

Newton Parks & Recreation Commission

Meeting Minutes

Zoom On-Line Meeting

7:00 p.m. – Monday, December 19, 2022

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

Meeting began 7:02pm

1. Meeting Minutes – November 21, 2022 - Approved 8-0

2. Gath Pool 4.0-Public Hearing

- Presented by Luis Perez Demorizi, Director of Parks & Open Space and Tom Scarlata of BH & A
- The previous plan included one connected pool. After reviewing the plans with the team, a two-pool plan is recommended. Updating the plan to a two separate pool design, Lap Pool, Recreation pool:
 - Addresses the safety concern of guarding at the connection
 - Allows better circulation around the pool deck
 - Allows addition of a second diving board
 - Lifts installed at both pools
 - The lap pool, recreation pool and splash pad will have separate filtering systems. If one area needs to be shut down, the other two areas will remain open
- Commissioner Banks commented we are excited to bring back this big change of two pools retaining accessibility for all swim areas.
- Ms. Connolly commented she is respectful of the process and thanked all for the work put into this plan. Families enjoy attending the swim meets, will there be space on the pool deck for families to watch swim meets. Mr. Scarlata replied yes there is space around the edge of the deck for viewing.
- Mr. Chapman asked about integration of the pool into the landscape and adding picnic tables. Mr. Scarlata replied this plan follows the pathway created by the Albemarle Field Renovation Project. The elevation change is not as steep as was thought, there will be steps of a pathway leading to the splashpad. Mr. Chapman asked if tables could be placed to the left of the walkway. Mr. Perez Demorizi replied all structures will be placed within the splash pad space. Commissioner Banks commented picnic tables are a great idea and there is some space in front of the bath house. Mr. Chapman requested a drawing including the structures.
- Mr. Chapman asked if there will be a wall on the east side of the pool. Mr. Scarlata replied yes, a short retaining wall with a chain link fence on top of the wall.
- Mr. Chapman asked if a bubble covering the pool could be considered in the future. Mr. Scarlata replied, this plan would allow for addition of a bubble in the future. Mr. Dunker commented there is limited funding for this pool project, a bubble is costly.
- Mr. Rice asked if the pool will be heated. Mr. Perez Demorizi replied, no. Commissioner Banks explained, the current pool is constantly cold due to the constant loss of water that is continually replaced with cold water.

- Mr. Rice asked the staffing requirements for the splash pad. Mr. Perez Demorizi replied if the splash pad has circulating water with chlorine an attendant is required. Commissioner Banks added a lifeguard is not required only occasional chemical checks. Mr. Rice asked if the future splash pad in the Newton Highlands will be circulating. Mr. Luis Perez Demorizi replied currently the plan is this splash pad will not be circulating. Commissioner Banks added the current technology is more advanced and allows monitoring off-site.
- Ms. Gavris commented this is a great design and thanked the team for the work put into this plan and asked to see the difference between the current footprint and the proposed footprint. Mr. Scarlata reviewed both footprints.
- Chairman Magni opened the meeting to public comment.
 - Councilor Pam Wright asked why the shallow end is not closer to the bath house. Kids get excited and run out of the bath house and having the deep end just outside the bath house seems like a safety concern. Mr. Perez Demorizi commented the deep end will be closer to the lifeguards. Mr. Nickerson, Aquatics Director, added having the shallow end farther from the bathhouse allows for a place for people to relax away from the constant traffic of the bath house.
 - Councilor Wright stated having the recreation pool as a saltwater pool may be cost effective and less maintenance. Mr. Scarlata replied a saltwater pool is allowed by the state regulations; however, the water will have to go through the system to be cleaned same as a fresh water, chlorine pool.
 - The reservoir for the splash pad is turned over every 25 minutes, Recreation pool is turned over every 4 hours and the lap pool are turned over every 6 hours.
 - Bill Connell, 367 Albemarle Rd asked if there has been any mitigation for parking and traffic. Mr. Perez Demorizi commented this project has not addressed the issue of traffic and parking in the area, but the city is aware of the issues and several departments are performing studies on parking and traffic in the area.
 - Ima Jonsdottier, Council on Disabilities member commented there is only one changing facility for someone with disabilities and a helper, who may take longer to get ready to go out to the pool. Mr. Perez Demorizi commented, the footprint of the bathhouse only allows for the one gender neutral bathroom, however, it is in a location close to staff so the usage can be monitored and adjusted as needed. Commissioner Banks noted that the locker rooms each have accessible restroom/shower/changing areas.
- Chairman Magni closed public comment
- Mr. Rice asked the next steps, Mr. Perez Demorizi commented the proposal must go to the Council, Design Review Committee, CPC, and Conservation Commission all at the same time. The proposed plan is after the 2023 swim season the pool will close and the renovations will begin.

Ms. Connolly made the motion to approve the proposed updates as presented. Mr. Neville Seconded the motion. Motion passed 8-0.

3. McGrath Park Project – Discussion

- Commissioner Banks stated when reviewing the different design elements for the McGrath Park Project, having both the interior and exterior walking pathway would shrink the athletic fields which jeopardizes compliance of field safety and size. The Council on Disabilities (COD) is contributing CDBG funds toward the pathway and prefer the exterior pathway. Staff reviewed the field dimensions and determined that the exterior perimeter path can move forward.
- Mr. Neville and Chairman Magni commented the pathway is a great idea, it is nice to have a smooth walkable surface.
- Mr. Johnson asked how close the pathway is to the proposed lacrosse wall. Mr. Perez Demorizi stated the wall may be sited on the Myrtle Street side of the tennis courts.
- Mr. Chapman asked if it is important to have a loop to get back to the parking areas and are there rest stops along the pathways. Mr. Perez Demorizi commented a full loop is not required and we are including benches along the pathway.
- Commissioner Banks thanked Mr. Perez Demorizi for the work done on this project.

4. Commissioner's Report

- Last week the Levingston Cove Project groundbreaking event was successful and well attended.
- Claflin Park fencing has been replaced and extended with added gates.
- Boyd Park, DPW & Grounds maintenance repaired the steps and railings.

5. Committee Reports

- Community Preservation Committee -B. Dunker
- Discussed how to make the public aware of the available CPA funds
- Urban Tree Commission – B. Wilkinson
- The two proposals for the Council may be on the Council agenda January 4th
- Farm Commission – B. Wilkinson
- Currently working on the end of year fundraising
- Off-Leash Area Working Group (OLAWG) – Commissioner
- Meeting in January
- Arts & Culture – G. Gavis
- Winterfest in Newton Centre January 28 & 29th

6. New Business

- Chairman Magni reminded the members the elections for Commission Chairperson and Vice-Chair will take place during the January 23rd meeting. If interested in any of the positions, please contact the Commission Secretary

Meeting Adjourned 8:21pm

Robin McLaughlin

Commission Secretary