

Newton Parks & Recreation Commission

Meeting Minutes

Zoom On-Line Meeting

7:00 p.m. – Monday, November 21, 2022

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

Meeting began 7pm

1. Meeting Minutes – October 17, 2022

- Approved

2. Spears Park Community Garden- Public Hearing

- Presented by Luis Perez Demorizi, Parks & Open Space Director, Cassie Bethoney, Weston & Sampson, Farah Dakkak, Weston & Sampson
- The presentation may be view on-line:
 - <https://www.newtonma.gov/government/parks-recreation-culture/parks-open-space>
- Presenters reviewed:
 - The project timeline
 - Goals determined after input from the Community:
 - Enclosed, raised, garden beds
 - Seating Area
 - Pathway
 - Water service
 - Perimeter fence
 - Storage
 - Visibility: Screening, evergreen trees, material storage, and an elevated compost area
 - A tighter knit perimeter fence to address the rodent concern
 - Include art in the design
- Ms. Gavis asked if the orientation of the sun was checked. Ms. Bethoney stated a sun/shade was done. Beds will be in the sun and seating in the shade.
- Ms. Gavis asked the height of the fence. Mr. Perez Demorizi replied 4'
- Ms. Gavis asked if netting or another product could be added to the fence to make it attractive. Mr. Perez Demorizi commented possibly artist panels could be added.
- Mr. Feldhusen asked if the garden area will be open to the public or gated. Mr. Perez Demorizi replied, the gardens will be gated. Ms. Gavis asked if the gate will be locked. Mr. Perez Demorizi responded this is the first of its type, there is no clear definition for security. Commissioner Banks replied there is vandalism in all areas, we will work with the Friends group. Commissioner Banks stated a policy will be developed and any Commission member may be part of the group developing the policy.
- Mr. Neville asked if there is vandalism at the Nahanton Park Community gardens. Mr. Luis Perez Demorizi replied, no, mostly the handbook policies are not being followed.
- Mr. Feldhusen requested signage be added and make the signage consistent around the city.
- Mr. Feldhusen recommended digging down 18" when installing the fence to keep the critters out of the gardens and asked if the city will be providing hoses. Mr. Perez Demorizi commented PRC staff will work with the Friends of Spears Park on the details.

- Mr. Magni asked who will be maintaining the area and keeping it tidy. Mr. Perez Demorizi replied, it will be a shared effort.
- Mr. Chapman will there be a plan for the new plantings, maybe add some edible fruit trees. Mr. Perez Demorizi commented the plan will be reviewed with the Friends group.
- Ms. Gavis asked if there will be lighting. Mr. Perez replied there will be no lighting or electricity.
- Chairman Magni opened the meeting to public comment, a 3-minute limit per speaker:
 - Bonnie Lerner – requested the dimensions of the garden beds, and asked if there will be any height limitations
 - Susan Thompson is currently a gardener in Nahanton Park.
 - Standing compost is not good for big plants
 - Concern with sunlight in the area
 - Abutters are concerned but gardeners are good for the area
 - Jen & David Frenetele
 - Lots of concerns, there is a petition going around.
 - This plot was deeded to the city, there should be no fencing
 - This is a small road and a congested area
 - Having a locked gate is an issue
 - Concerned about maintenance and upkeep
 - Maren
 - Lives a couple of blocks away and is excited about the project
 - Pro locked gate
 - Rebecca
 - Thanked the group for the hard work, looking forward to this project
 - Marcus Breen
 - Looking forward to the project with the community
 - There has been great support from surrounding community
 - Councilor Greenberg
 - Thanked Mayor Fuller for providing ARPA funds for this project
 - The pike has divided this neighborhood, this project is bringing the neighborhood together
 - Agi
 - Would like to see a pollinator garden
 - A locked gate is required
 - Work together with abutters
 - Sister Mary Anne Doyle
 - Owns the land around the garden
 - This is an attractive project and will improve the area
- Chairman Magni closed the meeting to public comment
- Chairman Magni asked about the deed, height of beds and cost
- Mr. Perez Demorizi responded:
 - And read the deed, the Law Department reviewed the deed and determined this project fits within the terms of the deed
 - Height of beds is TBD
- Commissioner Banks replied to the question of the cost:
 - ARPA funds for design
 - \$75K state earmarked funds
 - Fundraising
- Ms. Gavis asked if the City will construct the beds for continuity will the beds be ADA compliant. Mr. Perez Demorizi replied there will be standard beds and, yes, the beds will be ADA compliant.

- Ms. Gavris asked who manages the finances. Mr. Perez Demorizi replied, the PRC Department will manage the finances.
- Ms. Wilkinson asked if there is a ballpark fee? And if there is a scholarship fund
- Commissioner Banks commented fees & policies will be based on what we already have in place, but also the input from the friends group. The gardens are self-funding. We have scholarships for other programs and will review options for garden beds.
- Mr. Perez Demorizi commented there will be test pits and soil analysis to check the soils is safe for growing.

*Mr. Chapman made the motion to accept the proposal as presented. Ms. Wilkinson seconded the motion.
Motion passed 8-0*

3. Wellington Playground – Public Hearing

- Presented by Greg Mellett, Asst. Director of Parks & Open Space, Friends of Wellington Park members, Eyal Dechter, and Amanda Kovalcik
- The presentation may be view on-line:
 - <https://www.newtonma.gov/government/parks-recreation-culture/parks-open-space>
- Mr. Dechter commented the park users have outgrown the tot lot. The location is underutilized, the new structure will be ADA compliant and have sensory focused activities.
- Mr. Chapman asked if any other location has been explored, the fence/ structure seems to encroach on the field.
- Ms Kovalcik commented there is no fence surrounding the structure
- Mr. Mellett replied no other locations were reviewed
- Mr. Dechter commented there is another field on the other side of the park, not shown in the photo. Commissioner Banks commented the additional field is not actively permitted for sports, only pick-up games.
- Ms. Gavris commented this project is a good idea for the neighborhood and community, is the group confident they can raise funds.
- Mr. Dechter commented the 2021 fundraising effort was put on hold after the informational meeting and the project plans changed from a community build to a vendor build. Once the project is approved by the Commission the fundraising will begin.
- Mr. Rice commented the cost difference of a vendor build vs. a community build is not that much, and this structure is too complex for the community.
- Mr. Neville asked if Recreation Manager, CPSI approved the location and the plan. Ms. Kovalcik responded yes; Ms. Lapham was involved in the process.
- Ms. Wilkinson asked if the netting can be cut. Mr. Chapman checked the materials of the netting online; the ropes are steel wrapped in fiber. Ms. Kovalcik commented the ropes have a 10-year warranty.
- Chairman Magni opened the meeting to public comment, a 3-minute limit per speaker:
 - Mary Stehle lives ¼ of a mile from the park and is thrilled about the project, her 2- and 5-year-old are aging out of the tot lot
 - Cheryl Wermer has 3 kids who have outgrown the tot lot and appreciates the location, near the tot lot so she can see her children on both structures.
 - Rose McCozie, Friend of Wellington Park has 3 children. The location of the structure is well thought out and the other open space is wide open
 - Heather Lockrow has been going to the park for years, her kids are aging out. This is truly a community park.
 - Angela Erb, Supports the structure.

- Jane lives next to park this project is out of sync with the park, it is the size of a three-bedroom ranch and intruding on the green space. Jane thought Newton wanted to hold on to green space, this is a mistake someone must think about the park.
- Chairman Magni closed the meeting to public comment
- Chairman Magni noted that Jane’s comment was passionate and thoughtful. Chairman Magni is familiar with the park and if the energy is channeled to have a safe structure, the project is a good idea, there is open space on the other side of the park.

Mr. Rice made the motion to accept the proposal as presented. Mr. Dunker seconded the motion. Motion passed 7-0-1

4. Commissioner’s Report

- Budget review: City Council approved the request to hold a special election for the budget override in March 2023. to \$1.5 Million is earmarked for PRC.
- McGrath Park met onsite with neighbors, Councilors Malakie, and Norton to discuss the location of the lacrosse wall. Consensus was found and plan is being further studied.
- Artificial turf replacement at NSHS has been presented to the Program & Services committee.
- Tennis, lights on the courts has ended
- RFP is out for a new tennis contract
- Newton Centre Playground resurfacing is scheduled for the spring. A tile system will be installed, and the work is weather dependent.
- Levingston Cove groundbreaking ceremony will be scheduled in December.

5. Committee Reports

- Community Preservation Committee -B. Dunker
 - No report
- Urban Tree Commission – B. Wilkinson
 - There is \$500K in the override money for the Forestry Division. Marc Welch made two presentations on how the money would be utilized
 - Planting
 - Pruning
 - Additional tree care
 - Expand in-house staff
- Farm Commission – B. Wilkinson
 - Year ended well
 - Director of Education, Matt Durham is moving on, the farm is trying a new structure/direction
- Off-Leash Area Working Group (OLAWG) – Commissioner
 - Fence at Claflin playground is being replaced, adding pedestrian gates, and doing some concrete stair repair
 - Park Ranger has been hired, Adam Nahabedian. The Park Ranger will provide presence and education
- Arts & Culture – G. Gavris
 - No report

6. New Business

- Mr. Dunker proposed time limits on approvals of projects, such as the Lacrosse Wall
- Mr. Johnson proposed the Commission members have site visits before a public hearing

- Chairman Magni agreed, this would be a policy update

Meeting Adjourned 9:27pm

Robin McLaughlin

Commission Secretary