

City of Newton



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Community Preservation Committee

APPROVED MINUTES

July 12, 2022

The virtual meeting was held online on Tuesday, July 12, 2022, beginning at 7:00 P.M. Community Preservation Committee (CPC) members present included Dan Brody, , Byron Dunker, Susan Lunin, Robert Maloney, Jennifer Molinsky, and Judy Weber. Committee Members Mark Armstrong, Eliza Datta, and Martin Smargiassi were not present at this time. Community Preservation Program Manager Lara Kritzer was also present and served as recorder.

Chair Jennifer Molinsky opened the Community Preservation Committee's public meeting at 7:00 P.M and introduced the CPC members present at this time. Ms. Molinsky also agreed to be the reviewer for this meeting's draft minutes.

Update on Future Recreation Projects from Parks, Recreation, and Culture Department

Nicole Banks, Commissioner of Parks, Recreation and Culture, and Luis Perez Demorizi, Director of Parks and Open Space, presented an update on the Parks and Recreation projects that were anticipated to be coming to the CPC for funding over the next few years. Commissioner Banks gave an overview of their programs and projects with a focus on the work underway on the Athletic Fields Project. She summarized their ongoing Master Planning efforts, explaining that they were looking at how to balance and manage the parks as both open space opportunities and public grounds. Their five year strategic plan looked at how the City could increase its ongoing investment in the athletic fields through expanded opportunities, evening play improvements, and multi-year capital improvement projects as well as how the Department could expand its project management team. Commissioner Banks explained that they were prioritizing these projects and explained their review criteria. The Department's goals were to improve lighting in the parks to allow more evening play, increase the size and quality of the playing fields, and implement smart and sustainable techniques and technologies where possible.

Commissioner Banks went on to explain that since last summer, they had hired two firms – CDM Smith and Weston & Sampson – to serve as the consultants for the Athletic Fields project. The consultants were working with concerned groups and had held three community meetings on the future design of Albemarle Park and two meetings on the potential changes at the Brown/Oak Hill, Burr School, and McGrath playing fields. Commissioner Banks reviewed their capital projects list and noted where ARPA funding was anticipated to be used. In total, the City had ten projects proposed for eight locations at this time. She noted that they were also looking at adding lighting and replacing the synthetic turf fields at the high schools but would not be coming to the CPC for those projects.

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Commissioner Banks explained that they were looking at other potential sites for lighting systems and where there were opportunities for every play expansion. The high schools were critical locations for this but there would be other locations as well. She explained that the City also had thirty softball fields and that they were considering where they could overlay these with multi-purpose fields. They were also considering where they could reduce maintenance costs and improve their operating plans. Commissioner Banks explained that the softball diamonds were expensive to maintain and that they were considering where these fields could be removed or adjusted as well as where synthetic fields could be added.

Commissioner Banks stated that they were also looking at the City's racquet sport courts. The City had 67 tennis courts in 18 locations, some of which also had an overlay for pickle ball. The City wanted to expand its recreational offering by adopting more of these courts as pickleball was a popular multigenerational sport. However, finding a location for the pickleball courts was challenging as the game could be loud and it was recommended that there be 150 feet between the court and adjacent properties. They were currently looking for the best sites to use for future pickleball courts as the overlaid courts were creating competition between tennis and pickleball users. Commissioner Banks added that they could fit two pickleball courts in the space used by one tennis court and that they could not add overlays to the high school courts because pickleball was not a competitive sport.

Commissioner Banks and Mr. Demorizi next reviewed the proposed changes to the City's recreation inventory. Splash pads were to be installed in Upper Falls and at the new Gath Pool facility and State funding was being used to look at potential work at the Crystal Lake Beach. The Burr School, McGrath, and Brown/Oak Hill field improvement plans were also underway. They were considering removing the existing pickleball courts at McGrath because they were too close to surrounding homes but planned to keep the courts at their other sites. McGrath Park would also have a new pathway added to improve accessibility and walking opportunities and they were considering options for reusing its underutilized soft ball fields. It was noted that a primary goal of the Department as to provide more regulation lacrosse fields.

Burr Park was anticipated to be a "swing space" for other facilities when they were under construction. Commissioner Banks reviewed the existing conditions of the site, noting that the parcel was uneven and the work would include leveling the field and repositioning pathways around its perimeter. They planned to also install multipurpose fields here but to also leave space for future expansion work at the school.

It was noted that the Brown/Oak Hill fields were also used by Newton South High School and that each had a baseball and softball field. The plans for this site included adding more pathways, removing an unused agility playground, and installing new multipurpose fields.

Albemarle Park was anticipated to have much larger site changes and Commissioner Banks reviewed the proposed plans. She noted that some of the multiple uses on the site conflicted now and explain how they would be reorganizing the site for the softball and little league. The park was being reimagined with the new pool at its center and they were looking at how to continue pathways from Crafts Street to Watertown Street in such a way that they would create loops for walking. She explained that it was a challenge to accommodate all of the needed uses at this site, including the City's fireworks display, which needed a minimum radius area as well. Members discussed the

competing interests at this site and it was noted that it might be a secondary site for a future synthetic field.

Commissioner Banks stated that if everything moved forward perfectly, they would begin construction on Burr Park in Spring 2023, anticipated to cost \$500,000, followed by Albemarle Park in Fall 2023, which was currently anticipating a \$5 million construction cost due to the complexity of the project. These would be followed by McGrath Park at a cost of \$600,000 and the Brown/Oak Hill fields at \$500,000. The total rough estimate for the overall Athletic Fields project was \$7 million. Their next step would be to refine the plans, prioritize the first three fields to be completed, and begin the process of gaining the necessary project approvals for construction. Ms. Weber thanked the representatives for the presentation and asked if the estimated total was the price of the work without the new pool. Commissioner Banks answered yes, that the cost was only for the field work.

Public Hearing on the Gath Pool Project - Design and Construction Drawings

Commissioner Banks stated that it was a pleasure to be back before the CPC on this project. She introduced project consultant Tom Scarlata of BH+A, Inc., and explained that he would be presenting. She noted that the consultants had been very busy over the last year and had been involved with many community groups to develop design concepts that would address the City's needs. Mr. Demorizi introduced the rest of the project team and noted that the current proposal was only for the additional funding needed to complete the design and permitting. He reviewed the goals and objectives of the project and the numerous meetings and focus groups that had been held as part of the consultant's process. Mr. Demorizi explained that they were continuing to design the spray pad, deck, ramp and stairs, which they were adjusting based on additional public input. He reviewed the feedback that they had received to date on the project and explained that their concept was of a pool at the center of a park. He noted that they would need to address other interested and concerns in the area and how the pool site was elevated to address flooding, an issue that also needed to be addressed in the new designs.

Mr. Demorizi stated that the existing site had a Z shaped pool with lane lines. The new pool would upgrade these facilities and incorporate a toddler pool area. He noted that the bath house currently had a very convoluted floor plan which did not allow for easy or direct access to the pool. In addition, the projected costs for the existing pool had been increasing due to the leaking water and the need for additional chemical use. Mr. Demorizi stated that the current facility was in dire need of replacement.

Mr. Scarlata began his presentation with the bath house, which would be reconfigured to create a lobby and allow views through the building directly to the pool. An additional ramp would be installed at the front entrance and the interior would be redesigned to create more compact locker and changing areas as well as three gender neutral changing areas that the current facility lacks. The changes would also provide direct access to restrooms from the deck and allow visitors to skip the locker rooms and directly enter the pool area. Mr. Scarlata pointed out the lifeguard and first aid areas in the new building and how they would be moving the pool manager's office out onto the deck to provide full visibility. The work also included bring the pool deck up to be flush with the pool house as well as other new amenities.

Mr. Scarlata went on to review the pool layout. He noted that it would be a combined pool with separate recreational and lane areas. The new pool was designed with a zero depth entry area a recreational play area, and an exercise area, all of which would have improved accessibility. He noted that the current pool had six lanes and that the new one would have eight lanes with a uniform bottom and noted their locations on the plan to the side of the pool area. He explained that the new deck would have space for spectators as well as seating areas. The new splash pad would be terraced down to the existing grade and would be broken down into zones for different age groups. Mr. Scarlata noted that they were still developing the plan for the splash pad and that the existing adjacent field house would remain in place with additional seating areas to be installed in the same area.

Mr. Scarlata noted the viewing areas to the site and reviewed renderings and sections of four potential options for the site design. He presented several 3D images of the site and explained that this would be a pool that was designed for everyone's use. He reviewed the options that had been considered during the review process before moving to the conceptual construction budget. Mr. Scarlata stated that the budget was designed with a hefty contingency and anticipated additional mark ups for materials. He explained that the proposed design with a larger splash pad was \$11 million.

Mr. Demorizi stated that the current proposal to complete Phase II of the project was anticipated to take 10 months. He reviewed the elements of the plan approval process that would need to be done to take the project all the way through the bidding process. He then reviewed a breakdown of the design fee and how the current request for \$486,500 had been reached. It was noted that this breakdown did not include the construction administration for the next phase which would be covered by the \$96,000 in staff time from the City.

Mr. Brody asked about the anticipated construction costs. Mr. Demorizi stated that they were budgeting \$6 million for the pool work and that the \$11 million was estimated to cover all of the proposed goals. He added that they were currently working on the updated totals for the new budgets now. Mr. Brody asked if the CPA would be asked to fund all of the proposed construction. Mr. Demorizi answered that they were looking at other options as well. Commissioner Banks noted that the current estimates were preliminary and that the market was volatile. She stated that they were holding the Gath Pool budget at \$6 million and expected the City to provide \$1 million in funding. They were also looking at State earmarks for other funding resources as well as potential grant opportunities. The idea of the current Gath Pool funding request was to bring the project's design to a point where they could get an actual estimate ready. She added that they wanted to manage the budget while keeping as many of the goals intact in the project scope as possible.

Ms. Weber noted that the surrounding Albemarle Park project was estimated to be \$7 million and asked if the two projects would be completed in roughly the same time frame. Mr. Demorizi answered that they were looking at how best to stage the work as they did not want the park to go fully offline if possible. They were also looking at other funding sources and were expecting to complete both the park and the pool area separately over at least two stages. Commissioner Banks noted that they were trying to have the pool opened throughout next summer and to have work ready to begin in the fall. For the fields, they were considering doing the north and south in sections and could begin work on the lighting as soon as they knew where they would be located.

Ms. Molinsky opened the discussion to public comment. Cedar Pruitt, President of the Friends of Albemarle Park, stated that their organization now had 450 members and that there was a lot of passion in the community for Gath Pool. He felt that this was a great place for the City to invest its CPA funding and noted that there had been a great deal of collaboration between the consultants, residents, and staff. Gath Pool meant so much to the community and while there were private pools, many in the area did not have access to them. The facility was seen as an important recreational asset for the community that allowed for competitive meets as well and the Friends were excited about the new vision for the space.

The public hearing as closed at this time. Ms. Molinsky noted that the project before the CPC tonight was just for the design work and asked if there would be additional design work needed if the City could not afford these plans. Mr. Demorizi answered that there would be milestones throughout the process that would help staff to meet this challenge. They would be working closely with the consultants throughout the process and could adjust the scope as needed to complete a set of construction documents which could move forward with the proposed budget. He did not believe that additional design funding would be needed. Mr. Scarlata added that the cost of the project was based on the current design and concept and that they were anticipating that there would be a lot of back and forth on the project details over the next few months. The project was also estimated with a \$2 million contingency but they were hoping that the market would calm as the design moved forward so that this could be reduced. Mr. Scarlata believed that the proposed amount of funding would cover the cost of the project unless the site changed and noted that the current phase of work was less impacted by inflation.

Ms. Weber stated that in the not too distant future the CPC could expect requests for approximately \$13 million and asked if that would be staged over three to four years. She wanted to have a better understanding of the scale of the upcoming request. Commissioner Banks explained that they needed to work through the rest of the design but that their goal was to keep the pool project within the \$6 million range. She explained that they were looking to provide a facility that met the Community's needs within that existing budget goal and that they needed to continue to work on the project details to get to that point. Mr. Demorizi added that they were looking to complete this work on a shorter time frame because of the condition of the facility and explained that they were taking an aggressive approach to meeting their five to ten year goals. Ms. Morse understood the CPCs concerns that all of these funding requests were coming at once and thought that it would make sense for their team to come back to the Committee in the fall when they had more details and information on these projects.

Ms. Molinsky agreed that that would be helpful. She thought that the current proposal was a good use of funding to move the project forward to the next stage and that there would be a lot of opportunities over the next year to revise and refine the project scope. Mr. Maloney moved that the Committee recommend full funding of the project as submitted. Ms. Lunin seconded the motion which passed by unanimous voice vote.

Public Hearing on the Jackson Homestead Basement Rehabilitation Study

Historic Newton Executive Director Lisa Dady was present and noted that most of the members had been present for the earlier pre-proposal discussion. She noted that the pre-proposal had requested funding for the full cost of both the design and construction to address the water issues in the

basement of the Jackson Homestead and create a museum quality space for the City's collections. Their project team had since decided to break the project into smaller phases and were only requesting funding at this time to hire a consultant to complete a study of the space and develop plans for its rehabilitation. Ms. Dady noted that the Committee had had a lot of concerns at the last meeting about the overall cost. She thought that the RFP might come in with a lower project amount and explained how this work would allow them to plan by using numbers that were developed based on professional estimates. She had included the scope for the RFP with the full proposal and noted that it would be managed by Rafik Ayoub in the Public Buildings Department. Architects Larry Bauer and Russ Feldman were also assisting with this project. Ms. Dady reiterated that the project would stabilize the crumbling stone and brick foundations and create a watertight envelope to insure the long term stabilization, moisture control, and useability of the space. As part of this work, they would also be looking at the HVAC system.

Ms. Dady imagined that the results of the study would be a list of options and trade-offs and that the consultants would provide them with the information they needed to have a discussion about what could be done given the realities of the space and collection. She added that they also wanted to consider Universal design elements as well and had discussed what firms might be a good fit for this work. She ended by noting that the budget would keep in mind both the design and inflation.

Mr. Brody asked whether the HVAC system was a gas system and whether they would be considering zero carbon options. Ms. Dady stated that the furnace was only two years old and was not sure whether they would make any changes to it at this time. Mr. Morse stated that they wanted to start with the envelope first and that once that had been addressed, they would look at dehumidification, which often involved a heat pump system. He thought that it could make sense to change out the heating system but that the study would drive that decision and provide them with the best options for the building.

Ms. Molinsky asked about the time frame of the project. Ms. Dady answered that they anticipated that 80% of the RFP would be ready by the time the funding was approved. They would then work with Purchasing and anticipated a two month turn around time to review the bids and get the project underway. Ms. Molinsky noted that Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Smargiassi had previously offered to take a look at the basement and wondered if that site visit had happened. Ms. Dady answered that it had not taken place yet but that they could set one up at any time. She noted that those members had thought that the work could be done for less funding. Mr. Morse explained that there were a number of things that would need to be covered in this project. He explained that fifteen years ago they had done an exterior project to install a ramp and that accessibility to the space was an issue. They would need to water seal the foundation by developing a plan to direct water way from the foundation, seal the existing stone and brickwork, and install exterior and interior drains as needed. The problem was a dewpoint issue as well as a water infiltration one and was also impacting the fieldstone. He stated that he had been with the City for 14 years and that the last project at the Jackson Homestead had involved multiple funding requests. He explained that he would rather put in one request for more funding and return some than need to come back for additional funding in the future.

A question was raised about the use of CPA funding for the exhibit space. It was noted that CPA funding could be used for the preservation of the building and collections and for accessibility improvements but not for the exhibit itself. Mr. Morse stated that the scope would be developed as

they went and that it was possible that it would be below the \$1 million in the pre-proposal. . Mr. Maloney moved that the Committee recommend full funding of the project as submitted in the new full proposal. Ms. Lunin seconded the motion which passed by unanimous voice vote.

OTHER BUSINESS

Review of Current Finances

Ms. Kritzer briefly reviewed the status of the CPC's ongoing projects and current finances. It was noted that CPA funds could be requested in the future for a potential land acquisition in addition to the Recreation projects previously discussed. Members discussed where the funding stood and how much could potentially be proved for new projects in the future.

Members agreed to take some time at the August meeting to discuss what projects were in development and what might be coming in for funding in the next few years. Members asked for more information on what projects were in the City's Capital Improvement Plan and how the City allocated its own funding for these projects.

It was noted that the Affordable Housing Trust would also be coming before the CPC in August for funding. Members discussed how to consider this request and what amount might make the most sense to allocate at this time.

Approval of June 14 Minutes

There were no minutes ready at this time.

Other Business

Mr. Maloney moved to adjourn. Ms. Lunin seconded the motion which passed by unanimous voice vote. The meeting was adjourned at 9:04 P.M.