

RECREATION & PARKS COMMITTEE

Minutes

Wednesday, November 17, 2021

7:30 am

Special Meeting

Via Zoom Meeting

I. Call to Order –

Joe Weist made a motion to call the meeting to order at 7:32 a.m.

- A. Attendance – In attendance were Barbara Ausiello, Ms. Checko Checko, Jennifer Das, Donald Droppo, Ravi Hanjan, Kelly Jackson, Joe Weist and Bob Yass.

II. Minutes of Preceding Meeting – September 14, 2021

After review of the minutes of September 14, 2021, Bob Yass motioned to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Barbara Ausiello and passed unanimously.

III. New Business

A. Proposed American Rescue Plan Act Projects

Ms. Checko reported to the committee that initially the Town manager had advised the staff that most of the ARPA money was going to go to the pavement management plan. After some time, he came back to the department heads and said there were other things that could be done with the money and he asked them for their “wish lists”. Ms. Checko put together a list of projects which committee members received. Basically there are a lot of projects being recommended for the Senior Center such as upgrading the HVAC and renovating the bathrooms on both the senior side and the community room side. Bathrooms are currently not ADA accessible, so there would be design and engineering as well as demolition and reconfiguration. Ms. Checko said everything in the senior center unless it has been changed cosmetically, is original to the building. Ms. Checko said she believes these items will fit in to the criteria for using the funds. Joe Weist asked what year the building is. Ms. Checko said she thinks it is 1993. (Correction, the building was opened in 1989). One of the big projects that she has added is the addition of a multi-purpose room to the Senior Center. It would be stand-alone off the back of the building towards the Bacci court/tennis courts. It would have a capacity of 75 people, and it would help the department with our limited useable spaces. We can’t use the Senior Center during the day, we can’t use Board of Education buildings during the day, Countryside Park is limited to 35 people for capacity, and with this multi-purpose room we would not be competing for space for programming. It would be a multi-purpose room where programs and classes could be held. The estimate for the multi-purpose room is \$50,000 for design and \$500,000 for construction.

Bob Yass asked Ms. Checko if the list that committee members received is a list of totality of funds that she thinks is allocable to Recreation and Parks or is this a prioritization of a variety of projects for which we would be competing with other departments and something will be decided by the Town Council by the end of the process. Ms. Checko said yes, the process is such that we have created our list with justifications and costs and this will go to the Town Manager. Ms. Checko said the list will be presented to Town Council in December and they will decide whether or not they want to hold a public meeting, which could take place at their January meeting. From there the projects would be prioritized and assigned, then at the February meeting they would do the supplemental appropriations, and then projects could hopefully start in March.

Bob Yass asked if we needed to establish a rank order of these items and Ms. Checko said yes, that could be done. Barbara Ausiello asked where programs are currently being held and where would this multi-purpose room free up space. Ms. Checko said it's not going to free up any space, it would allow the department to do more programming.

Ms. Checko explained that Bonnie Daly, our previous programmer had taken advantage of the senior center being closed during COVID and she scheduled a lot of programs there. Then when Sara Roccapiore came last January, the Senior Center was still closed and Sara picked up and continued. When the Senior Center re-opened to the public July 1, 2021, Sara came to Ms. Checko and said there were a lot of things going on at the Senior Center and Ms. Checko told her, yes, we were only in there because the building was closed to the public. At that point, it made the department realize that we could be doing a lot more if we had additional space.

Jennifer Das said this fall under ARPA and asked if this falls under Capital Investments in Public Facilities and does it fall within the criteria? She thought the multi-purpose room sounds like a great idea she just wants to make sure she understands it. Ms. Checko said we will be very sure at the next step whether or not it falls under the criteria. Ms. Checko said the Finance Director is involved and is the one that condensed the Considerations for AARPA Funds, Brandon Robertson is involved as well as Grace Tiezzi, the assistant Town Manager. Ms. Checko said some of the projects may fall off as not eligible, some of them might be a stretch but the assignment was, that if all of these don't get funded, what does get funded comes off the Capital list so we can move projects up. Bob Yass asked if this was the totality of the Capital Improvement Plan and this is just a function of moving projects off and the Capital Improvement Plan stays as is and will continue to be address in future years. Ms. Checko said yes, that is correct and it is a function of moving things off that we think are eligible for the ARPA funds.

Joe Weist asked if parking would be an issue if the multi-purpose room gets added on at the Senior Center. Ms. Checko said that was looked at and it not believed to be an issue because the size of the classes that would be run would not interfere with other things going on in the park or the senior center.

Bob Yass asked if there was anything on the list that was not on the Capital Improvement Plan. Ms. Checko said the addition to the Senior Center was part of the Capital Improvement Plan that was at the 10-15 years out projects so it has been there but has never come up as a priority.

Ms. Checko gave an overview of the projects. For the renovation at Sycamore to the pickle ball and tennis courts, she is proposing is to demolish the whole thing and then redo the tennis courts, which there is money in Capital to do, and where the basketball court is we would add two more pickle ball courts and move the basketball courts toward the playscape. Ms. Checko said we also have replacing the playscape in this list and she has gotten estimates to light all of the tennis courts, pickle ball courts and basketball courts.

Ms. Checko said renovations to Buckingham baseball field is included on the list and there is \$40,000 in Capital and the renovation estimate came in at \$80,000. She said the \$40,000 estimate was if it was done in-house by Public Works, however they won't end up doing it for various reasons. One of the other projects is a band shell for the Sycamore Hills Recreation Area and this might be a stretch, but the department would love to hold concerts in the park and reinvigorate the concert series that the department used to run. There are shade shelters for the pool and Ms. Checko would like to add two more. Mr. Robertson has recommended that the department change out the two existing pavilions at Fisher Meadows. Ms. Checko said another item is a lightning protection system which is something that she and Bruce Williams have been working on for a couple of years now and she feels that may be a project that may fit into the criteria. Ms. Checko said they have expanded it to be a town wide system which would cover the parks, the pool and school grounds.

Ms. Checko said she has also included the pool repairs, which she has in the Capital plan for next fiscal year.

Don Droppo asked if Ms. Checko knew what the maximum was that the Town might be getting. He agrees that we should put in as many projects as we can and see what we get. The Town would be responsible for design and then construction costs would be paid with the ARPA money. Ms. Checko said perhaps the ARPA money would pay the design costs, but it's a grey area. Ms. Checko said it is her understanding that the Town received \$2.5 million in May 2021 and they will get approximately, another \$2.5 million in March of 2022. One of the stipulations is that the projects have to be allocated by the end of the calendar year of 2024 and completed by the end of the calendar year 2026. Mr. Droppo suggested prioritizing in terms of what we thing would pass and approved. He felt this was a great opportunity to take potential line items that have been lingering for years and pushing them to the top.

Ms. Checko asked the committee members if they would like to see the projects that are at the top of this list be the priorities or do they want to rearrange the priorities and sort through the list of projects. Bob Yass said he would be interested to know what committee members think are the "A" list projects and what the first tier items would be such as the HVAC and the bathrooms to bring them to meet ADA compliance. He suggested then there could be a "B" list and a "C" list rather than rank list all of the projects on the list. Ms. Checko said her recommendation would be, because the senior population was hardest impacted by COVID, she would recommend trying to accomplish all of the Senior Center projects first along with the multi-purpose room. She felt this would be the best fit initially, followed by the outdoor athletic facilities being upgraded.

Bob Yass asked about the Lightning Detection item and if this system is well established and proven technology and if other towns have used it and found it effective. Ms. Checko said yes it is, it is an encrypted, cloud based system, and the technology is state of the art. The system is used at many golf courses around us. The system is from Turf Products that we are working with. Mr. Yass asked if the system will have information available at trail heads where people might be at a less than organized environment but still need to get that warning. Ms. Checko said only if the trail head begins in a park that has the system. Mr. Droppo said he felt the system is needed not only as a former golfer, but also as a former soccer coach and being in charge of 20, 12 year olds when a storm comes through, it can be very scary. Joe Weist asked if the system allows individuals to get alerts on their phones. Ms. Checko said that is possible but the town decided not to go that far because each person's information would have to be entered into our database and it would be pretty cumbersome to try to achieve that. The system is more of a localized system that would have strobes and sirens. Mr. Weist said a lot of the technology companies have a road map of things they are trying to develop and perhaps we could press them a little bit and let them know it would be ideal for us to have a way for people in the town to utilize this without it being an administrative nightmare for the staff.

Jennifer Das said that it seems that the multi-purpose room was at the top of the project list and Jennifer said she thought it was a great idea because what we are facing now in the community are a lot of mental health repercussions from COVID and the social interactions and the impact from all of that and she feels like this would fit in the criteria a lot more easily. Ms. Das said she feels that some of the other items are items that were already on the Capital list that could get pushed through in normal times, but the multi-purpose room should be pushed to the top of the list for these purposes and it would be a good use and since we are getting the funds in and this project has been on the list for a while. Don Droppo said he likes the idea as well and also because of the additional programming opportunities as well. Bob Yass asked Jennifer Das if she was suggesting that the multi-purpose room should take priority over the HVAC and the bathrooms renovations. Ms. Das said yes, she feels like the multi-purpose room does take priority only because the HVAC in a normal year and a normal budget is something that is already accounted for whereas the multi-purpose room especially in light of what the funds are for is something that would be good use of the money. Prioritizing one over the other, Jennifer thinks that the senior center projects are priority, but she feels that the multi-purpose room could be done with the extra money. Bob Yass

asked if there is money that has been set aside for the HVAC and Ms. Checko said she doesn't think there is, it has been band-aided over and over and it has kind of snuck up and it is no longer efficient to continue to try to keep it running. Don Droppo suggested prioritizing the senior center in its aggregate instead of saying yes to one item and no to another, it seems like it should be the whole package. Bob Yass asked if the multi-purpose room would be in a different location and not at the Senior Center. Ms. Checko said it would be attached to the Senior Center for the purpose of mechanics but there would not be an entrance from the Senior Center, it would have its own dedicated entrance.

Joe Weist said the Town has old buildings which are 30+ years old and there are no identifiable funds necessarily to take care of them so he is hopeful that we can not only identify what we need but how can we maintain what we have because 30+ years is a long time to not touch things very much. Ms. Checko said she believes there is support in the next fiscal year to renovate Countryside Park and the Town Council did feel it was a high number but there are a lot of structural things that need to be done. It is not a residence that is being renovated, it is a public gathering space that is being renovated so there are other structural considerations.

After much input from committee members Ms. Checko asked if everyone is in agreement that the Senior Center building is the priority with the multi-purpose room. Bob Yass said he feels that the HVAC and the bathroom renovations would be priority "A" and the multi-purpose room would be priority "B" and then the other projects after that. Jennifer Das said as long as the multi-purpose room is also a higher priority than the other projects after the Senior Center that would work. Joe Weist said if the multi-purpose room gets done the mechanicals would get touched anyway and it would be nice to get both. Kelly Jackson said she thinks it has to be one item because the bathrooms have to become compliant and the HVAC would have to be done anyway so she thinks the mechanicals, the bathrooms and the multi-purpose room have to be one item. Bob Yass said his point was that if something had to be cut out, that the HVAC and the bathrooms should have priority over the multi-purpose room. Ms. Checko said she doesn't think they would want her to lump it together, they would want her to have it broken out the way she does but she feels it is okay for the committee to say this is a priority project in these stages. Barbara Ausiello asked if we are currently running programs at Countryside Park as well as renting it out so there is income coming in from that facility and if it was our hope to have both places done. Ms. Checko said that is correct. To wrap up, Joe Weist said it would be great to get it all, but Ms. Checko can present it in a way that would get us closest to getting it all.

Ms. Checko said she will draft a recommendation once the minutes are done and give that to the Town Manager. Ms. Checko will keep the committee members informed. Ms. Checko said she feels we should meet again as the process goes on but it will be in the form of special meetings. She asked committee members to ignore the January meeting that is on their calendars and we will let them know when the next special meeting will be scheduled.

III. Adjournment

Joe Weist adjourned the meeting at 8:01 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by

Sharon Henry

Sharon Henry
Clerk