

Newton Parks & Recreation Commission

Meeting Minutes

Zoom On-Line Meeting

7:00 p.m. – Monday, April 25, 2022

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

Meeting began 7:04pm

1. Meeting Minutes – March 21, 2022

- Approved 8-0

2. Mass DOT Bridge Replacement, Riverside Road – vote to support DCR eminent domain action

- 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 through eminent domain. This requires a vote from the Commission.
- Mr. Dunker asked if this is an agreement why take by eminent domain. Mr. Autler stated there are friendly and hostile takings by eminent domain. This is a friendly taking and part of the legal process to grant an easement.
- Mr. Feldhusen clarified that “Department” in the motion refers to DCR.

Mr. Dunker made the motion to concur with and otherwise approve the taking by the Department, acting by and through its commissioner, under the power of eminent domain pursuant to G.L. c. 92, § 79 to acquire such easements for such purposes over the parcels of land located at Riverside Road in Newton, Massachusetts, including the land under the Charles River for the construction and maintenance of a recreational path and bridge. Mr. Neville seconded the motion. Motion passed 8-0.

3. Upper Falls Stairway – Public Hearing

- Jennifer Steel, Chief Environmental Planner reviewed the proposal for installing the upper falls Stairway:
 - 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.
- Ms. Steel stated there has been no opposition to this project. There is support from the area council, Mayor, and the MAAB.
- Mr. Neville thanked Ms. Steel and Mr. Perez Demorizi for the work they have done to move this project forward.
- Anil Adyanthaya, Councilor Downs started their support of the project.

- Mr. Dunker commented he has reached out to the Tower Company about accessing the land around the tower. Ms. Steel recommended Mr. Dunker reach out to resident Jay Werb, Mr. Werb has been in contact with the Tower Company and all communications should go through M. Werb.

Ms. Wilkinson made the motion to approve the project as presented. Mr. Neville seconded the motion. Motion passed 8-0

4. Tennis – Clay Court Fees

- Stephanie Lapham, Recreation Manager introduced the tennis lesson contractor for the city, Tim Mayotte, and Mark McIntyre of Tim Mayotte Tennis. The website is: www.newtonTennis.com Mr. Mayotte and Mr. McIntyre are a new contractor for the city and commented they are very excited to work with the city.
- The fees for the clay courts will remain the same as last year. The hours have been extended to 7am-dusk.
- Ms. Gavis asked if the weather remains warm will the season be extended? Mr. McIntyre replied yes, they have started a week early due to the weather and will extend the season as weather allows.
- Mr. Neville asked if pickleball is part of the operation. Mr. Mayotte replied they are just getting into pickleball and SPEC tennis and would like to bring them all under one umbrella.

Ms. Gavis made the motion to accept the proposal as submitted. Mr. Neville seconded the motion. Motion passed 8-0

5. Albemarle Park Field Design Concepts

- Luis Perez Demorizi, Parks & Open Space Director, Cassie Bethany of Weston & Sampson, and Yuabin Wang, of Weston & Sampson presented the updated design for Albemarle Playground. The presentation may be viewed on-line: www.newtonma.gov/fieldprojects
- Mr. Perez Demorizi commented this has been a very exciting project to work on. Tonight, is the informational meeting for the Commission. On May 3rd there will be a community meeting. Community meeting registration information is located: www.newtonma.gov/parks
- The city has been awarded a grant for storm water management for Albemarle.
- Albemarle will not be meet all the needs requested for this area, PRC is working on a city-wide athletic field plan including several different locations
- Ms. Bethoney presented 4 design options, keeping in mind the following from previous community meeting comments and working with the Gath Pool Design Team & Storm Drain Team:
 - Reduce overlap
 - Use space in the best way possible
 - Make accessible
 - Optimize court location
 - Path connections
 - Plant trees
- The timeline is scheduled to complete the phase 1 design by August 22, 2022
- Mr. Feldhusen stated he likes all 4 concepts especially the pedestrian pathways and asked if the overall capacity changes through the concepts. Mr. Perez Demorizi replied we cannot calculate the capacity; we are relying on the survey and stakeholders for capacity numbers. Mr. Dunker commented league use rarely overlap. Commissioner Banks commented the PRC filed permits track participants and total permitted hours.
- Ms. Bethoney commented trends show field use changes over time.
- Ms. Gavis asked if the Albemarle master plan is chapter 1 and how does it relate to what is to come. Mr. Perez Demorizi stated we would like to get as much done in the master plan in one swoop, but construction may be several cycles. Ms. Gavis asked if the budget is planned 5-7 years out. Mr. Perez Demorizi stated we are not planning that far out.
- Commissioner Banks commented the master plan is important for the different uses, to see what fits where. How lights will be placed.
- Ms. Gavis commented she loves the connectivity of the paths is there any contiguous loops planned? Ms. Bethoney commented the design mostly gets there to the south end of the field. Mr. Perez Demorizi commented there are interior loops, we did not want the loops to impact the playing fields

- Mr. Johnson commented the user information presented does not include the swim team. Mr. Perez Demorizi replied that is correct, and we are aware of the swim team and the 4th of July celebration.
- Commissioner Banks commented pool use is a summer activity, the athletic field use is generally spring and fall activities.
- Ms. Wilkinson asked if there are additional fields added will there be sufficient parking. Commissioner Banks stated this could be an issue, but we would manage the traffic through scheduling and the city is working with Fessenden to add parking.
- Mr. Johnson asked in concepts A & B Burke Field is moved near Murphy Field would additional lights be added. Commissioner Banks replied yes, the field is currently lighted and would continue to be a lighted field. Mr. Dunker commented concept A & B are not workable options. The workable arc for little league older participants is 300', these layouts would have the balls being hit into the parking area or street. Mr. Perez Demorizi stated this issue would increase the need for netting.
- Mr. Rice asked if the 4 concepts would be cut down to 2-3 options. Mr. Perez Demorizi replied, the options would be whittled down with costs.
- Mr. Dunker asked if there are paths through Avery Woods. Mr. Perez Demorizi stated FA Day students have created a path. Chairman Magni commented the land deed may prevent any changes or uses of the property.
- Mr. Rice commented it will be nice to have a synthetic turf field on the north side of the city.
- Mr. Feldhusen asked about the trucks on the field for the 4th of July celebration. Mr. Perez Demorizi commented it does make it more of a challenge, especially the fireworks near synthetic turf.

6. Gath Pool Project Update

- Luis Perez Demorizi, Parks & Open Space Director, and Mr. Tom Scarlata of BH+A, Inc. presented an update on the pool design proposal. The presentation may be viewed on-line: www.newtonma.gov/gathpoolproject
- Mr. Perez Demorizi commented tonight is the informational meeting for the Commission. On May 3rd there will be a community meeting. Community meeting registration information is located: www.newtonma.gov/parks
- Mr. Scarlata presented the updated design based on public input and working with the Albemarle Master Plan team. The footprint has been adjusted, the pool is one connected pool, and the splashpad location has been changed. There has been no change to the bathroom/changing area.
- Mr. Johnson asked with one connected pool if there is an accident will that shut down the pool. Commissioner Banks replied yes. We currently manage one pool. An operational policy would include swim diapers, breaks, and follow the state code of a 30-minute shutdown. Separating the pool does not allow for universal access, multiple access options and the footprint uses less space.
- Mr. Johnson asked if there is a ramp for emergency vehicles. Mr. Scarlata commented that is still under design, but the vehicles will be able to pull up to the access points. Commissioner Banks replied this will also provide better access for deliveries.
- Mr. Johnson asked how people will enter the pool and splash pad. Commissioner Banks replied there are two entry ways:
 - Off-season - people will enter the splash pad, the entry gate to pool deck will be closed
 - Swim Season- people will enter through the bath house
- Mr. Rice asked if a lifeguard is required for the splash pad. Mr. Scarlata commented a lifeguard is required for standing water not recycled/filtered water. No standing water is planned.

7. Returning events preliminary informational submission

- Commissioner Banks presented the following reoccurring events. The applications submitted shows no changes to the event from last year. The PRC department will work closely with both applicants. A public hearing will be scheduled on May 16 at the P & R Commission meeting.
 - Indigenous People's Day Event – October 10, 2022 at Albemarle Playground
 - St. Mary of Carmen Festival – July 13-17th at Pellegrini Playground

8. Commissioner's Report

- Crystal Lake Water Treatment Update
 - The last treatment was done two years ago. The next treatment is scheduled May 3rd, weather permitting. May 4 & 5 are the rain dates. Signs will be posted in the area.

- Budget Update
 - This year there will be an increase in the field maintenance budget and the Cultural Development budget for events
 - The trash trucks and staff will be relocated to the DPW department
 - There was a question from the Councilors during the budget presentation asking who sponsors the Farmers Market Snap match program. Village Bank sponsors the match program. Thank-you Village Bank.

9. Committee Reports

- Community Preservation Committee – B. Dunker
 - Recent agenda items; Affordable Housing and the Armory
- Urban Tree Commission – B. Wilkinson
 - Forestry is working on pruning and planting trees.
 - Mr. Welch continues to meet with Councilor Norton and Councilor Malakie and the Law Department for preliminary discussion on changes to the tree ordinance
- Farm Commission – B. Wilkinson
 - No meeting
- Commonwealth Golf Course – J. Neville
 - Winter Golf is January through March
 - 2021: \$88k income, \$41k went to the foundation
 - 2022: \$62k income, \$16k went to the foundation
 - The City is losing money because the contract was not updated.
- Commission Manual Update – M. Feldhusen - Manual Review
 - Posted for review
- Off-Leash Area Working Group (OLAWG) – Commissioner
 - Meeting held on March 25th, there is interest in adding an additional OLA north of the pike.
- Arts & Culture – G. Gavis
 - The arts community is happy about the ease and clarity of the special event permit on-line
 - This is the busy season

10. New Business

- Ms. Wilkinson mentioned she was contacted by Sue Dickerson about a new community garden at Spears Park. Commissioner Banks confirmed there is a group including Councilor Greenberg proposing a Community Garden at Spears Park.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:42 pm

Respectfully submitted by

Robin Mclaughlin

Commission Secretary