

**PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION
TOWN OF NEEDHAM, MASSACHUSETTS**

**Minutes of Meeting
August 10, 2020**

PRESENT: Cynthia J. Chaston, Michelle S. Geddes, Matthew M. Toolan,
Stacey Mulroy, Angela O'Connor, Kristen Wright

ABSENT: Christopher J. Gerstel, Bruce R. Williams

Ms. Chaston called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM remotely using Zoom.

Ms. Chaston read a statement regarding public meeting process due to COVID-19.

1. Open Forum – Public Comment

None presented

2. Director's Report

Ms. Mulroy reviewed the report with the Commission.

Mr. Toolan asked about repeat registrations at the Pools and if there is some diversity each day. Ms. Mulroy stated that the registration system is set to limit the number of registrations and there is a black-out period between registrations for each group. Ms. Wright added that families are getting much better about canceling with plenty of time and opening up timeslots to registered members of the waitlist, which tend to be non-members that could not initially register. Ms. Chaston asked if there were members that were unable to get into any time slots. Ms. Mulroy stated that there have been some, but many get in contact with the office and we are able to get them in.

Ms. Chaston confirmed that the current ending date for the Pools season is August 23rd.

Ms. Geddes stated that the current priority system that is in place is the correct approach and would be reluctant to open it up to non-members at the same time as members. Ms. Mulroy stated that she will continue to think about how to best serve non-members. Ms. Chaston agreed with Ms. Geddes as the people that purchased membership stuck with the department and the commission through the unknown, but ultimately would trust the judgement of the department to best serve the community.

Mr. Toolan asked if the department has a plan, or plans, for different outcomes regarding Fall sports. Mr. Toolan stated that over the summer we were left waiting on state guidance and he feels we should have some contingencies in place. Ms. Mulroy stated that policies regarding fields have not been reviewed yet as the summer has been the focus. Ms. Mulroy stated that she is planning on having the user groups submit and then hold them until we have more information. Ms. Mulroy stated that she has been in contact with Superintendent Dr. Gutenkanst and will be discussing planning for the Fall based on both MIAA and the state guidance. Mr. Toolan shared his concern about not having a plan forward for the Fall. Ms. Mulroy stated that the focus will

remain on the currently summer operation and continuing to maintain a safe summer season, but some focus can be shifted to fall and fall field permitting in the coming weeks as the summer season comes to an end. Ms. Chaston shared that when the decisions are made at the state level they will have quickly, and we need to be ready for those decisions. Mr. Toolan asked the department to spend some time coming up with contingency plans to get the user groups on the fields as soon as possible as the public needs to be aware of the timeline.

3A. Pool Updates

Discussed earlier in the meeting during the Director's Report.

3B. Summer Recess Updates

Discussed earlier in the meeting during the Director's Report.

3C. Playground Updates

Discussed earlier in the meeting during the Director's Report.

3D. Assistant Director Opening

Ms. Mulroy provided an update on the process of posting the Assistant Director Opening.

Ms. Chaston shared that in past experiences that the process is slow, and we should be prepared for it. Ms. Geddes stated that the sooner that we can get it posted the better. Mr. Toolan also shared that the other concern he has is that if the Town goes into a hiring freeze that we may not be able to fill the position. Ms. Geddes suggested also looking into temporary staffing to help the staff so we can continue to move forward. Ms. Chaston stated that Commission is happy to help in any way to ensure this position moves forward.

3E. Fall Town Meeting Articles

Ms. Chaston asked to review any articles that will come up at Special Town Meeting. Ms. Wright stated that only the articles that are being presented by CPC on behalf of Parks & Forestry, Conservation and Park and Recreation are still pending. Ms. Wright shared that the CPC will be meeting on Wednesday to discuss them.

3F. Fall Programs

Ms. Mulroy stated that we will be very limited with what we can offer without the use of the schools and the department is looking into working with vendors that can offer some outdoor based programs. Ms. Mulroy stated that some virtual programming will also be offered. Ms. O'Connor stated that Girls on the Run is ready to move forward, both in person and virtually. Ms. O'Connor stated that Needham Community Theater may also be interested in hosting virtual programming. Mr. Toolan asked if walks or hikes could be scheduled. Ms. Mulroy stated that we will be bringing as many programs as we can. Ms. Mulroy stated that for the winter Nashoba Ski

has already reached out and the biggest hurdle there is transportation. Ms. Chaston agreed and thought that rentals also may be a concern. Ms. O'Connor suggested snow shoeing as a possible Winter program.

3G. Fall Field Permitting

Discussed earlier in the meeting during the Director's Report.

4A. CPA

Ms. Chaston stated that we will need to keep the next cycle of projects in mind as the December 1st application deadline seems to always approach quickly.

4B. Budgets

Ms. Chaston stated that this is another item that comes up quickly. Ms. Mulroy stated that Mr. Davison has already had some conversations about the budget, and she expects it will be well communicated as deadlines approach.

4C. Boat Launch

Ms. Mulroy stated at a meeting last week Engineering will be working with Tighe & Bond directly and we will continue to receive updates. Ms. Mulroy stated that there is another meeting in a few weeks.

4D. Walker Pond

Ms. Mulroy stated that she is working with the working group to get a meeting on the calendar. Ms. Mulroy shared that the Association has been disappointed with the process and the slow nature in which municipal government works and that they will be submitting a letter to the Town Manager.

Mr. Toolan stated that he thinks we are doing as much as we can during the current situation and that it should be communicated that it may not be submitted as a CPA project this year. Ms. Mulroy shared that there is a bit of a disconnect as the Town Engineer already has things in the works and the initial meeting was to discuss what is already happening and what time restraints we are working under.

4E. Events

None presented.

4F. Projects

None presented.

5A. Meeting Minutes

Mr. Toolan made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 19, 2020 meeting. Ms. Geddes seconded the motion and it passed, 3 – 0.

6. Issues Not Reasonable Anticipated by Chair within 48 hours

Ms. Chaston asked Ms. Mulroy to review the Special Event Request that was sent earlier. Ms. Mulroy stated that the food distribution that has been taking place at Newman cannot use the school parking lot as the schools start to begin. The organization got in contact with the Police and the Police suggested DeFazio so it was submitted to Park and Recreation. Ms. Mulroy stated she spoke to both Rick and Bob and they were okay with it. Ms. Mulroy stated that the request is to use the DeFazio parking lot from 2-4 every Thursday from the end of August through November. Ms. Mulroy stated that if there is a sports schedule that does come up that they may have to revise the schedule.

7. Topics for Future Agendas

None presented.

8. Adjournment of Business Meeting

Ms. Chaston wanted to take the time to thank Ms. O'Connor for her service to the community especially with the Pool, both last year and this year. Ms. Chaston thanked her from a personal point of view as well and wished her well. Mr. Toolan echoed what Ms. Chaston said and added that she rallied the team and was an asset to the department. Ms. Geddes stated that Ms. O'Connor will be greatly missed. Ms. Geddes stated that she works with the kids that work for the department and they have nothing but good things to say and thanked her for her service.

Ms. Geddes inquired about the Skateboard equipment and if there was a reason that it was not put up. Ms. O'Connor stated that there was an issue finding a location for it. Mr. Toolan asked about using Perry and the upper lot. Ms. Mulroy stated she would like add it to her list.

Mr. Toolan moved to adjourn the August 10, 2020 Park and Recreation Commission meeting at 8:00pm. Ms. Geddes seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at 8:00pm.