

RECREATION & PARKS COMMITTEE

Minutes

Tuesday, September 13, 2022

7:30 am

Via Zoom Meeting

I. Call to Order:

Mr. Yass, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:32 a.m.

- A. Attendance – In attendance were Mr. Beaudoin, Ms. Checko, Ms. Das, Dr. Gurtman, M. McNeill, Ms. Roccapriore, Dr. Sondheimer, Ms. Willis and Mr. Yass.

II. Minutes of Preceding Meeting – August 10, 2022

M. McNeill asked for clarification on the number of boats that the Crew team coaches have. Ms. Checko said they have 2 boats. M. McNeill stated on page 3, paragraph 2, line 3, the word “staring” should be corrected to say “starting”. M. McNeill suggested in paragraph 4, line 1, it should read “Dr. Sondheimer said that people use the lake like fisherman and is there some way we could post that this is a limited use activity”. Ms. Das pointed out that she was listed as both present and as absent and she was present. James Beaudoin made a motion to approve the minutes of the August 10, 2022 meeting as corrected. Ms. Das seconded that motion which passed unanimously.

III. Public Comment - None

IV. Director’s Report

Ms. Checko told committee members that the recommendation to add a deadline in the Public Place Regulations of April 1 for sports leagues, requests for summer use was presented to the Town Council at their September meeting and after much discussion it was decided that the deadline would be better served as April 15. The Town Council felt it was better for the user groups and Ms. Checko said it was still accommodating scheduling needs for the Recreation department and Public Works department, and that is what was approved.

Ms. Checko said the Sycamore Hills Pool closed on Labor Day. The total attendance for the

summer was a little over 16,000 people which is up from 14,000 last summer. Ms. Checko said the new Aquatics Directors did a fantastic job and exceeded expectations. She met with the two Aquatics Directors at the end of the season and went over a list of changes and recommendations for next season. Most of the changes will be very subtle to the public and it will help our staff run things more smoothly, provide better services with swim lessons, swim team, etc. The Aquatics Directors went through the Aquatics page in the brochure and updated it for next summer. Ms. Checko said the Aquatics Director is planning on returning however, the Assistant Aquatics Director is not sure.

The Buckingham baseball project is complete and ready for fall ball. The Countryside Park building construction began last month. The deck has been removed, the front entrance ramp, side ramp and all the stairs have been removed, the basement is demolished inside. They have been having trouble getting contractors to quote on the materials and labor for the exterior work but Mr. Williams, Public Works Director is working on this.

The fall brochure has gone out and the Recreation staff is now working on Youth Basketball and the After School Ski program. Fall sports including soccer, softball and baseball have begun and the fields have been in pretty good shape. There has been a lot of trail work done, some of which is ongoing and some of the work may seem like it was started and then just left, but it is being worked on as time allows. A bridge was built on the Fisher Farm and the kiosk replacement repairs will start in the fall; the contractor that will be doing the kiosk is tied up working on Countryside Park.

Ms. Das asked which project we were having trouble with for getting quotes. Ms. Checko said this is for the Countryside Park building exterior construction and we must get estimates from 3 contractors. Ms. Das asked if anything publicly has been announced to get quotes or is Mr. Williams reaching out to people he knows. Ms. Checko said he is reaching out to people he works with. An RFP (Request for Proposal) would be required for a higher threshold than what we are at.

Mr. Yass asked Ms. Checko if the changes at the pool require any action on the committee's part. Ms. Checko said no action required since they are mostly operational changes. Mr. Yass asked Ms. Checko to go a little deeper into the basketball issue. Ms. Checko said this will be covered under New Business on the Agenda.

V. Program Specialist Report

Ms. Roccapriore told committee members that summer programs went very well and in addition to running several specialty camps, we had our two town summer camps, Summer Fun Camp and Adventure camp. All sessions of the Summer Fun Camp and the Adventure camps were maxed out. Ms. Roccapriore sent out a survey at the end of those two camps and received positive feedback on both the staff and the programming. We are hoping to expand

capacity for those camps next year because we also had large wait lists for those camps.

Upcoming programs for the fall include a new Trunk or Treat event that we are trying out for October 29. She said we are looking for Trunk host volunteers to come to the event, decorate their cars and hand out candy. We currently have 9 Trunk host volunteers, and we are hoping for 11 more. She is expecting registration for volunteers to pick up closer to Halloween and we will start pushing advertising for this event closer to October.

Other program highlights for the fall are Winter Fun Camp, Holiday Wreath Making, Mommy, Daddy, and Me Art class, After School Ski program is back with buses again this year, Jump Bunch, Food Explorers Youth Cooking class, Volleyball League, Basketball League, and our fall Hiking Series kicked off this past Saturday and our adult Pickleball program is sold out with a waiting list. Ms. Roccapriore said we had two programs that did not kick off due to staffing issues but overall, fall registration has been doing very well.

We are currently working on our 2023 Program survey to send out this year to get insight on what interest is for new programs. Bob Yass asked Sara if the two programs that had to be cancelled due to inadequate staff, if there were a lot of sign ups for those programs. Ms. Roccapriore said the programs were not released because we knew we couldn't staff them. She said one of them was a new Mountain Biking program and the other one is a program that we run every fall and spring. We are hoping to be able to run both programs in the spring.

Dr. Gurtman asked where people could get more information regarding the Trunk or Treat program. Ms. Roccapriore said there is some information posted in the fall brochure and we haven't released too much information yet because we are trying to get more Trunk or Treat volunteers first, but she has sent emails and, on our website, there is a button that people can click to register to volunteer. Dr. Gurtman was wondering if there is another way to get the word out. Ms. Roccapriore said the last email blast that she sent out had 6 people respond immediately and she will send out another email blast as we get closer to the date. If that doesn't bring in more hosts, she will call local businesses and organizations to see if they are interested in participating. She said the registration is just for host volunteers and not for participants. There is no registration required for participants to attend, it is a free event to the public. Ms. Das asked if we are looking for both individuals and businesses to host and Ms. Roccapriore said yes. Ms. Das said she would be happy to share this on Facebook as we get closer to the event.

VI. Correspondence – None

VII. Committee Communication

Dr. Sondheimer thanked Ms. Checko for getting the trail maps on the website. He was

wondering if there is a way to make the name of the trail interactive and when you click on the name of the trail it will bring you to the map of the trail. Ms. Checko will investigate this.

VIII. Old Business

a. ARPA Projects

Ms. Checko gave an update on the ARPA projects. She said the Town Council agreed to approve the cosmetic improvements at the Avon Senior Center which include carpeting, ceiling tile and LED lighting which is about \$66,000. They have also moved to approve the bathroom renovations as well. Both items will be on their October agenda and on the Board of Finance agenda for the appropriations.

The Sycamore Hills Pool project was one of the first ARPA projects funded and the original estimates for work to be done were extremely high and some of the items were not necessary. She said she is working with the Public Works Grounds Foreman, and they will come up with a list of other items they feel would be very beneficial instead of what was originally requested. She said the original request was in the capital program and it was very detailed. It included stair repairs and pool drains repaired and these items are not needed. What is being suggested is redoing the floors, painting the interior, replacing the lifeguard chairs and some of the older items. The shade shelters have been ordered. The slabs will be poured at the end of the month. Ms. Checko met with the Public Works Director yesterday to come up with a plan as to where the shade shelters would go.

The playscape design has been finalized and will be ordered within the next month and will be delivered mid to late March. DPW will demolish the existing unit by the 1st of November.

Ms. Checko reported that the HVAC at the Senior Center has not started yet because it is going to go out for a Request for Proposal and the Assistant Town Manager and Public Works Director are working on this.

Ms. Checko said regarding the multipurpose room at the Senior Center, the Town Manager asked her to go back to the architect and get a more formal design for the Town Council. This and it was presented at the September Town Council meeting. Ms. Checko shared the new design with committee members. The final footprint is 2480 square feet at a cost of \$300 per square foot. Construction, contingency, furnishings, engineering fees and documents brings the project cost to \$957,000. Ms. Checko reviewed the drawings, which included the plan, the floor plan, and the front elevation drawing. Mr. Yass asked Ms. Checko to explain the status of this project. Ms. Checko said at the Town Council meeting Richard Kenyon presented the plans and explained why we went with this square footage, and she went over the operation values of the building. At that meeting only one Council

member was prepared to approve it. Ms. Checko asked Ms. Roccapriore to review some of the operational values of the building. Ms. Roccapriore told committee members that we want to expand programming, but we can only do so much with the space we currently have available. At this time, we can only get into the Senior Center and the schools after 4:30 p.m. and they also have programs that they run which limits our use. By building this room it would open a myriad of opportunities for programs for toddler/preschool programs, dance/movement classes, gymnastics, craft classes, Esport leagues, additional adult programs, leadership programs and several others. The room could also serve as a base for our summer Adventure camp in the event of rain. Currently if it rains in the summer, we must scramble to find a place to move the Adventure camp to since it is based at the Sycamore Hills Pavilion. Ms. Das asked what the hesitations of the Town Council members were? Ms. Checko said it ranged from them thinking the room isn't big enough, to them just not being sold on it. The Council asked her to come back with revenue projections. Ms. Das asked if there was any opposition to building the room at all and Ms. Checko said there was not. She said they liked the project and some of the questions included what the difference between this room and Countryside Park were and she thinks they thought the room itself would be larger than it is. Ms. Checko said she doesn't have the staff to manage a full-blown community center and we don't know if the residents would support it. Ms. Checko said her analogy is that this size room is something we can manage, and this is something we can staff, it will not go empty, and she feels it will be well used and beneficial. Ms. Checko said the other question that Town Council has is what the user priority would be. She told them it would be the same as our regulations delineate and she would investigate something along the lines of what the library has. She said we could change the regulations so that there is continuity for the Recreation Department but also the public use as well.

Mr. Yass asked Ms. Checko to share the 3 slides out to the committee members so they can interact with her at some stage in the process. Ms. Checko will get them out to committee members.

Dr. Sondheimer said he was at the Town Council meeting, and he said he would like to talk with Ms. Checko privately about the presentation. He feels that we need to build a constituency for this, and he feels more groundwork needs to be done. He said for some time the Council has been describing this project cost as \$654,000 and this proposal says \$957,000, which is nearly a 50% increase. He believes moving forward now would not be greeted with enthusiasm. Ms. Checko said the original cost was an estimate and we asked the architect to go back and design it and put cost on it and get the most he could within the square footage. She said costs have also recently escalated. Mr. Yass said he would like to see the plans and maybe there could be a special conversation focused on this and get the committee's input.

Dr. Gurtman asked about the survey that Ms. Roccapriore mentioned and if this goes out soon, that would be an opportunity to get town resident input on programs they would like to

see, and this may help justify use of the multipurpose room space. Dr. Gurtman asked what the timeframe for the survey is. Ms. Roccapriore said we are working on it now and would like to get it out mid to end of October. Mr. Yass asked if the committee could see the survey questions so they could give some feedback before it goes out. Ms. Roccapriore said she would do that. Dr. Gurtman asked Ms. Checko if this would work with her timeline to get back to the Town Manager about use of the space. Ms. Checko said she hasn't talked to him yet about her next step. She said she just received the draft of the Town Council minutes and hasn't reviewed them yet. Ms. Checko told committee members that the plans they are currently seeing are basically the same thing she has been showing them, they are just cleaned up. Mr. Yass said depending on what she and the Town Manager decide for the timeline for this, he thought it would be good for the committee members to talk with her as a group and provide their input as members of the community.

Mr. Beaudoin asked Ms. Checko if there was a possibility of adding on a second unfinished floor to allow for expansion in the future. Ms. Checko said it was a question at one of the staff meetings and the architect said that would make it another whole project. She said a second floor would also require elevators. Ms. Checko said she would ask if that would be a possibility.

Dr. Sondheimer said at the Town Council meeting he heard Mr. Robertson talk about a potential for a town wide fiber network which is a nearly \$800,000 project that could receive other funding and drop off the ARPA list. He said we were also in danger of having our \$657,000 multipurpose room dropped off the list which would leave nearly \$1.5 million of unspent ARPA funds. Dr. Sondheimer believes we should be aggressive in talking about what we know to be useful projects and present them now as potential APRA projects. He said he noticed that the Ball Field Construction is listed as a 7 for the source of funds and he asked if Ms. Checko was thinking about putting that in the ARPA money. Ms. Checko said no she was not; this would be CIP and fundraising by Avon Little League. Dr. Sondheimer said he would propose that we move the Ball Field Construction partial funding and the Pickleball courts up to become ARPA projects and if they fail there, then we could put them in the capital program. Ms. Checko said the Town Manager does not want the Sperry Park construction project as an ARPA project because it is too open ended and contingent on fundraising and there are deadlines with ARPA project completion dates. Ms. Checko said she added the Pickleball courts. Mr. Yass clarified that the items that Dr. Sondheimer is talking about are noted in the capital budget and if ARPA funds become available because other projects aren't approved, then items eligible for ARPA could move off the capital program and into ARPA projects. Dr. Sondheimer said he is suggesting that we be aggressive and upfront about the projects that we would like immediately considered and prioritize those as "A" projects.

Mr. Yass asked Ms. Checko if the extra money in the pool APRA project would now be utilized for other items at the pool since some of the original items for that project are no

longer needed. Ms. Checko said yes, she would.

Mr. Yass asked Ms. Checko if the design of the new playscape that has been ordered is the same design that was voted most popular by the attendees at the Bike Rodeo. Dr. Gurtman asked what will happen with the swings at Sycamore. Ms. Checko said the existing swings will be kept. Dr. Gurtman asked if the existing swings needed refurbishing and Ms. Checko said they do not. Dr. Gurtman also asked about the timeframe of the playscape installation and if it will be a problem not having anything at the park from November to mid-March. Ms. Checko said we had to get the project in to the Public Work queue. She said we also didn't think it would take until March to receive the new playscape. Ms. Checko said there is also a shade shelter being installed near the playscape and that will be done this fall and the playscape will be done in March. Ms. Das said as a mom that uses the playground with her children, she doesn't feel it will be a problem to be without the playscape for a few months since there are other playgrounds in town.

IX. New Business

a. Travel Basketball

Ms. Checko said she and Usha Srivel, who organizes the department's basketball program met with representatives from the Avon Travel boys' and girls' groups. Ms. Checko and Ms. Srivel looked at the gym schedule from last year's practices and they put together an offering of gym space that gave them specific times and dates. By doing this it will allow them to have continuity from the beginning of their season to the end. Once the Recreation department's basketball practice schedule is complete in November, we will offer them some additional gym time that our coaches have not taken. Ms. Checko said she was also able to work with the Athletic Director at the high school and for the first time ever, we were able to get gym space there for 2 nights a week and occasionally 3. We are also able to be in the schools until 9:30 this year, which is an hour later than last year. Ms. Checko said the other thing that she discussed with them was the school regulations and policy for building use because the Avon Travel teams compete with other travel basketball leagues for gym space. Under the regulations, the other travel leagues have the same priority status as the Avon basketball groups as long as they are non-profits. The Avon Travel representatives were happy with the offer and after some correspondence, their gyms have been secured. Mr. Yass asked if Dr. Carnemolla was also involved in the process and Ms. Checko said yes, she dealt with some of the items on her end and Ms. Checko worked with Myles Altimus and Tim Filon and at one point she and Ms. Carnemolla agreed that it wasn't necessary for the two of them to meet. Mr. Yass said the parents from the Avon Travel teams that attended our last meeting were invited to come back to this meeting and since no one came, he feels that they are happy with the arrangements made.

b. Capital Improvement Plan 2024

Ms. Checko told committee members that this year she put the unapproved ARPA projects upfront in the capital improvement plan per the recommendation of the Assistant Town Manager.

Ms. Checko said she doesn't think we should look in to doing the Recreation Master Plan until we know what ARPA projects come to fruition and what capital projects have been done. Ms. Checko's recommendation is to put the Recreation Master Plan into fiscal year 26/27, then softball renovations at Fisher Meadows in fiscal year 25/26. She told committee members she would like some additional work done on the softball field at Fisher Meadows. She said there is a fence on the varsity softball field that is about 400 feet out and a varsity softball field outfield fence should be 200 feet out. Ms. Checko said varsity parents purchased a temporary homerun fence and DPW installs and takes it down every spring and every fall at the 200 feet mark in the outfield. She would like to permanently pull the fence that is 400 feet out and replace it with a new one at 200 feet and this would allow space to build a batting cage between the two softball fields. Ms. Checko said this is something she and the athletic director have been discussing for a long time.

Ms. Checko said the Unionville Damp project is an item that the Engineering department has her carry each year. Ms. Checko said the Preliminary Planning and Engineering for Buckingham is in fiscal year 26/27 however she feels the Recreation Master Plan should come before the Preliminary Planning before Buckingham even though they are both in fiscal year 26/27. She said these are place holders and do frequently move back and forth. Ms. Checko said the reason she thinks designing Buckingham is important is because there is interest in a dog park, and she thinks this may be a good location. There is interest in building pickleball courts, and this would be a good location for those as well.

Ms. Checko said the Engineering department is working on the design of the Ball Field at Sperry Park. She said they did get a budget from a contractor that was very high. The Public Works Director is going through each line item to try to bring it to a more realistic dollar amount. Once that is done, Brandon Robertson will make the decision if the project should be done in house by DPW or put out to bid.

Ms. Checko said the dog park is still in the capital plan. It should be part of our planning process in the future. She said she put the pickleball courts in again so if there is alternative funding such as ARPA or grants, they are identified in our capital plan and have a place holder.

Bob Yass thanked Ms. Checko for sharing the capital plan with committee members, which will allow them to give some early-stage input. He asked Ms. Checko if there were items that were in the capital plan that may have been taken out and perhaps give a snapshot of what's

new and what's old and what is out there that may not be in this plan at all. Ms. Checko said the biggest item on the horizon is the multipurpose room. Mr. Yass asked if the items are in the order as they are in the ARPA plan such as the multipurpose room is number 1, so does that mean the Infield Pro Groomer Replacement is number 2 in the ARPA plan. Ms. Checko said the Pro Groomer Replacement is not in the ARPA plan because she doesn't think ARPA will fund equipment. Mr. Yass asked what items in the capital plan are also in the ARPA plan. Ms. Checko said the multipurpose room is the only item. Dr. Sondheimer asked Ms. Checko, if this committee can propose changes to the capital plan that disagree with what the Town Manager and the Assistant Town Manager have directed so they can advocate for aggressive movements that they aren't necessarily comfortable with, since this committee is appointed by the Town Council and answers to them. Ms. Checko said as an advisory committee they can advise, and she can pass their information on and ultimately it is the Town Managers budget. Dr. Sondheimer asked if they can pass their information on directly to the Town Council without going through the Town Manager and Assistant Town Manager. Ms. Checko said that is correct. Dr. Sondheimer said this committee if they want, could prioritize, and change things on the capital plan and ask the Town Council to follow their recommendation. Ms. Checko said that is correct. Bob Yass said if the committee took that action, it would be reflected in the minutes. Dr. Sondheimer asked Mr. Yass if a motion needed to be made to do that. Ms. Das felt that a motion would need to be made but she feels this should be tabled for now. Dr. Sondheimer is concerned that there is very little time for this to be tabled. Mr. Yass asked Dr. Sondheimer if he was referring to the general concept of moving thing around. Dr. Sondheimer said has specific items. He suggests that a high priority be given to the Buckingham plan, and it is in the 2007 Master Plan of the department and there is court space in that plan that instead of being volleyball and tennis become pickleball so he feels we could move quickly there. He suggested putting the proposed expenditure next year and then move the pickleball court into the year after that. Ms. Checko told Dr. Sondheimer that the \$27,000 that is in capital plan for Buckingham is just for the preliminary design to be done by the Engineering department and this money will not get us to construction documents. Dr. Sondheimer said there is a preliminary design in the 2007 Master Plan that shows where courts would go but not a dog park. Ms. Checko said that is correct. Dr. Sondheimer said then we can eliminate that and go immediately to the pickleball court in 2023 or 2024. Ms. Checko asked him about designing Buckingham so that we are doing it appropriately and systematically. Dr. Sondheimer said it's already in the 2007 Master Plan. Ms. Checko said that is correct, however it is just the preliminary design. Dr. Sondheimer said he was very confused and could someone work backwards on getting the pickleball courts built the year after next under ARPA funds. Bob Yass asked Dr. Sondheimer if he was referring to the last item listed in the capital plan which shows a 2027 action date and is \$250,000 expenditure for the pickleball courts and Dr. Sondheimer wants to move it up on the list. Dr. Sondheimer said that is correct. Bob Yass wanted to clarify that Dr. Sondheimer would like to move this item higher up on the list and earlier in the years and potentially use some ARPA funds for this if they became available. Dr. Sondheimer said that is correct. Bob Yass asked Ms. Checko if these are parameters that she could work with

assuming that this is the recommendation of this committee. M. McNeill said she doesn't have an issue with pickleball, but she feels that of all the projects that are in the capital plan she is more distressed that softball doesn't have what they need in terms of fields and repairs. She said if the committee gets to a point of prioritizing the items in the capital plan, she doesn't feel that she would be on board with putting the pickleball courts ahead of the softball project.

Ms. Checko responded to the question Bob Yass asked which was could she work with moving the pickleball courts up. Ms. Checko said she could work with that, however, the \$250,000 is only going to build courts, it is not going to pay for tree removal, excavation, leveling the ground, and the construction and placement of the courts at Buckingham. She said this money is simply for courts that would hopefully be wrapped into other improvements at Buckingham. Mr. Yass told Ms. Checko that the committee would like to provide feedback on the capital projects and would like to prioritize the pickleball courts and the softball field renovations at Fisher Meadows. He said as the committee takes a closer look at the capital plan there may be other items that they may want to have prioritized and would like Ms. Checko to take their suggestions in to consideration which would be input for Ms. Checko and the Town Manager to work with. Mr. Yass told Ms. Checko that this enables the committee to continue to work with her and give her input and allows them as members of the Avon community to communicate with the Town Council members as they see fit.

Dr. Gurtman asked Ms. Checko about the band shelter that she referred to earlier in a prior meeting and about the pavilion at Sycamore that she mentioned. Ms. Checko said the bandshell was eliminated early on she believes at the Town Managers level. She said there were concerns about unexpected consequences that would come with a bandshell, meaning noise, neighbors not liking it and it was also a very expensive project. Ms. Checko said for the shade shelters, the original request was for two and when it went to the Town Council level, they added a third shade shelter to be placed at the playscape. Dr. Gurtman suggested the Avon Village center might be a better location for the bandshell since it is a non-residential area and wondered if the bandshell idea could be revisited. Ms. Checko said revisiting the bandshell project would be possible. Ms. Checko said there are discussions about open space being dedicated through the Carpionato project and that may be an ideal spot for a band shelter. Mr. Yass asked Ms. Checko if she could share that other form with the committee so they can look at those projects.

Mr. Yass said as a sense of the committee in finalizing the capital improvement plan that attention should be given to accelerating the pickleball courts and the improvement to women's softball fields and he asked committee members if that was a fair summary. Committee members agreed.

Mr. Yass asked Ms. Checko if the cost for the Ball Field Construction project was an all-in cost with the expectation that there will be serious fundraising. She said it was not the all-in

cost and the all-in cost based on the estimate was double the \$500,000. This did not include a press box, running the electrical from the pole, or upgrading the service. She said therefore this is still being investigated. Ms. Checko said the estimate is \$1,000,000. Mr. Yass asked if this was to be defrayed by some unknown amount based on fundraising and the final approval would depend upon what is fundraised. Ms. Checko said that is correct. Ms. Checko told Mr. Yass that the Town Council may also say they are willing to contribute a certain amount and Little League would need to fundraise and come up with a certain amount. Bob Yass asked Ms. Checko if the capital improvement plan will now be reconsidered in terms of input the committee provided, subject to the Town Managers and her consideration. Ms. Checko said yes it would be taken on advisement.

X. Adjournment

The next meeting of the Recreation and Parks Committee is scheduled for November 8, 2022. Ms. Willis asked if we would still be meeting that day since it is election day. After some discussion it was decided to move that meeting to a different date. Notice will be sent out to committee members when the new date is set.

Being no further items to discuss Mr. Beaudoin made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:51 a.m. Ms. Das seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by

Sharon Henry

Sharon Henry
Clerk