

Newton Parks & Recreation Commission

Meeting Minutes

Zoom On-Line Meeting

7:00 p.m. – Monday, Nov 15, 2021

Attending: Chairman Magni, Commissioner Banks, Vice-Chair Byron Dunker, Randy Johnson, Midge Connolly, Beth Wilkinson, Gloria Gavris, Jack Neville, Mark Feldhusen

Meeting began 7:00pm

1. **Meeting Minutes** -October – Approved 8-0
2. **Blue Bike Share Station – Informational -Nicole Freedman, Director of Transportation**
 - Director Freedman presented a proposal for the installation of a Blue Bike Share Station on the corner of Centre St & Comm Ave. The Bike Share program is a two-year pilot, several stations have been installed around the city. The stations are automated rentals, solar, modular, and mobile, no trenching is required to install.
 - There were 4 location options in the area. After feedback from neighbors, staff, and Councilors the corner of Centre & Comm was selected.
 - Ms. Wilkinson commented she has received several calls about this proposal and asked which councilor suggested this location. Director Freedman replied Councilor Baker.
 - Ms. Gavris asked if the location is between the carriageway and footpath. Director Freedman replied yes and commented most people will take the left to the carriage lane. Ms. Gavris commented it will not be adjacent to the carriage lane. Director Freedman replied the group wanted the station visible to all four corners.
 - Commissioner Banks inquired if the company schedules free bike days to attract users. Director Freedman replied yes, they have had several free bike days.
 - Ms. Wilkinson asked if people can be encouraged to not ride bikes across the lawn. Director Freedman stated signs can be posted at the station
 - Chairman Magni asked Director Freedman the timing of the project. Director Freedman stated the station must be installed by December 31. Chairman Magni stated the public hearing will be scheduled December 20.

Ms. Gavris made the motion to move the proposal to a public hearing. Motion passed 8-0

3. **Commissioner's Report**
 - The department has held several informational community meetings, through a zoom webinar, for Gath Pool and athletic field projects.
 - A webpage has been created specifically for the projects:
<https://www.newtonma.gov/government/parks-recreation-culture/parks-open-space>
A shortcut web address was also created: www.newtonma.gov/fieldprojects which links to the same page.
 - Email addresses have been created for each project
 - Wednesday November 10, there was an informational meeting with abutters of NSHS Brandies Field. Due to the change in the school schedule, there is little playtime on the fields before it is dark outside. The school currently uses temporary lighting, each light system uses its own generator. The school has requested permanent lighting for this field.

- Some abutters understand the need but do not agree with the location. This location is on the OSRP it is being moved forward now due to the school schedule issue. We are willing to meet with the abutters and add restrictions to reduce impacts.
- The value of this location is that the field is artificial turf and on the school campus close to the athletic department.
- The light data shows the lights follow the light ordinance in addition, the poles would be lower and closer to the field compared to the stadium light system.
- Gath Pool project community meetings provided an update with the consultant. There is interest from the swim team families for a year-round pool. This option would significantly increase both the project timeline and cost.
- Mr. Johnson commented a year-round pool would be an additional cost, but it would also create opportunity to generate income. A lot of private swim clubs are looking for pool time. Commissioner Banks replied we would have to look at the market rate for rentals, the Commissioner ran the Westwood pool for 7 years, the pool was open 5am to midnight daily and it just about broke even due to the cost of infrastructure, maintenance, staffing, supplies, etc.
- Mr. Dunker commented the Brandeis Rd lights presentation was taken on as a favor to the school, this is a school project the Commission has no oversight. This is the same battle in terms of abutter concerns that the Commission had with the stadium lights.
- The Commissioner stated the department does schedule permits and maintain the field. This update was for the Commission.
- Mr. Johnson asked if a representative from the school was on the call. The school set-up the Commissioner and Mr. Perez Demorizi as punching bags it was absurd.
- Ms. Connolly commented the schools should have had someone in a higher position than the Athletic Director on the panel.
- Mr. Feldhusen commented the school should have reached out to the abutters. Commissioner Banks stated the P,R & C department did send notification letters to the immediate abutters. She also stated that the Principal and Asst. Superintendent were on the presenting panel.
- Mr. Rice commented this project is funded by the schools and requires school committee vote.
- Chairman Magni asked if the Commission can vote or take a non-binding vote. We can be good neighbors, but he does not want to cross any lines.
- Commissioner Banks will find out what the process will be for this project.

4. Committee Reports

- **Athletic Fields Committee – B. Dunker**
 - At the last meeting Sheila Butts presented details on hours of use and other town fee structures. The discussion revolved around an hourly fee or a per person fee for each season. No vote was taken.
 - Commissioner Banks commented the use of the funds brought in from fees would go directly to field care, a field marshal, and/or IPM. The objections were that some of the groups already pay to maintain some of the fields.
 - Ms. Connolly commented the leagues could give scholarships if needed.
 - Mr. Dunker met with the NSELL members and the group did not have any issues with the \$10/head fee.
 - Commissioner Banks commented the money brought in would not bring the fields to premiere status, the total would be around \$80K-\$100K.

- Mr. Feldhusen commented so currently the youth leagues do not pay to use the fields, but they do some maintenance of the fields.
- Commissioner Banks commented yes, and the research shows that most other communities charge fees, the other communities either charge by the person, by the hour, or a hybrid of both.
- Needham spends \$15K/acre on field maintenance, Newton spends \$2-3K/acre.
- Chairman Magni asked if the Commission is voting on the \$10/per person fee during this meeting. Mr. Dunker stated the sub-committee will vote and then bring to the Commission. Commissioner Banks agreed and commented this will give the leagues time to discuss.
- Cliff Slater. Newton Youth Soccer commented the league has spent \$50K over the last few years on Weeks field, if the \$10 fee is added they would like a credit for the difference. Justin Traxler, Newton Girls Soccer agreed.
- Commissioner Banks stated this would be open for discussion with the sub-committee.
- **Community Preservation Committee -B. Dunker**
 - Newton Art Center is requesting funds for an engineering study to relocate the Art Center.
- **Urban Tree Commission – B. Wilkinson**
 - Forestry is planting 500 trees this fall.
 - There has also been discussion on the storm damage to street trees.
- **Farm Commission – B. Wilkinson**
 - The Farm will be requesting funding from CPC for maintenance projects.
 - Mr. Dunker commented the CPC does not provide funding for maintenance projects.
 - The annual report shows the farm did well this year, despite Covid and a miserable summer.
 - The 15th annual celebration was very successful.
 - Crops did well, a second greenhouse is being installed along with some solar cells.
- **Commonwealth Golf Course – J. Neville**
 - The golf course did well financially.
 - Steve Meyer is contacting the Purchasing agent regarding the management RFP. Commissioner Banks commented Steve did send the RFP to the committee members for input.
 - Mr. Neville commented after this contract is awarded and fully executed the group should immediately begin a review of the RFP page by page for the next time the RFP is put out for bid. Commissioner Banks suggested a sub-committee be created to review the RFP.
- **Commission Manual Update – M. Feldhusen**
 - Updating has been going well. Need to determine the best way to present to the Commission.
 - This will be a living document, some info is not included, like field info, current issues, or general guidelines.
 - Commissioner Banks thanked Mr. Feldhusen for taking on this project.
- **Off-Leash Area Working Group (OLAWG) – Commissioner**
 - The Hunnewll Project is complete.
 - There has been an increase in the dog license fee. Part of the fee will be used to pay for dog waste barrels not in off-leash areas.

- There is discussion on restricting the use of off-leash areas to neutered/spayed dogs only.
- **Arts & Culture – G. Gavris**
 - It is quiet right now it will pick up after the 1st of the year.

5. New Business

- Chairman Magni welcomed newly appointed Commission member, John Rice.
- Mr. Dunker announced Mr. Rice will replace Sam Figler on the Athletic Fields Committee.

Meeting Adjourned at 08:20pm
Respectfully submitted by
Robin Mclaughlin
Commission Secretary