

# Newton Parks & Recreation Commission

## Meeting Minutes

### Zoom On-Line Meeting

7:00 p.m. – Monday, June 27, 2022

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

Meeting began 7:00pm

#### 1. Meeting Minutes – May 16, 2022

- Approved 8-0

#### 2. Burr School, McGrath Park, Brown/Oak Hill Middle School Fields Improvement Plan -Info

- Luis Perez Demorizi, Director of Parks & Open Space presented a preliminary plan for Burr School, McGrath Park and Brown/Oak Hill Middle School. The 5-year plan is to improve quality, quantity, and maintenance of athletic field facilities, with an emphasis on quality and quantity. All projects are posted on the website: [www.newtonma.gov/fieldprojects](http://www.newtonma.gov/fieldprojects)
- Mr. Perez Demorizi reviewed the process developing the plan, reviewing all fields, courts, usage, and conditions of all areas. Quality and quantity of multiuse fields is a big goal, as well as accessibility. And incorporating smart and sustainable technologies for better resource management. Parameter paths are also a common theme in the plans. This allows for walking and biking.
- The timeline for these plans would be after the spring season which is an important time for schools.
- Commissioner Banks commented McGrath Park and Brown/Oak Hill plans will come back to the Commission for a public hearing. Burr School is not Parks land and is not required to come back to the Commission for a public hearing.
- Mr. Johnson requested Mr. Perez Demorizi return to the Albemarle design slide and asked why the tennis courts are being removed, the courts appear to be active. Mr. Perez Demorizi replied there is use by abutters and Day Middle School but permitting is low. This is an opportunity to implement additional pickleball courts in an area where the sound will not directly affect abutters. Pickle ball is a fast-growing activity and PRC receives many requests for additional courts.
- Commissioner Banks commented the pickleball courts are smaller courts and relocating the courts allowed for expansion of the Gath Pool/splash pad design. Friends of Newton Tennis have been working closely with the department on all projects. The plan is to keep 65 tennis courts around the city.
- Mr. Feldhusen asked to see the presentation slide of other tennis courts around Albemarle Playground. Mr. Luis Perez Demorizi commented there are other tennis courts at Pellegrini, NNHS, and Wellington Playground.
- Mr. Johnson asked if the Day school tennis team was ok with the change. Mr. Perez Demorizi replied yes School representatives are on the working group and they are ok with adjusting their program and starting a pickleball program.
- Mr. Feldhusen commented he does not want the community to lose the casual use of the courts. Since covid it seems everything must be reserved/permitted.

### 3. Albemarle Re-design – Public Hearing

- Mr. Perez Demorizi and Cassie Bethoney, Weston & Sampson presented the Albemarle re-design plan. All projects are on-line: [www.newtonma.gov/fieldprojects](http://www.newtonma.gov/fieldprojects)
- Ms. Bethoney reviewed the following
  - Goals of the re-design: reduce overlap and maximize use
  - Flow of the design including paths, motor gates fencing, netting, existing playground, NECP Playground and Gath Pool/splash pad
  - Ballfields include:
    - Babe Ruth field
    - Softball field
    - T-ball field
    - Murphy field
    - Batting cages
  - Rectangle fields:
    - One synthetic turf field
    - Two grass overlay fields
- Mr. Perez Demorizi commented there are funding challenges regarding the synthetic field it may be a grass field with the option to retrofit to a synthetic field in the future.
  - Courts
    - One basketball
    - Six pickleball courts
  - Lighting
    - Existing lighting will be upgraded to a system with minimal spillage, covering the play area only
- Mr. Perez Demorizi commented the “alternate zone” shown on the presentation is currently not a lit area. It would be beneficial to the users, but we are not tied to this option.
  - Areas added for storage and maintenance supplies
  - Seating at each field and players dugouts
- Mr. Perez Demorizi commented the field house will also be refreshed
- Chairman Magni asked the previous presentation showed 3 concepts, is the current presentation one of those concepts. Ms. Bethoney replied there were 5 original concepts, the current design is a culmination of the five previous concepts, based on community input.
- Mr. Chapman asked if the pathway will be lit and the connection to path on Craft Street. Mr. Perez Demorizi replied there will be pedestrian scale lighting or at least lighted bollards. The south end of the path ends at the NECP parking area, the intention for the north end of the path is to connect to Watertown. Mr. Chapman asked if the path near the Cheesecake Brook is a shared path? Mr. Perez Demorizi commented there is a plan for Cheesecake Brook path, but it is not part of this project. Mr. Chapman commented a multiuse path should be 12’ wide. Ms. Bethoney commented the path is designed to be 15’ wide for vehicle use. Mr. Chapman commented the new location of the pickleball courts divides the park. Mr. Perez Demorizi replied yes, the courts were moved for expansion of the pool and make Burke field fit without overlay.
- Commissioner Banks commented Cole field will be refreshed with a new fence that could be a lower fence. There is a path behind Gath pool to connect the park.
- Mr. Chapman commented a multiuse path is beneficial and likes the plan for additional trees.
- Ms. Wilkinson asked if the lighting will be programmed so there are no issues with birds and pollinators overnight. Mr. Perez Demorizi replied yes, the lighting will be controlled

by zone. If a field is not being used the lights would not be on. Ms. Wilkinson asked the typical hours lights are on for activities. Commissioner Banks replied some use has been past 10pm but we would work with the user groups to stay closer to 10pm.

- Mr. Feldhusen asked if restrooms would be available. Mr. Perez Demorizi commented, currently porta potties are available by the leagues during their season. Mr. Feldhusen commented kids use the Cheesecake Brook path to cross over to Albemarle, with the fence surrounding the park they will not have a direct route. Ms. Bethoney replied the plan is to redirect the kids, if a path was put directly from the Cheesecake Brook Path into Albemarle the path would cross the multiuse field /track.
- Ms Connolly asked if there are no funds for an artificial turf field why move forward. Commissioner Banks replied this would be a dedicated multipurpose field with no overlay, lighted grass field. We would keep close eye on the condition through scheduling.
- Chairman Magni opened public comments:
  - Peter Cariani has used this area for many years. Pickleball on a tennis court is ok. Keep one tennis court with pickleball markings. A tennis backboard would also be appreciated.
  - Rich Dinjian, Newton Little League, Happy to see a full size at Burke field. Netting is required between Burke field and multipurpose field as well as by 1<sup>st</sup> base and Gath Pool.
  - Mary, concerned about the path near Fessenden, kids cut through on their bikes how will they cross the street. Mr. Perez Demorizi commented that path is for a future bridge – this is a placeholder on this plan. The path would be a separate project.
  - Bruce Barron, FoNT commented Friends of Newton Tennis have been working closely with the Commissioner. FoNT does not like to lose courts, but there are 65 other courts throughout the city and hopes people will use them. FoNT endorses this plan.
  - Catherine Vendetti, Lighting at the courts would bring the lighting closer to her property. Agrees with Mr. Dinjian netting is required along the path. The older players would be able to hit balls onto the path. Why is there vehicle access to path if it is a walking path
- Chairman Magni closed public comment.
- Commissioner Banks thanked everyone, commented she appreciates the comments
- Chairman Magni stated if this plan is approved tonight there is still a lot of work to happen. Commissioner Banks agreed. Mr. Rice commented there will be many more meetings along the way.

*Mr. Rice made the motion to approve the project as presented. Mr. Chapman seconded the motion. Motion passed 8-0*

#### **4. Gath Pool Design – Public Hearing**

- Mr. Perez Demorizi and Mr. Tom Scarlata of BH & A presented the preferred Gath Pool design. All projects are on-line: [www.newtonma.gov/fieldprojects](http://www.newtonma.gov/fieldprojects)
- Mr. Scarlata reviewed the process involved in creating this design and the current conditions of the pool.
- The preferred design includes:
  - Bathhouse
    - Accessible
    - Direct access to pool from the entrance
    - Gender neutral/family friendly

- Storage
  - Staff area
  - Public use lockers
  - Possible solar panels or light tubes
- Pool
  - Single body of water
  - Competition area (8 lanes)
  - Zero depth entry
  - Exercise area
  - Walking area
  - Seating
  - Splash pad
  - Shade structures
  - Two accessible egresses
- Phasing and timeline of project
  - Construction begins fall of 2023- ready for 2024 swim season
- Ms. Connolly asked if the diving board can be removed during swim meets. Mr. Scarlata replied they can be removed or flipped up.
- Mr. Feldhusen there appears to be open space to the east of the field house near the splash pad. Mr. Perez Demorizi commented there is an egress and utilities on site that cannot be relocated.
- Ms. Connolly commented the mayor put money aside for the bubble. Mr. Perez Demorizi commented that would be a separate process, a feasibility study would be done to determine if Albemarle/Gath are the right location for an indoor pool. Mr. Scarlata commented the current design would accommodate a bubble later. Commissioner banks clarified the money set aside by the mayor is for the pool rebuild project matching the CPC funds.
- Mr. Feldhusen asked if the bathhouse would require renovation to accommodate year-round use. Mr. Perez Demorizi replied yes.
- Chairman Magni opened public comment. There were no public comments.

*Ms. Connolly made the motion to approve the project as presented. Ms. Gavriss seconded the motion.  
Notion passed 8-0*

- Ms. Connolly stated the reason for no comments is the great outreach work done by the department.

#### **5. Cabot Park Pavilion – Public Hearing with MassArt**

- Mr. Perez Demorizi introduced Paul Hajian, Mass Art College, partnering on this project
- Mr. Hajian commented Mass Art students’ partner with communities on a build project
- The students work with the community to envision, engage, fabricate, and build. The city provides the material, and the students build the project. Mr. Hajian introduced the Mass Art Team for this project.
- Jean Sebastian Vachon, Student stated the group started by looking into the history of Cabot Park, reviewed the site conditions and reached out to the community
- Ashley Seidman, Student reviewed the proposed site location. The location would be in the place where the old play equipment was removed. Acoustics would be pointed away from the residents
- Jesse Smith, Student we are calling the structure the Butterfly pavilion

- Multiuse
- ADA Accessible
- Deck pavilion
- Outdoor classroom
- Roof
- Kyle Curtis, Student we met with the Explore and More pre-school group and the Cabot school principal. The children were sitting on tree stumps and the trees were very important to the kids, so we went with that theme in the design
- Mr. Perez Demorizi commented upon approval the pavilion would be built over the summer small details will be tweaked/adjusted
- Ms. Gavis commented she loves the design and asked if there will be electricity and what is the future maintenance on the pavilion. Mr. Perez Demorizi replied yes there will be electricity and the materials being used will be durable to weather and available at Home Depot if anything needs to be replaced.
- Ms. Wilkinson asked the overall size. Ms. Smith replied 25'x50'
- Mr. Rice commented he manages the Hyde bandstand and recommended synthetic flooring. The rain chain is a great idea, the Hyde bandstand had one, the kids hung off it and it broke.
- Mr. Feldhusen asked the cost of materials and management of schedule. Mr. Perez Demorizi commented there has been \$25K allocated for materials there will be some open use but for amplified events and special events those would be permitted. Ms. Gavis commented the department has a permit process in place for special events.
- Mr. Hajian commented he is a registered architect, and they group also works with a structural engineer. Mr. Perez Demorizi commented the structure would also go through the standard building permit process.

*Mr. Chapman made the motion to approve the proposal as presented. Ms. Gavis seconded the motion.  
Motion passed 7-0-1*

#### **6. Spears Park – Community Garden – Informational**

- Mr. Perez Demorizi presented an initial proposal for community garden beds in Spears Park on Washington St. Currently there are public community gardens at Nahanton Park, a few schools have a garden bed. A Friends of Spears Park group was created to support this project.
- Project details
  - Friends Group to assist with gardens
  - 50 raised beds
  - Fenced
  - Accessible
  - City would fund the fence, water, and pathway
  - Possible seating and composting
  - Friends group would fundraise to support the project
- Mr. Chapman commented a friend's group is important and a 1" fence is essential to keep critters out
- Ms. Wilkinson commented it looks amazing and like the fence and asked if the area would be for the gardeners only or open to the public and how will you protect the beds from the public helping themselves to the vegetables, etc.
- Mr. Perez Demorizi commented those are discussion we will continue to have with the Friends group.

#### **7. Commissioner's Report**

- July 4<sup>th</sup> event is back

- Presented field fees to Programs and Services Committee, had good reception
- Department received end of fiscal year support:
  - NN Tennis Courts resurfacing
  - Newton Centre Playground accessible surfacing
  - Replace athletic turf at both high schools
  - Historic Newton rock wall repair
- Continued meetings with Friends of Farlow Park
- Meeting for Crystal Lake design improvement
- NSHS lighting is being delivered this week and NNHS lighting will be delivered in a couple of weeks
- Received a grant for Marty Sender path improvements- Phase I under way
- Mr. Johnson asked what was going on at the Bullough's pond ramp area. Commissioner Banks replied, a bike rack is being installed and the Friends group prefers a different surface for the area. Mr. Perez Demorizi we are looking at a gravel surface

## 8. Committee Reports

- Community Preservation Committee -B. Dunker
  - Gath Pool Project was approved for funding
- Urban Tree Commission – B. Wilkinson
  - Three Councilor's have docketed an item to have a moratorium on tree removal for one year until the ordinance can be revised:
    - No exempt lots
    - Protected tree size reduced to 6" from 8"
- Farm Commission – B. Wilkinson
  - No report
- Off-Leash Area Working Group (OLAWG) – Commissioner
  - Met the beginning of June
  - Improvements to Clafin
  - Add another OLA to the north side of the city, Norumbega, Lyons or the grassy areas on Washington St across from Oakley Spa.
- Arts & Culture – G. Gavis
  - Public Art has been installed throughout the city, painted butterflies, pianos, and church pews
  - Festival of the Arts is scheduled in July
  - PRC is hosting several summer concerts at the Newton Centre Bowl, it will be interesting to see the use of the bowl

## 9. New Business

- No new business

Meeting Adjourned at 10:31 pm

Respectfully submitted by

Robin McLaughlin

Commission Secretary

