

Newton Parks & Recreation Commission

Meeting Minutes

Zoom On-Line Meeting

7:00 p.m. – Monday, March 21, 2022

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

Meeting began 7:00pm

1. Meeting Minutes - February 28, 2022

- Approved 8-0

2. Susan G. Koman 3-Day Event- Informational

- Meredith Parker presented the proposal for the 180th Susan G. Komen 3-Day Event. The event is expecting approximately 1,100 participants.
 - Requesting two sites on Friday August 26, 8:45am-2:00pm; Newton Center Playground and City Hall to be used as a pit stops for the walkers.
 - Street closures and traffic mitigation are not necessary. There are vans that travel the route to assist walkers. There will be safety crews on bicycles and motorcycles along the route.
- Ms. Connolly asked if there are portable toilets at the pit stops. Ms Parker replied yes.
- Ms. Parker will reach out to the local businesses.

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

3. Albemarle Park Master Plan/ Gath Pool Design Review

- Commissioner Banks provided an update on project. There was an initial meeting with the Gath Pool project consultant, including other city departments, DPW, Conservation and Newton Public Schools
- Mr. Perez Demorizi, Director of Parks & Open Space reported the community survey on the Albemarle Master Plan has closed. There were approximately 1,500 entries which is a great response. For the City-wide open space plan there were 1,300 responses. Ms. Gibson asked when the data can be reviewed. Mr. Perez Demorizi stated the data is still being reviewed.
- Ms. Connolly commented she is concerned about putting a lot of money into a facility used 2.5 month in the year. There are no options for swimming in Newton without paying a private fee.
- Mr. Johnson stated we should be looking at multiple options. Commissioner Banks commented when assessing the need that an outdoor pool is important to the community and the plan is to include the ability to add a bubble in the future.
- Ms. Gibson agrees with Ms. Connolly, when the NNHS pool was built there was a lot of excitement to have access to the pool and that did not work out. The options are to have the potential for a bubble and to research other options in the city.
- Commissioner Banks commented Gath Pool is an outdoor facility with serious issues, the cost is 5 million dollars to replace the pool, including a splash pad, make the pool accessible and reconfigure the interior. The bubble would be a different process and separately funded. Ms. Gibson asked the timeline for the bubble. Commissioner Banks commented a budget is required, the council will review, and the project would be put on the CIP list.

- Ms. Gavris stated the YMCA has a new pool facility on Wells Ave has there been partnership discussions? Commissioner Banks replied yes, we are looking at all opportunities.
- Ms. Wilkinson commented it should not be either/or CPC or City funds. Commissioner Banks stated CPA funds cannot be used for designing or building an indoor pool.
- Mr. Dunker commented to build a year-round pool would cost around 25 million dollars, the yearly operating costs would be around one million dollars.
- Ms. Connolly commented the priority should be a year-round pool. The pool at Wells Ave does not work for the swim team.
- Mr. Dunker commented the original plan for the NEWCAL building at Albemarle included and indoor pool. Currently the CPC has funded design and engineering not the pool.
- Mr. Johnson asked if there will be multiple designs for the outdoor pool. Commissioner Banks replied yes, staff is currently reviewing the survey results and focus group meeting notes. Mr. Johnson agrees with Ms. Connolly and is concerned we are rushing into this project.
- Mr. Feldhusen asked what the dollar amount is of water being wasted due to the current pool issues. Commissioner Banks replied that this summer's water expense was \$160,000.00. The normal expense is between \$75,000 /\$80,000. Mr. Feldhusen commented it is a compromise to build the outdoor pool with the bubble option. And asked if CPA funds can be used for the infrastructure. Commissioner Banks replied we would break out the pricing for the project. Mr. Dunker commented it is like the turf fields, CPA funds the infrastructure but not the carpet.

4. Upper Falls Stairway – Informational

- Mr. Perez Demorizi, Director of Parks & Open Space & Alfredo Vargas, Design Engineer presented a proposal from the Conservation Commission (ConCom) for the design of the implementation of stairs at the Upper Falls Greenway:
 - Rectify treacherous dirt sloped path and provide a safe connection between the Greenway and the trail to the south of the Greenway.
 - Serve the residential neighborhood to the south of the Greenway.
 - Accommodate increased use resulting from the Northland Dev.
 - Serve as a pilot for possible staircase on the north side of the Greenway to connect to Bobby Braceland at the existing trail easement.
 - The ConCom has secured a variance from the MAAB (521 CMR); the site will not allow a fully ADA compliant wheelchair ramp.
 - Engineering firm BETA to undertake a geo-tech assessment and 100% design plans
 - Foundations and finish will be coordinated between ConCom, PRC and Engineering, considering state and federal regulations required for stairs, along with any maintenance needs or finishes etc.
 - Conservation Commission will fund the design and geotechnical explorations.
 - ConCom and PRC, along with DPW Engineering will coordinate construction, staging areas, tree protection, erosion controls etc., and any additional permits required for the construction of the stairs.
- Mr. Rice commented this project has been in the works for a while and it looks great, integrating the Greenway.
- Mr. Neville asked what the material will be for the stairs. The stairs will be metal.
- Ms. Gavris asked about accessibility. Mr. Vargas stated the Greenway can be accessed by Oak Street. Mr. Demorizi replied, the pathway at the bottom of the stairway is not accessible because of the dirt on the trail.
- Mr. Dunker asked where the funding is coming from and when will construction begin. Mr. Demorizi replied ConCom is funding the project, and construction is TBD.
- George Kirby commented this is only one of the possible connections there are other projects in play.

- Susan Lunin, Conservation Commission member thanked Mr. Demorizi and Mr. Vargas for presenting the proposal.

Ms. Wilkinson made the motion to move the proposal to a public hearing. Mr. Neville seconded the motion. Motion passes 8-0.

5. Mass DOT bridge replacement

- Gerald Autler, DCR Representative for the Greenway Trail Network Project. There is a bridge located on the Newton/Weston line near the Lasell boat house. DCR will be taking ownership of the property for the trailway project. This requires a vote from the Commission. The Weston land and advertisement has been posted looking for the owner. The Newton land: the City and Commonwealth have rights, but they cannot locate any documentation, a title search may clear it up.
- Mr. Chapman asked if it was specific land, the boathouse, or the park. Mr. Autler replied the boathouse is owned by Lasell. The Park land is DCR, in question is the roadway that allows access to the bridge. Mr. Autler will return in April or May once the ownership is determined.

6. Commissioner's Report

- Commissioner Banks thanked John Rice and the Nonantum Neighborhood Association for working out the noise issues with the neighbors regarding Nonantum Village Day.
- Community events will be back to full capacity.
- Light ordinance discussion with the Council. It has been proposed to have light requirements start at 7pm as opposed to the current 9:30pm time.
- Budget will be presented to the Council on April 20th
- Current Projects:
 - Albemarle Fields
 - Community Garden
 - Stage at Newton Centre
 - Crystal Lake left beach repairs
 - Athletic field lights at NNHS & NSHS
 - Gath Pool project

7. Committee Reports

- Community Preservation Committee -*B. Dunker*
 - CPC awarded the Farm with 90K for maintenance repairs
- Urban Tree Commission – *B. Wilkinson*
 - City street plan in process and continuing ordinance discussion
- Farm Commission – *B. Wilkinson*
 - See the CPC report
- Commonwealth Golf Course – *J. Neville*
 - New management contract was awarded for the next three years. The contract did not freeze the highs and lows. 2.2 million is shared other revenue is not shared. It is terrible what is happening to the city. It's like the Committee works for the management company not the city. There is no oversight. Municipalities no longer lease courses, they run the course. Chairman Magni recommended the Commission address a letter to Mayor Fuller voicing discontent with operations of the golf course. Commissioner Banks commented she will work with the Executive Office.
- Commission Manual Update – *M. Feldhusen*
 - Final review by Commissioner in April, will be ready for review by Commission for the April meeting

- Off-Leash Area Working Group (OLAWG) – *Commissioner*
 - There is a meeting on Friday
- Arts & Culture – *G. Gavrís*
 - Next month we will have the summer schedule

8. New Business

- No new business

Meeting Adjourned at 8:58 pm

Respectfully submitted by

Robin McLaughlin

Commission Secretary