

Recreation Commission Meeting

11/20/2023

Zoom

Commission Attendees: Paul Cowing (Chair), Dave Lind (Vice Chair), Cortney Eldridge (Secretary), Anthony Ferrante, Steve Warner, Ken Krilla, Anthony Ferrante, Mike Capitani, Theresa O'Connor

Town Attendees: Brandon Fitts, Heidi Barberio

Call to order 5:30pm

Review and Approve October 16th Meeting Minutes

Approved: Cortney Eldridge, Anthony Ferrante, Theresa O'Connor, Mike Capitani, Ken Krilla, Steve Warner

Abstain: Paul Cowing

Rink Update (Anthony Ferrante)

- Old/current structure is still standing
- Will come down soon – and so will White Field House
- Rink will move closer to JV field; put in a retaining wall so that the Fire Department can have access to three sides; there is some rethinking of the layout of the site
- Prefab metal building; will have solar panels and translucent paneling in the roof for natural light during the day
- Usage: talked a lot about off-season use; non-ice use
- No a/c; well-insulated; dehumidified
- Capable of making ice in the summer but not currently planned – plan is 9 months of ice
- Latest drawings are up on the website: https://www.belmont-ma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlif6831/f/uploads/2023-09-19_belmont_rink_updated_drawings.pdf

Brandon's update

- Toured Belmont Hill, Rivers School in Weston, and Roxbury Latin to get a sense of what they convert the skating rinks to when the ice comes out/is melted – these all convert to turf in the summer months; turf will be most affordable, easily stored, a lot of flexibility; alternative: hard, rubber matting floor – requires more storage
- Potential use: rain back-up plan for summer movie series; Champions Soccer School rain back-up; ran back up for rec programs (e.g., archery); could host fitness classes
- This will not fall under Recreation's purview for management – rink management will report to Town Administrator

Discussion

- Timeline: mid-winter 2024; summer programming in 2025
- Ideas of what to do with no ice – also recommend talking to Hayden in Lexington; BB&N
- Should begin public input and create a plan

- Hiring a rink manager – this person will be involved in the summer planning/programming discussion

Update on Dogs (Brandon Fitts)

- A private working group consisting of Mike, Theresa, Paul, and Brandon, as well as dog owners, users from the public, animal control officer
- Have been meeting regularly and have come up with a starting point for a structure/solution
- Agreement/preliminary solution: would like to launch a pilot program in January for 1-6 months; will involve community collaboration
- Collaborating with Health dept, Police dept, Town Administrator to ensure the work will work for all
- Hope to start to communicate out about the pilot after Thanksgiving
- This is a complex project with a lot of inputs and approvals from various users and town employees/departments

Questions/discussion

- Quentin Fennessy: Not sharing specifics today – is that intentional?
 - Yes.
- Dave Lind: timing?
 - Coincide with January 1 timeframe to see if we can enroll in the program with license updates
- Dave Lind: communication plan?
 - It'll go out through the normal channels – anybody with a current permit; may do a broader communication through different means; trying to build up better communication in general
 - Paul: also folds into a bigger signage conversation
- Anthony Ferrante: will the commission vote on this?
 - Yes – December 4th
- Suzy Feinberg: What is the mechanism for community input prior to launching it or voting?
 - We have been using the working group for preliminary ideas and wanted to get it moving; will be collecting feedback as it is rolled out; concerned about timeline to coincide with new permits

CPC Projects Update (Brandon Fitts)

Payson Park

- Ran into some expected snags but largely on target
- Playgrounds are nearly installed
- Benches are being organized – not bolted down yet
- If grass grows well, could be open in early summer; may not be accessible until late summer – wait and see depending on weather

Grove Fields

- Leveled, getting irrigation set, getting ready to set down sod

- Will wrap up the project in the spring of 24
- June 1 2024 reopening target date

PQ and Grove Basketball Courts

- Will be finished in the spring of 24 – surfacing, asphalt, etc.
- PQ and Grove are on same timeline
- Should be open June 1 2024

Town Field

- Fencing around the basketball area should be done by Thanksgiving; may be delayed due to supply issue – is still in the works and expected to be completed soon
- Will be featured in the National Parks and Rec magazine
- Any feedback (e.g., loose knobs) should be sent to rec dept as well as Jay and Frank (due to holidays etc)

Chenery

- Have submitted Phase I design and review application – next large project
- Have submitted application to set aside \$1m in anticipation of this project costing a lot – could be upwards of \$3m
- Area is wide/large: includes two softball fields, paved area, tennis courts, playground, and grass areas – lots of community meetings will be coming up
- Will go before Town Meeting in April 2024 for Phase I funding

Field Maintenance (Brandon Fitts)

- There has been talk about PQ and its condition; working with Frank and Jay and looking for natural alternatives (to turf)
- It is expected the HS fields come online in the spring for the spring HS season, which will impact other field usage around town
- The current plan is that all HS sports stay on the HS campus and use those fields, which relieve pressure on the other fields
- Freshman field hockey was at Winn Brook; Freshman soccer was at Grove
- This may allow us to rest some fields and create a true maintenance program – as fields come online and sports adjust to new locations, we can see/discuss

Director's Update (Brandon Fitts)

- Will have the winter brochure out soon
- Space [constraints] is our #1 issue
- It's still budget season – last Town Meeting, we got our revolving fund approved and this will allow us to have a lot more flexibility
- FTEs will remain in general fund; part time administrative assistant will be in the revolving fund and right-sized some of the other salaries
- Heidi has been promoted to Assistant Recreation Director
- We have a candidate to replace Josh for Rec Commission vacancy

- Will discuss signage updates after we hash out the dog plan

Next Meeting

Timing

- December 4th: 5:30pm on Zoom
- January 8th: 5:30pm on Zoom

Meeting Adjourned 6:28pm