- Amanda Caruso – 67 Tolman St
  - Ms. Caruso is a 4<sup>th</sup> generation Italian resident and feels the resolution was rushed by the Council. In the 1800's and 1900's Italian Americans were persecuted.
  - Columbus helped people assimilate to the new world. We offered to share the day but that was refused. Different people read different histories when Columbus landed there was already slavery and cannibalism. November is American Heritage Month, a day should be selected for IPD in November.
- Krysia Villon – IPD Committee member- 7 Westbourne Rd
  - Ms. Villon understands the Italian Americans feel like something has been taken away. Having a holiday called Columbus Day is like having a Holiday called Nazi Day; it represents the genocide of a people.
  - The request to have the event at Albemarle Playground because the Boston Marathon is scheduled this day and Newton Centre is not available. The Italian Festa just took place so it's not like there is no celebration for the Italian-American community.
- Councilor Alicia Bowman
  - The resolution to change the Columbus Day to Indigenous People Day was discussed by the Council several times.
  - A commitment has been made to look at other dates of an Italian Celebration Day.
- Jill Cowie – Roslindale MA
  - Supports the IPD event, this is culturally enriching and fun
- Lois Biener- 62 Prescott St
  - Respects and in favor of Italian American Day but should be detached from Columbus Day
- Haiwatha Brown – Narragansett Tribe
  - Mr. Brown stated his concern is IPD is honored and protected and to defend the principal of IPD. Historians should be brought in to discuss so everyone is on the same page.
- Anpin Shen -35 Kensington St, School Committee member
  - Approves of the proposal and is happy Columbus Day was replaced by Indigenous People Day. No need for competition or conflict, we need to celebrate Indigenous people. We need to be multicultural.
- Jacklyn
  - The event is not taking anything away from the Italian community but adding truth, compassion, and love.
- Sona Fidel
  - Lives close to Albemarle Playground and supports the proposal
- Anawan Weedon - Wampanoag Nation
  - Thank you for voting in IPD and having the opportunity to speak on his people's behalf.
  - Visits schools to educate.

- Will be the MC for this event
  - Terry Sauro - 44 Cook St
    - Supports the proposal for an event, disagrees with the date
    - Saddened there is a disconnect, the community should be coming together
    - November 26 is Native American Heritage Day, and this is a federal holiday so it could be a better date
  - Caz Novak – Brookline
    - Indigenous people have been erased since 1492, it is long past time they are seen and heard. Approves of the proposal.
  - Damian Luna, 12 Charlesbank Rd
    - Indigenous heritage
    - Supports the proposal, this event is a ray of peace and celebration
    - The name of Columbus Day causes pain
    - This is not taking away from the Italian community.
  - Chali Nary Dones
    - Member of the event committee.
    - Stated she is feeling very emotional, why have an IPD? because of all the genocide- Columbus destroyed people
    - Her son was attacked because he is indigenous.
    - Celebrates everyday who she is and where she comes from
  - Councilor Leary
    - Supports IPD
    - Sorry, this has caused angst in the Italian community and is looking for an alternate day with Councilor Greenberg
  - Chief Sachem Fisher
    - Apologized to all the Indigenous People on the call tonight with all the folks who perpetuated genocide willfully and ignorantly.
    - The City of Newton perpetuated genocide for white progress. Does not believe event organizers should have to request permission to use a park
  - Hiena Pandy
    - Supports the proposal this year and for years to come
  - Richard Sauro
    - Feels the hate for Columbus and love for IPD. We are wanting to eliminate hate, but we are perpetuating hate.
  - Councilor Norton
    - Albemarle is a good location for this event and approves of the proposal.
    - Reiterated that the date public hearing is about the event, not rehashing the decision of City Council on IPD vs. Columbus Day
  - Janice Torres
    - Assisted in Juneteenth becoming a holiday.
    - The holiday was created to unify, we are here together, supportive
- Commissioner Banks commented there was passionate input received tonight. The focus of this meeting tonight is to review the permit application for the event and answer questions, particularly about the proposed location.
- Chairman Magni closed public comments and opened comments for the Commission members
- Mr. Neville commented he is having a hard time. He 100% supports IPD, the issue is with the date. Stated that organizers could have asked for any other date but chose this one. It is causing divisiveness.

- Chairman Magni agreed and commented it is against unity and creates tension
- Ms. Gibson asked Councilor Bowman if an item has been docketed to find another date.
- Councilor Norton responded there has been an informal effort to work with the neighborhood before the item is docketed. Still working on it with neighbors.

*Ms. Gibson made the motion to approve the proposal as presented. Mr. Figler seconded the motion.  
Motion passed 4-2.*

3. **Fees** – Item moved to September agenda

- Building Rentals
- Tennis Court permits

4. **New Business** – Item moved to September agenda

Meeting Adjourned at 8:20pm

Respectfully submitted by

Robin McLaughlin

Commission Secretary