

Newton Parks & Recreation Commission

Meeting Minutes

Zoom On-Line Meeting

7:00 p.m. – Monday, January 24, 2022

Attending: Chairman Magni, Byron Dunker, Commissioner Banks, Randy Johnson, Midge Connolly, Beth Wilkinson, Gloria Gavis, Jack Neville, John Rice, Mark Feldhusen

Meeting began 7:05pm

1. **Meeting Minutes -December – Approved 8-0**

2. **Proposal by Newton Little League to Light Murphy Field- Public Hearing**
 - Doug Feldman, NLL and Mike Berry, Musco Lighting
 - NLL has 600 families involved in their program. Lights on Murphy field spring, summer, and fall. The lights would increase fall usage.
 - NLL met with Musco Lighting Company to discuss the types of lighting systems that would work best at Murphy field located on Albemarle Playground. The lights that are currently at NSHS is the system that will work at Murphy Field. There have been conversations with supporters of this project willing to donate financially to the project.
 - The benefits to add lighting:
 - Increased hours of play
 - Upgrade to current lighting
 - Low level of light spillage
 - Newton Little League is requesting approval on the project to begin fundraising.
 - Luis Perez Demorizi, Director of Parks & Open Space presented the staff notes:
 - The lighting equipment will be gifted to the city to operate, manage, schedule and control
 - The lighting equipment meets current sports field guidelines for illuminating fields
 - PRC has evaluated the spillage of the lights at the property lines and those meet the city's ordinance for light trespass
 - The current lighting design assumes Murphy will remain in its current location. However, the current location and layout of Murphy field may be examined as part of the improvement plan, with the possibility of needing to reconfigure, if needed. PRC will be working closely with NLL and other stake holders as we bring forward improvement plans to the park and fields.
 - PRC will ultimately bring to the Commission a set of plans to approve that would include any improvements and/or alterations to this and another field and court areas within the park.
 - Should layouts change or larger improvements come to Murphy, amenities supporting that field will need to be made accessible under ADA/MAAB regulations.
 - Commissioner Banks commented on the accessibility changes required with the proposal. Currently the dugouts are in the ground and the project would have to meet the ADA requirements, the same as all other projects. It is required that Jini Fairley the ADA Coordinator review the project.

- Ms. Gavris commented this light technology is in use at NSHS and Newton Highlands Playground and asked how the lights are working in those locations? How is the light spillage? Has there been any complaints? Mr. Dunker responded the Newton Highlands has a curfew of 9:30, the lights are on a timer controlled by the city. The lights go out at 9:30. Mr. Dunker has not heard of any complaints. Commissioner Banks commented it is the same at NSHS, the lights are on a timer, the only difference is the Athletic Director has the option to use the dimmer option to allow people to safely leave the stadium. Mr. Rice stated he was involved with both projects and light spillage has not been an issue.
- Ms. Gavris asked Mr. Feldman if NLL is comfortable with the fact there is an improvement plan for the entire area with a lot of moving parts and this proposal is a small part of the plan. Mr. Feldman commented yes, the group will work with the city/department during the process. Mr. Rick Dinjian, NLL commented he has attended the meetings for the bigger plan and will continue to work with the city moving forward. Approval tonight allows the process of fundraising to begin.
- Chairman Magni asked if this proposal is voted through tonight, the lights are installed but then a different vision for the park is developed would the light be relocated? Commissioner Banks commented the process is if the proposal is approved tonight, they would begin fund raising with the expectation they would track donations and if for some reason the project does not happen the donations would be returned. Before the lights are installed the overall park design would be reviewed and approved by the Commission and the City Council would have to approve the donation for the lights. Mr. Dunker commented this would be the same process as the NSHS Stadium lights. The lights were approved by the Commission so the Booster Club could begin fundraising to purchase the lighting. Then the lights were donated to the city and the council voted to accept the donation, the only difference is the NSHS Stadium was not being redesigned. Mr. Dunker would be very surprised if Albemarle was redesigned without a little league field.
- Ms. Wilkinson commented it is wonderful NLL is interacting with PRC and fundraising for this project, and asks,
 - Plans come from and are presented by PRC
 - All residents have access to the area not just the athletic leagues and private groups
 - PRC manages installation and maintenance of all projects
- Commissioner Banks commented the staff can include the conditions in the project notes. PRC/City manages and maintain all projects.
- Mr. Dunker commented PRC permits the fields to the user groups, none of the leagues own any of the fields. PRC maintains and controls.
- Ms. Connolly commented there are a lot of projects scheduled for Albemarle, The Early Education program at Horace Mann, Gath Pool, and the entire field improvement plan. These projects will impact a lot of people. Doesn't make sense to approve a proposal for fundraising when we are not sure of the plans.
- Mr. Dinjian replied, the idea to begin fundraising came from the fact the lights were never part of the original scope or CPC grant money. NLL would like to begin fundraising so when the plan is complete and lights on Murphy field are an option the money will be in place for the purchase the lights.
- Ms. Gavris commented the risk is with NLL the Commission is only voting to approve fundraising. Mr. Feldman commented NLL has the process in place for receiving and tracking donations.
- Mr. Feldhusen asked how long a project like this takes from order to completion. Mr. Berry replied four months.

- Chairman Magni opened public comment:
 - What is the percentage of girls in NLL? Will girls' softball use the lighted field? What about the parking issues? Mr. Feldman replied to NLL has around 700 players. Girls do participate in the younger league; the older girls tend to switch over to softball. There is a lighted softball field at Albemarle. Commissioner Banks replied we are at the beginning of the process for the master plan. PRC will be working with Weston & Sampson on design and layout options.
 - Will any trees removed be mitigated the same way as when the solar panels were installed? Mr. Perez Demorizi replied yes if trees are removed, currently there are no plans to remove trees.
 - Councilor Norton requested a site visit. Commissioner Banks commented a site visit will be scheduled.
 - Margaret Albright commented the fields should be under PRC control. Ms. Albright has pulled from her files previous agreements with leagues over the years that have not been followed through on. There are issues with the gate being locked, trash, graffiti, broken bleachers, and the snack bar in disarray. The scoreboard and security lights have had issues blinking on and off during the night. A resident should be able to put a request in the 311 system for help with these issues. Stay focused on the goals and needs of the park through the PRC department not the groups that use portions of the park. Commissioner Banks will meet with NLL to discuss the issues.
 - Robert Krauss commented the little league groups have been inconsistent over the years, some have been great, and others have not. The little league promised the gate would not be locked, but it is locked. Fessenden School next door has lights, other areas in Albemarle Playground have lights. Not every area in Albemarle Playground needs to have lights.
 - Councilor Norton is disappointed the meeting is not being recorded. It is disrespectful there has not been a site visit. People should have the chance to be heard. Commissioner Banks replied there will be meeting minutes for this meeting. The city does have a translation service, a resident may call the PRC office for assistance.
 - Councilor Norton asked for the tree cutting plan. Mr. Luis Perez Demorizi responded currently there is no tree cutting plan for the lights at Murphy Field. Later when the master plan is developed if there are plans to remove trees, the plan would be shared with the public. What is the timeline for the plan? Commissioner Banks commented we are at the beginning of the process, preparing to meet with the design contractor. We have had one community meeting. Councilor Norton requested a site visit be set-up.
 - Margaret Albright asked if the lights would be a gift to the city. Yes, the lights would be a gift to the city.
 - Marie Adams an abutter is in support of the lights at Murphy Field and requested lights be included at the playground. Mr. Luis Perez Demorizi will include this request when speaking with designers.
 - Margaret Albright asked how the fields will be integrated with the playground? This is a special accessible playground. Commissioner Banks commented PRC manages the playgrounds and will include the playground in the discussion with the designers.
 - Mr. Dinjian, NLL wanted to address the previous comment regarding the broken bleachers and the graffiti. Separate money is being raised for these issues. Bleacher damage is a yearly maintenance issue. The best way to eliminate the opportunity for graffiti is to have lighted fields. Sean Fitzgerald

disagrees with Mr. Dinjian, there is light that already bleeds to their house and will continue. Graffiti will happen with lights on or off. Mary Fitzgerald have been supporters of little league but the timing for this project is off, need to focus on a master plan.

- Margaret Albright asked if the playground from Jackson Road is being moved to this site. Commissioner Banks commented yes there are several playground projects.
- Chairman Magni closed the public comment and asked the Commission if there were any questions or a motion.
- Commissioner Banks stated a motion would be to approve fundraising only not the light design. That would be approved later in the process. Ms. Connolly asked if the funds raised could be used for anything else by the league besides the lights. Mr. Dinjian commented this fundraising approval would be for the lights only, the league would not require approval for fundraising for maintenance, etc.
- Commissioner Banks asked Mr. Feldman this request is for the lights only. Mr. Feldman replied yes this is for the lights, if we exceed goal, it would be discussed.
- Ms. Gavris the motion should be limited approval for fundraising for light proposal presented. If something different we should know.
- Ms. Wilkinson asked if PRC is comfortable with proposal. Mr. Luis Perez Demorizi replied yes. Commissioner Banks the proposal would come forward with master plan.
- Mr Johnson stated this is approval for funding not the plan.
- Ms. Connolly feels this approval would be premature due to everything else going on at the site.
- Chairman Magni commented he would vote with the mindset – if Murphy Field does not move in the master plan, he would approve the lights. Mr. Dunker agreed. Ms. Gavris commented that is a different vote than what has been discussed, fundraising only, not approval of the lights.
- Mr. Dunker commented it is not the Commissions place to approve fundraising without approval of the project. Ms. Connolly agreed the Commission does not approve the leagues fundraising, she is not ready to approve the project until there is additional input from the community.
- Commissioner Banks asked the Commission are they comfortable approving the fundraising for this project or do they want to wait for the master plan to develop
- Mr. Dinjian commented NLL cannot fundraise without the Commission approving the project to be part of the master plan.
- Commissioner Banks suggested scheduling a site visit with the community in February and bring the info back to the Commission.
- Mr. Johnson asked the timeline of the design process. Mr. Perez Demorizi stated it would be a few months.
- Mr. Dunker commented if we give permission, the permission would be plan would be consistent with master plan. Chairman Magni commented provisional votes have been done many times in the past.

Ms. Gavris made the motion to continue the public hearing to the next meeting, schedule a site visit and collect community input. Mr. Dunker seconded the motion. Motion passed 8-0

3. Nonantum Village Day- June 5, 2022 -Informational

- Lois Margaret Dominique representing The Nonantum Neighborhood Association would like to request to hold their 10th Annual Village Day, in Colletti-Magni Park on June 5th, 2022. The plan is to have the same type of activities as in the past 9 years, except there will be no bounce house.

*Ms. Gavis made the motion to move the proposal to a public hearing. Ms. Wilkinson seconded the motion.
Motion passed 8-0*

4. Special Event Process

- Commissioner Banks presented the updated Special Event Process. There has been an increase in requests for outside events. PRC Admin, Cultural Development and Hattie Kerwin Derrick in the Executive Office have worked on this updated Special Event Policy with the focus on the process being efficient, helpful and customer service oriented. There are guidelines on which events would be approved on the department and which events would be approved by the Commission in a two-meeting process. Fees have been added. An application fee covers admin costs, maintenance oversight costs, etc. There is a trash fee, a fee for use of restrooms in PRC managed facilities and a fee for use of field lights.
- Commissioner Banks received input and edits from some members and will incorporate those edits.
- The Commission members present made suggestions on clarifying some language. Commissioner Banks will make these updates.
- Once the updates are complete the new process will be posted and used for special event requests going forward.

5. Commissioner's Report

- The first Community meeting was held last week for Forte Park & Braceland Playground.
- Fields Committee- The committee wrapped up the fee discussion. The Department is implementing an initial \$10 per player, per season fee. Groups will be invoiced at the end of the season.
- Gath Pool presentation on Jan 25 to include layouts and cost estimates.
- Moving forward with Newton Centre Playground performance stage. The Commission will be required to approve.
- Levingston Cove project is going under Chapter 91 site review, additionally we received \$100K state earmark for the Crystal Lake Park which includes left beach.
- Capital Improvement: approval for NNHS tennis court resurfacing and Newton Centre Playground PIP resurfacing.
- Summer program season planning has begun.
- Budget- minimal additional funds this year, Cultural Development is a priority.

6. Committee Reports

- Athletic Fields Committee
 - The committee has completed their task as mentioned above. Thank-you Ms. Connolly, Mr. Rice and Mr. Dunker
- Community Preservation Committee -*B. Dunker*
 - The Farm requested funds; the request was tabled. The New Art Center is relocating.

- Urban Tree Commission – *B. Wilkinson*
 - Tree Warden Marc Welch presented the street tree plan, it is depressing how far we have fallen but amazing at what the Forestry Department has accomplished.
- Farm Commission – *B. Wilkinson*
 - CSA priority enrollment has begun
- Commonwealth Golf Course – *J. Neville*
 - Meeting of the committee tomorrow night
- Commission Manual Update – *M. Feldhusen*
 - Two more section remaining. Once complete the manual will be sent to the Commissioner and Chairman Magni for review. Plan is to send to all Commission members before the February 28th meeting
- Off-Leash Area Working Group (OLAWG) – *Commissioner*
 - Meeting scheduled Friday January 28
- Arts & Culture – *G. Gavriss*
 - Congratulations to the Cultural Development staff for adjudicating the Revitalize Creative Newton grants
 - Winterfest is scheduled Feb 12 & 13

7. New Business

- Commission Elections: Chair & Vice Chair
 - Commissioner Banks requested nominations for Chairperson. Mr. Neville nominated Arthur Magni; Ms. Connolly seconded the nomination. Nomination approved 8-0
 - Chairman Magni requested nominations for vice-chairman. Mr. Neville nominated Byron Dunker; Ms. Connolly seconded the nomination. Nomination approved 8-0

Meeting Adjourned at 09:30 pm
Respectfully submitted by
Robin Mclaughlin
Commission Secretary