

RECREATION & PARKS COMMITTEE

Minutes

Tuesday, May 10, 2022
7:30 am

Via Zoom Meeting

I. Call to Order:

Mr. Yass, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

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

Absent: Ms. Das

II. Minutes of Preceding Meeting – March 8, 2022

Dr. Sondheimer made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 8, 2022 meeting. Dr. Gurtman seconded that motion which passed unanimously.

III. Public Comment - None

IV. Directors Report

Ms. Checko told committee members that since the last meeting, we have been conducting interviews for summer staff. After designing some new advertising which we used on social media, sandwich board signs and banners, and also thanks to Sharon, we arranged to partner with Canton on a Lifeguard Certification class. Ms. Checko said we interviewed applicants and offered a conditional letter of employment based on them passing the Lifeguard certification class. The Recreation Department is paying for the certification class, which is starting to attract more lifeguards. As of today, Ms. Checko said all openings have been filled including two Aquatics Directors, both of whom have previously worked for the department.

Ms. Checko said we sent committee members a copy of our summer brochure, which the staff did a fantastic job on putting it together. Since registration began on April 22, the department has taken in \$180,000 in revenue. Ms. Checko said in both our Adventure Camp and our Summer Fun camp sessions are either filled or are close to being filled. Some weeks already have wait lists and several of our contracted programs or clinics are nearly full.

Sara has put together a Kids Bike Rodeo in partnership with the Avon Police Department and that event will happen this weekend. We have 67 children enrolled. Ms. Checko said we will hold 3 Family Movie Nights this summer, however, we will not be running our Family Fun Night. We are hoping to run this event again next summer.

Ms. Checko said the pool has had some work done; the return valves have been replaced and repaired some of cracks and the painting should start today. Once this is complete, the pool will be filled and inspected by Farmington Valley Health District and be ready to open on June 11.

Ms. Checko informed committee members that she and Bruce Williams, the Director of Public Works met with the architect on the Countryside Park building project and the plan is to close the building on August 22 and begin the renovations on the exterior of the building. This will include demolition and replacement of the deck, the stairs, front entrance and a new bulk head will be installed. Once this work is complete then we'll do the roof. Ms. Checko said once this work is done or is winding down, they will look at a plan to do the interior work.

Ms. Checko said a lot of trail work has been done at Fisher Meadows, Fisher Farm, the Foundland, and Huckleberry Hill and also at Alsop Meadows, tree clearing and some brush removal near the community gardens and the field. She said we have some volunteers addressing some invasive species in Alsop Meadows and we are also going to have our contractor remove some burning bush at Fisher Meadows that is getting out of control.

Ms. Checko spoke regarding the survey that was discussed at the last committee meeting. She said we will be conducting the survey in fall of 2023 and then another one in 2024 when we are closer to having the new multipurpose room. This way we can see what people want when we are closer to start planning programs for that room.

It was reported to the committee by Ms. Checko that we have a very busy sporting season this spring and we are preparing baseball and softball fields for 6-7 games a day. Ms. Checko works with the Athletic Director, Little League baseball and softball reps, and the grounds crew. She said it is tricky when it is rainy weather and she advised the committee that they may hear rumblings about field closures if we have a rainy spring or fall. Ms. Checko encouraged committee members to take a look at the Field Manual that is on the Town's website and it goes through all of the responsibilities of all those involved from coaches up. This manual is distributed to all the leagues every season.

Ms. Checko reported that there is a Lacrosse Tournament at Fisher Meadows this weekend and also a Soccer Tournament Memorial Day Weekend. She said our departments' role in these tournaments is to issue the permits, coordinate the dumpsters and port a potties, and working with DPW to make sure the field are lined. She said right now the fields are painted for soccer so all of those fields have to be painted for lacrosse and then on Monday after the tournament, they have to get turned back in to soccer fields.

Mr. Yass had asked Ms. Checko to look in to the timeline of the Capital Improvement Plan and the General Fund Budget deadline. Ms. Checko said our committee meets on September 13 and her plan is to present the Capital Improvement Plan to the committee at its October 7 meeting. The General Fund Budget is due November 5, 2022 and her plan is to have the CIP draft available for them in September and she will give them an overview of the General Fund Budget in November. Ms. Checko said the reason for doing this is because this budget is a work in progress right up until deadline. She said it is basically the same thing every year, cut where we can cut, and make sure we're covering what we need. She will make sure to present the CIP budget to committee members before it is presented to Town Council. Ms. Checko encouraged committee to members throughout the year, to submit to her or talk about at the committee meetings, things that they would like to see done or not and that way she can add it to her notes for the General Fund Budget. Ms. Checko said this way we can make sure that the things they would like to see done, gets funded.

M. McNeill went back to the subject of the survey and the timing of that and she asked when she thought we would have the results of that and is this something that we would need to discuss so that this could be put into the budget. Ms. Checko said a survey would be created this fall and then put it out looking forward to 2023 to see what people are looking for with regards to programming and then do it again in 2024 in hopes that we are closer to having the multipurpose room. M. McNeill clarified that the expansion for the multipurpose room would be for 2024. Ms. Checko said the survey would then be done annually. M. McNeill asked if there are things for this fall that could be implemented even without the multipurpose room and Ms. Checko said that is correct.

Ms. Checko said the challenge when we are doing these projects is that the facilities will be closed or impacted. Dr. Gurtman asked if the committee members could have input on the questions asked on the survey and Ms. Checko said yes they could. Mr. Yass asked if we would be tabulating numbers or would it be a fill in the blank type of survey. Ms. Checko said the less time people have to spend on a survey, the more responses you get. She said it will be more yes and no questions to cover what is necessary and then have one area where they can add text if they wish. Mr. Yass asked how the survey would be distributed and Ms. Checko said we use Survey Monkey and we advertise it via email blasts with a link. Dr. Sondheimer asked if the advertising for our department is in our budget or in another department's budget. Ms. Checko said it is in the Recreation Department's budget and the only thing that is not in our budget is recruiting. That has been moved to the Human Resources budget. Dr. Sondheimer asked if the webpage he and Dr. Gurtman came up with can be put up on the website by our Department. Ms. Checko said if it was going to go on the Town's webpage and not just ours, she would speak to the Executive Secretary in the Town Managers office and see if she could help with that.

Dr. Gurtman asked if the department has seen any trends with the summer programs in regards to trends this year compared to last year or years past. Ms. Checko said programs are filling up very quickly this summer but they also did in the spring and in the fall. The trend for adults is pickleball and for children it is tennis, basketball, we feel that people are ready to get out of the house and be active.

Mr. Beaudoin commented on the great job by the department on filling the summer positions. He asked if there was an estimated completion date on the Countryside Park project for the exterior. Ms. Checko said approximately 3 months unless we start hitting supply chain issues. Mr. Beaudoin asked if the interior would be done throughout the winter season and Ms. Checko said yes. Mr. Beaudoin asked if it would be a spring opening. Ms. Checko said yes.

Mr. Yass asked if the lifeguard issue is a regional issue or just an Avon issue. Ms. Checko said it is a global issue. Mr. Yass if people sometime take the training and then find jobs elsewhere and is there a way of making the reimbursement contingent upon them working for us for a certain amount of time. Ms. Checko said we did not do that because we were so short staffed, however, we did take a \$75 deposit so that people wouldn't sign up for the class and then not show up. Once the person is certified we would refund the \$75 deposit.

Mr. Yass asked how the fields did over the winter. Ms. Checko responded that there was nothing out of the ordinary, but were a couple of fields at Fisher Meadows that were torn up because the ground is so soft there.

Ms. Checko told committee members that she met with Avon Little League and their registration numbers were very high and they are playing games every night at Sperry Park. They are not able to hold practices there due to the number of games being played. As a result of that Ms. Checko had the Public works staff renovate the Avon Middle School softball field, the Thompson Brook baseball field and the J.V. softball field at Fisher Meadows.

Ms. Checko informed committee members that she has been meeting with Little League representatives about adding a field to Sperry Park. They want to change one of the baseball fields into a softball field to bring the girls in to the culture of Sperry Park. The girls currently play at Fisher Meadows and there is not a concession stand there nor is there the family feeling and comradery like there is at Sperry Park. They also want to build a new baseball field. Little League is going to get some prices and come up with a budget to build this field. Ms. Checko said the Engineering department has put together a conceptual drawing and Little League is going to fundraise to build this additional field. Ms. Checko said this will be a great addition to Sperry Park and the Town will offer some in-kind services to help with this project. Ms. Checko said there is also some interest from the Town Council to give them some funding to help with their fundraising efforts. Ms. Checko said this project has been in the Capital Budget since before 2014. Mr. Yass asked where the new field would go and Ms. Checko said in the empty field area near

the Board of Education building which is currently used for parking. Mr. Yass asked if there would be enough parking if that area was used and Ms. Checko said it was designed to add parking.

V. Correspondence

A. Memo to Brandon Robertson – Recreation Committee Recommendation for Countryside Building Facility

Ms. Checko just reviewed the memo with committee members as this was previously sent to the members.

B. Special Needs Information

Ms. Checko said we just shared a narrative page out of the department's budget book regarding the special needs information. She said we highlighted the line with the special needs number on it. Ms. Checko said our prior ADA Coordinator, who was a consultant and not an employee has all of her notes and the only thing that she shared with Ms. Checko and Ms. Roccapriore only goes back a year. Ms. Checko said going forward they can put some information together for the next meeting which will give an overview of where we are at and where we want to be. Ms. Checko said Ms. Roccapriore has taken over the ADA coordination and has done several trainings recently and she started out in Therapeutic Rec in college and Ms. Checko feels she will take the department in an appropriate and good direction.

VI. Committee Communication

Dr. Gurtman elaborated on the list that she and Dr. Sondheimer put together of all of the trails in Avon and she wants to get this put on the website. She said one of the things she would like to see on the website is a map of Avon with all of the trails identified. Ms. Checko said there is a GIS (Geographic Information System) system in Avon that has a layer that shows all of the trails marked out that are on Avon property. Ms. Checko said she was not sure how we could mark trails on that system that are on Avon Land Trust property. Ms. Checko said one of the staff Public Works Department has been going out and marking all of the trails that are Avon property and eventually she could send him out to the Avon Land Trust property to mark those trails and then perhaps it could be put on the Town's GIS mapping system. Ms. Checko said we have found that some people in Avon are creating their own trail systems on Town property that go through resident's back yards, they have their dogs off leash and we have even found some people were taking down trees to create their own trails. The DPW staff person is using a Garmin and tracking these trails and if it is a rogue trail and a barrier or signage needs to be put up, then we know it is not a legal or a sanctioned trail. Dr. Sondheimer said some of our neighboring towns have a more extensive set of outdoor activity pages on their websites and he would like to look at upgrading our Town website in the future.

Mr. Yass said it seems like there are a lot of good activities going on through the Recreation Department. Mr. Yass asked if it would make sense to get to the committee members what the Recreation department is sponsoring for the next 3 months so if members of the committee would like to show up, having this list would be helpful. Committee members agreed. M. McNeill informed committee members that she would be willing to contact some of the television stations about some of the activities that the Recreation department is sponsoring so they could stop by the event and maybe just show people having a good time. She said she would be more than willing to try to promote that. Dr. Gurtman said when they did their bike collection event they reached out to the Valley Press and they were very receptive.

VII. Old Business

A. ARPA Projects Update

Ms. Checko said most of the projects for ARPA have been tabled by the Town Council. The items that have been approved are repairs to the pool, she is working with the representative from the playground company to replace the Sycamore Hills playscape. Ms. Checko said the Town Council just recently approved the resolution for the Buckingham baseball field renovations. Everything else at this point is tabled. Ms. Checko said the multipurpose room has been paused, however the Town Council is in support of it. Ms. Checko suggested that she have the architect do some preliminary drawings to show the Town Council. Ms. Checko said in the process, when the Town Council Chairperson gives Brandon permission, his office creates resolutions, Town Council approves the resolution and then it goes to Board of Finance and they approve it and appropriate the funds. Ms. Checko said until this process takes place, none of the other projects can be started. Ms. Checko said the ARPA have to be completed by the end of 2026. Dr. Sondheimer asked about the two items at the Senior Center which were the ADA compliant bathrooms and the HVAC system and if those were approved. Ms. Checko said the HVAC was approved because it was failing. The bathrooms have not been approved as far as the resolution process. Ms. Checko said some other items have been added to the Senior Center which include new carpeting in the community room, ceiling tiles throughout and all new LED lighting. Dr. Sondheimer asked if the committee wrote a letter to the Town Council if it would push the projects a little faster. Ms. Checko said she wasn't sure if it would help or not. Mr. Yass asked if it was just Recreation and Parks projects that were tabled or other ARPA projects as well. Ms. Checko said it was across all departments. Mr. Yass asked Ms. Checko to provide an item by item ARPA project status list to committee members prior to the next meeting. Ms. Checko said Town Council will meet in June and then they will not meet again until July 28.

Dr. Gurtman asked about the Sycamore Hills playscape and that approval. Ms. Checko said part of that project was funded through ARPA money and \$60,000 of it was an Urban Act Grant from the State of Connecticut. Dr. Gurtman asked what the timeframe was on the project. Ms. Checko said she will have two renderings by this Friday and she may display the renderings at the Bike Rodeo this coming weekend. Ms. Checko said due to a backlog on components, it most likely won't be completed until this fall.

VIII. New Business – None

IX. Adjournment

Mr. Yass reminded committee members that our next meeting is scheduled for September 13, 2022 at 7:30 a.m. M. McNeill made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:18 a.m. James Beaudoin seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by

Sharon Henry

Sharon Henry
Clerk