

Newton Parks & Recreation Commission

Meeting Minutes

Zoom On-Line Meeting

7:00 p.m. – Monday, April 25, 2022

NOT APPROVED BY COMMISSION

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

Meeting began 7:04pm

1. **Meeting Minutes – April 25, 2022 – Approved 8-0**
2. **Susan G. Koman Event- Public Hearing**
 - Meredith Parker presented the proposal for the 180th Susan G. Komen 3-Day Event. They are expecting approximately 1,100 participants. Requesting two sites on Friday August 26, 8:45am-2:00pm; Newton Center Playground and City Hall, each to be used as a pit stop 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. Parker has been in contact with Jack Lovett, DPW. There will be some road construction along the original route. The route has been modified to avoid the construction.
 - There were no public comments shared during the meeting and no, email or phone calls received for this event by the PRC Department office.
 - Mr. Neville asked the location of the pit stop at City Hall. Ms. Parker replied on the western section of the grass

*Ms. Gavis made the motion to approve the application as presented. Ms. Connolly seconded the motion.
Motion passed 8-0*

3. **St. Mary of Carmen Festival – Public Hearing**
 - Chuck Proia presented the proposal for the 87th annual St. Mary of Carmen Festival at Pellegrini Playground. The dates of the festival are July 13, 2022- July 17, 2022, with a procession down Watertown Street on Sunday.
 - Mr. Chapman asked about the noise levels, there was concern from neighbors regarding the Nonantum Village Day public hearing. Mr. Rice commented he worked with the group and neighbors to come up with a solution, all were happy with.
 - Mr. Proia commented he is in close contact with the neighbors and businesses and works hard at resolving any issues.
 - There were no public comments made and no emails or phone calls received for this event by the PRC Department office.
 - Chairman Magni recused himself from the vote, as he is a member of the St. Mary of Carmen Society.

*Ms. Wilkinson made the motion to accept the application as presented. Ms. Gavis seconded the motion.
Motion passed 8-0.*

4. **Indigenous People's Day Event – Public Hearing**

- Kerry Prasad presented the proposal for the October 10th Indigenous People's Day Ceremonial Celebration Event at Albemarle Playground. Activities include dancers, singers, speakers, a marketplace with vendors and local supporters.
- There were no public comments made and no emails or phone calls received for this event by the PRC Department office.

*Ms. Gavris made the motion to approve the application as presented. Ms. Wilkinson seconded the motion.
Motion passed 7-0-1 (Jack Neville abstaining)*

5. **Cabot Park Improvements**

- Luis Perez Demorizi, Parks & Open Space Director presented current improvements for better accessibility and improvement of the amenities in Cabot Park.
- Pathways are being added from Norwood Ave and East Side Parkway to the lower half of the park.
- Basketball lighting is being updated. New hoops and nets have been installed. The extra hoops that were in bad shape have been removed.
- Mr. Chapman asked what the surface material will be for the pathways. Mr. Perez Demorizi stated the material is still under discussion.
- Mr. Chapman asked if there are flooding issues in the walkway. Mr. Perez Demorizi commented not around the walkway but a little bit on East Side Parkway.
- Mr. Chapman commented wet areas are an opportunity for plantings. Mr. Perez Demorizi commented that's a great idea, at this point a planting could happen if a group would like to adopt the space.
- Mr. Neville commented he is surprised to see the path westbound there typically is not a lot of traffic in that area. Mr. Perez Demorizi The entrance to the tennis court has changed to the westbound side. The pathway provides access to the courts, the east side is not ADA compliant and Safe Routes would access the pathway.
- Mr. Neville stated the extra hoops that were removed used to be frequently used. Ms. Connolly commented a basketball camp was run on this court and the extra hoops made a difference. Mr. Perez Demorizi stated the amenities are being consolidated to increase permitting. Cabot School added a half basketball court in the school yard.
- Ms. Wilkinson asked how permeable pathways are functioning without care. Mr. Perez Demorizi replied he is not sure if the pathway has been tested and the pathway is still in discussion, but it does reduce the need for salt during snow and reduces puddling. Ms. Wilkinson asked if the pathway would determine the placement of the proposed pavilion.
- Commissioner Banks stated there are no dates scheduled yet for community input on the pavilion. This would be a student project over the summer. Chairman Magni asked if the pavilion will be a temporary structure, Commissioner Banks replied, the structure will be a simple, permanent structure, under cover.
- Ms. Gavris commented the pavilion is terrific for the neighborhood and requested electricity is considered for the pavilion. Mr. Perez Demorizi stated electrical is one of the goals.
- Mr. Feldhusen asked if there is a bubbler in the park. Mr. Perez Demorizi replied yes
- Mr. Chapman commented if the asphalt walk is relative to the play area being removed a curved path may provide shade. Mr. Perez Demorizi commented the path construction will go out to bid in the fall and design will line up with the pavilion.
- Mr. Neville commented there is a field in play here, the location where the play structure is now would be the best location for the pavilion.

- Ms. Wilkinson requested outreach to the neighbors/community to determine the perceived need for the pavilion there seemed to be none until the professor and students wanted to build it.
- Mr. Dunker commented when the new school was built a pathway was added through center field of the ball field, kids in-play can be hurt falling or sliding on the pathway. Mr. Neville commented that pathway never received approval and was not included in the original proposal brought to the Commission.
- Commissioner Banks commented the Park & Open Space Division will be included with school projects and village center redevelopment projects early in the process.
- Commissioner Banks recommended the Commission view the installed Pellegrini shade structure as a concept for the pavilion.
- Ms. Wilkinson asked if there is a policy that a pavilion is required. Commissioner Banks commented there is no policy, there are different amenities in the different neighborhoods. Ms Wilkinson commented there is a distinction between a field and open space, and it is important to consider.

6. Newton Centre Performance Pavilion – Feasibility Study Update

- Mr. Perez Demorizi presented a power point presentation of a feasibility study for a pavilion in Newton Centre Playground in the area known as “The Bowl” behind Recreation building “The Hut” on Tyler Terrace. This is a partnership with the Public Buildings Department.
- Paula Gannon, Director Cultural Development commented the mission is to administer and support creative and cultural programming. During Covid “The Bowl’ was used for programs and movies and the events were well attended. A pavilion would provide a place for the community and a respectful location for the artist.
- DJ Chagnon of CBA Architects present three options for the pavilion along with the pros and cons for each location. (see attachment)
- Chairman Magni commented Newton Centre is an Olmstead park and we should tread lightly about changing the park. Previously there were requests for memorial at Newton City hall another park developed by Olmstead, the request was denied. To Olmstead nature is king and nature should be enjoyed uninhibited. This proposal is a fabulous idea, but this is a significant structure in an Olmstead setting it just doesn’t gel at all.
- Mr. Chapman commented the only difference between option A & C is option A has greater spacing. Mr. Chagnon replied yes. Mr. Chapman commented Olmstead did a lot of land sculpting, taking advantage of the hillsides is a worthy goal.
- Ms. Gavis thanked the group for the presentation and is overwhelmed by the drawings the pavilion is larger than expected and likes the way the natural lawn works. Ms. Gavis is nervous to see walls built into the land and would not want this. Ms. Gavis likes a community space with blankets on the lawn. And suggested keeping the natural slope there are sufficient trees for shading. Ms. Gavis asked why the stage is square, she thought a rectangle stage would work best. Mr. Chagnon stated the square stage is just a preliminary placeholder. Ms. Gavis asked if there will be lighting and backstage storage. Mr. Chagnon replied yes lighting is included in the plan, there is no plan for backstage storage. Ms. Gavis commented to keep it simple and possibly invest in the Hut for restrooms and storage. Mr. Chagnon commented it is a challenge to make the lower part of the Hut ADA Compliant.
- Ms. Wilkinson commented she is shocked and blown away by this presentation. She is a proponent of the arts and suggested a site visit, she cannot imagine what would be done to the park for this project, the vista would be lost. Sounds like the group did a great job

reaching out to the arts community but now you need to reach out to the Open Space community. Mr. Perez Demorizi commented a site visit can be scheduled.

- Mr. Rice commented he can see the issue with option A. At the Hyde Community Center Bandstand when music is played it blows away the kids, but when there is a theatre performance, they need to ask the kids to be quiet. Option B would be a good option and integrate the Hut. It is a great idea the community uses the Hyde bandstand for passive recreation. What would be the impact on sledding?
- Mr. Feldhusen commented this is a powerful idea but have other locations been considered, he is concerned about the open space in the city. Mr. Perez Demorizi commented this seemed to be a good location close to the village center, T Stop and the "Bowl", other locations have not been reviewed.
- Ms. Gannon commented the number of people expected at these events could be 300+ there are not a lot of options for this many people.
- Commissioner Banks commented this location has parking, it is the center of the city and over the past few years this space has brought people outside for events.
- Ms. Gavris commented Newton Community Pride had an economic report done on the impact of Arts and village vitality and the arts brings business to the villages.
- Ms. Wilkinson commented economic vitality is critical, but the Commission's job is to do what's best for the park.
- Ms. Connolly and Chairman Magni agrees with Ms. Wilkinson.
- Mr. Perez Demorizi commented this is the first step we will continue to have discussions

7. Commission Manual – Final Review and Approval

- Commissioner Banks commented Mr. Feldhusen has done an amazing job updating the information in the manual. This is a great resource for the Commission and staff.
- Mr. Feldhusen commented this is a living document if anyone has any updates just notify him. The manual will be posted to the web site.
- Commissioner Banks suggested a yearly review of the manual. This could be added to the January agenda.
- Mr. Rice suggested adding the Hyde Bandstand information to the manual in the Hyde Playground section of the manual.

Ms. Gavris made the motion to approve the updated manual. Mr. Neville seconded the motion. Motion passed 8-0

8. Commissioner's Report

- Commissioner Banks commented Ellen Gibson has resigned from the Commission and wishes her well.
- For all members who voted on the Weston Bridge DOT project, please see Peter Ko, in City Clerk's office. Peter will notarize your signature for the MOU.
- The Department is moving several projects forward.
- Summer programs, camps and aquatics are preparing for the season. We are hiring for these programs.

9. Committee Reports

- Community Preservation Committee -*B. Dunker*
 - Providing money for the extension of the carriage land near Lyons Field. It is to be taken from the funds allocated for parks projects
- Urban Tree Commission – *B. Wilkinson*
 - Tree plantings and watering is a smaller lot this spring.
 - A request from the cemetery to remove trees has been denied, they did not meet the tree ordinance requirements. The cemetery has appealed the decision to the Mayor and is awaiting her decision. They will have to pay \$311,000 into the tree fund if they want to use their current plan.
- Farm Commission – *B. Wilkinson*
 - Happy with the \$88K they received from CPC grant
 - Matt Durham is the new Director of Education
 - Cheryl Lappin is now on the Commission
 - There is an issue with truck “jake breaking” at the stop sign on Nahanton St. The loud noise makes it hard to focus and talk. Commissioner Banks suggested they speak with DPW for some signs.
- Off-Leash Area Working Group (OLAWG) – *Commissioner*
 - Group will meet the beginning of June. Looking at amenities in the areas and looking to find an 8th location on the north side of the city. Mr. Chapman asked if the carriage lane near Norumbega could be used for extra parking for an off-leash area. Commissioner Banks commented Norumbega is Conservation Land, and the group has been working with them for a spot at Norumbega park.
- Arts & Culture – *G. Gavras*
 - The Family Fun Fest this past weekend was terrific
 - Festival of the Arts is scheduled in July
 - Summer Concerts are also being scheduled

10. New Business

- No new business

Meeting Adjourned at 9:24 pm
Respectfully submitted by
Robin McLaughlin
Commission Secretary

SITE ANALYSIS Location Options



PROS OF LOCATION A

- Natural bowl-shaped topography
- Largest space for stage sizing, audience capacity, and layout flexibility
- Close connectivity to existing ADA path and ADA parking at Mason-Rice Elementary
- Existing drainage infrastructure nearby

CONS OF LOCATION A

- High community utilization of hill and open space for flexible activities
- Existing drainage problems
- Greatest sun exposure
- Close proximity and lack of barriers to loud adjacent uses
- Large open space more difficult for "nestling" stage



PROS OF LOCATION B

- Existing visual and auditory screening by the Hut from the street and residential neighborhood
- [Limited] access to Hut amenities including bathrooms and shade
- Large tree backdrop behind stage
- Generous distance on either side from loud uses at school and sport courts

CONS OF LOCATION B

- Farthest distance from any existing ADA walkway
- Smaller space with immovable boundary constraint at Hut
- Complications of Hut inaccessibility and lack of code compliance
- Sensitive Tree roots limit areas of construction and usable lawn space
- Sound may reverberate off building
- Divides expansive lawn



PROS OF LOCATION C

- Good existing drainage
- Shade, visual buffer, and sense of prospect-refuge provided by existing evergreen trees
- Closest connection to ADA designated parking at Bowen Street
- Close playground provides child entertainment
- Closest to town center

CONS OF LOCATION C

- Distance from existing ADA pathways
- Farthest distance from Mason Rice Elementary parking lot
- Close proximity to loud sport-court uses and playground
- Convex hill shape and flat open space, less like a bowl
- Stage faces directly west (evening sun will be in performer's faces)

