

RECREATION & PARKS COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Wednesday, September 6, 2017
Avon Town Hall, Building Department Conference Room

I. Call to Order - 7:32 a.m. – By Peter Ponziani, Chairman

A. Attendance

1. Members & Staff Present

Ruth Checko, Director, Peter Ponziani, Donald Droppo, David Jadovich, Kelly Jackson, Joe Weist

2. Members & Staff Absent

Todd Donovan, Mark Olson

II. Minutes – December 13, 2016

Minutes from the December 13, 2016 meeting were presented. Mr. Weist had a question regarding the Press Box tower. He wanted clarification on the ADA accessibility requirements. Ms. Checko advised that they are correct because there is no room for an elevator.

Ms. Jackson motioned to accept the minutes as presented and Mr. Jadovich seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

III. Public Comment

Chairman Ponziani asked if there was anything brought up to anyone. Ms. Checko advised that she'd received no correspondence. She did share that there's been good input from the camp and the pool. Currently, the biggest challenge is fields.

IV. Director's Report

Ms. Checko began with last spring and summer projects – we added a lot of clay to Buckingham baseball infield and resodded. Renovations were made at Sperry on the infields. We installed new filtration pumps at Sycamore. Huge containers of sand. The old ones were 20 years old and made of fiberglass. We've installed a lot of new blinds at the Senior Center. We assisted the Board of Ed with some of the renovations at the High School baseball field, but not as much as I wanted to. I convinced Myles to do some herbicide and over seeding, weed killer on the warning track and to bring the baselines up. It's not a priority for the Board of Ed. We prep for games, but they maintain the facility. It's up to me to get out there and let Myles know what needs to be done.

At Fisher Meadows, we installed a new water main for the irrigation. That will feed the new system and upgrade the existing system. We did the main in the driveway and the perimeter of the existing fields and then we had to stop. Scheduling and timing were the main causes. We also ran out of money and had to go out to bid. We have to wait until fall programming is over in November to begin.

Mr. Ponziani asked if the state budget not being in place impacted us. Ms. Checko replied that it impacted the HS Athletic turf field because of the bonding.

Fall and winter projects include new fencing around Sycamore and getting the Pavilion redone.

Summer programming – 3 family movie nights, Family Fun night which had record attendance. Camp Discovery and Summer Fun Camp were restructured for programming and staffing. We got almost all positive feedback from our survey. We added a diving class to our swim lessons.

Fall and winter programs – Flag Football has 370 kids from 1st grade to 8th grade. Youth Basketball – girls 4th through 8th grades, we're going to partner with other Farmington valley rec leagues. We will practice in Avon during the week and then travel to another gym for games. Last year we had four Grades 4, 5 and 6 teams and no Grades 7 and 8 teams. We sent our 7th and 8th grade girls to Farmington to play. They practiced in Avon, but played in Farmington.

We expanded Soccer Shots to a second tier of soccer programs up to age 6 ½. They have to have gone through Soccer Shots Classic in order to enroll in the second tier.

We're offering fall swim lessons through Farmington Farms again this year.

V. Correspondence

Chairman Ponziani asked if there was anything and Ms. Checko replied only what she emailed to him.

VI. Committee Communication

Chairman Ponziani asked if there was anything and Ms. Checko replied that we could remove this item.

VII. Old Business

A. Fisher Meadows Expansion Plan

Last March we were ready to break ground. In a staff meeting, someone mentioned do you need a storm water construction permit from the state? We did. The engineer started the application. Half way through, we realized we have identified protected species in Fisher Meadows. DEEP requires a Natural Diversity Database review. Their database has a map of Fisher Meadows with circles (blobs). We applied to the DEEP for the review and it took twelve weeks. They identified that we had Box Turtles. In order to complete the storm water review application, we need the Natural Diversity Database number. We now have this and the DEEP's word that we should have our Storm water application approved by September 8th. We can conceivably start construction by September 11th, but we have a Road Race and a Cross Country competitions scheduled, so it will be October 1st. Part of the permit and wetlands conditions is that we construct in 5 acre phases. Phase 1 (October) will be the parking lot. Phase 2 (next spring) will be heading west the first set of fields. Phase 3 (next Summer or Fall depending on what gets done) will be more fields. Each set of fields will be three small fields, or one large field. The earliest use of the new fields will be fall 2018 or spring 2019, depending on turf growth.

Regarding the turtles, we submitted a remediation plan. As long as we silt fence the area while the turtles are active, we can start construction within the silt fence if we check for turtles first. They hibernate starting September 30th. Regarding the Storm Water application, if they have any questions, they will not reject us. They will call us and ask us the questions.

Chairman Ponziani asked if we can make do with what we have until spring 2019. Ms. Checko responded that USA Soccer redid field and goal sizes. There are 4 U8 fields on Softball #3 and Softball on 4 Sundays. We bumped the High School soccer team one practice field because we had to put 2 U9 fields on a full size field.

Lacrosse and Soccer are at Thompson Brook. Flag Football and Field Hockey are Middle School. Flag Football is at Enford. CT Valley Lacrosse is at Alsop. Boys Lacrosse plays at Buckingham.

Mr. Weist asked if parking first was the best way to start. Ms. Checko responded that the parking lot will actually become the staging area for construction.

B. Synthetic Turf Field Project – Avon High School

Ms. Checko advised that a letter was sent last October to the state asking them to consider bonding. Since the state has no budget, they're not going to issue bonds. Once the state passes the budget, I assume that they'll resume bonding meetings.

Mr. Weist asked how much of the project was from the State. Ms. Checko replied that funding consists of grant money, state money, and then tax dollars. We hadn't applied for any grants because there weren't any available. It's really contingent on what the state comes back with on their willingness to bond.

C. Field Demands

Ms. Checko stated that she gave the committed an overview of what we're up against.

Mr. Weist asked about the impact of the Fisher Meadows delay. Do we need to look at what's next for fields? Ms. Checko responded that by expanding Fisher Meadows, we put us where we need to be with hours of field use, but we won't be able to eliminate usage of Alsop Meadows, the Middle School, etc. We will probably still utilize those other fields. The tricky thing is going to be figuring out how many U8 fields, U9 fields, etc. and how many goals do we need to buy?

Our plan is to have 4 and 3 small size fields. In the spring, it will be soccer and lacrosse. In the fall, it will be soccer and flag football.

If flag football wants to stay at the Middle School, then we can rest fields.

Ms. Jackson asked about Alsop Meadows. Why isn't it used for flag football? Ms. Checko responded that there's no irrigation, it's not a formal field, its buggy, it's hard to get in and out of there, there's no parking. Besides, flag football likes the visibility of the Middle School.

VIII. New Business

A. Set Meeting Dates for 2018

Proposed meeting schedule for 2018. 1st meeting for January 9, 2018 is already set under this year's schedule. Mr. Weist inquired about November 6th, because it's Election Day. Ms. Checko responded that it shouldn't have any impact because the meeting is in the morning. Mr. Ponziani motioned to accept the schedule and Mr. Weist seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

A memo will be sent to the Town Clerk after Mr. Ponziani signs it.

B. Approve Advertisement Signs from Spring 2017

Ms. Checko advised that last spring, the Committee approved via email all the signs that went up after one change to the North House's sign. We should have a motion to approve the signs. Mr. Jadovich motioned, Mr. Droppo approved. The motion to approve passed unanimously.

C. Capital Improvement Plan

We're going to take a break on Capital projects and do a catch up year. We're behind in projects. We're going to get some design estimates for Countryside Building and Buckingham. We're going to put in for fencing on the Farmington Valley Trail. We've had Town Council allocate money to do a portion and we've asked the Farmington Valley Council to donate some money. The balance will be out of Ms. Checko's Capital budget.

We're in the process of purchasing the new mower.

D. General Fund Budget 2018 FY

Ms. Checko doesn't see any improvement. Have to look at salaries because of the minimum wage increases.

Mr. Ponziani brought up the Public Place Fees. They haven't been changed since 2008.

Mr. Jadovich asked how we compare to other towns. Ms. Checko replied that we're very different. She said that she will do some research. Mr. Jadovich asked if we increase the fees, will that actually drop the revenue because people are not going to rent from us. Ms. Checko responded that if the State is reducing our revenue and taxes may increase, is this the right time?

Mr. Ponziani agreed that we should look at neighboring towns so that we're in line with them.

Mr. Weist asked if the use of these places cause the Recreation Department any additional costs or if it's additional revenue. Ms. Checko responded that for fields, its field preparation. For buildings and pavilions, its maintenance and booking, our time scheduling, facility attendant fee if required. If you look at the codes, local residents really don't pay anything and they're the majority of users. Most of our revenue is generated from Countryside Park building and the Senior Center. According to Sharon, the rates for Code 1 – A-D, that were implemented in 2009, caused the rentals to drop in half. Ms. Checko added that she didn't feel this was a bad thing because of the reduced wear and tear on the building.

E. Ordinance 41 Parks and Recreation review

Ms. Checko stated that she wants the committee to change, amend, and bless the regulations today. We would like to have Town Council review them at the meeting in October. What I'd suggest is that the rates remain the same for now, but we'll look at them. I need to see how much this actually generates in revenue vs the expenditures and see what the other towns are doing.

Mr. Ponziani asked when this could be done. Ms. Checko responded that she thinks she can have it for January's meeting.

Regarding the Ordinance, Ms. Checko added that there were a couple of small changes. To Appendix D we're going to add Conforming Use because there's reference to that on page 1. There's also a maps reference that I forgot to cross off. On page 1 under C User Codes, we have Note that, I forgot to add that the Town and Board of Ed are priority users.

The biggest change is that we're removing the appeals process. The appeals process in the regulation is different from the appeals process in the ordinance. The two documents contradicted each other. The Town Attorney advised that we could remove the appeals process and that the user has the right to go to court.

Mr. Weist inquired about the rates specified for the lifeguards and the attendants. He asked about needing to review and update these to keep them current. Ms. Ponziani suggested using language that allows Ms. Checko the discretion of increasing the prices without having to have the Recreation Committee from approving it.

Mr. Weist suggested using current pay scale. Ms. Checko added current pay scale plus Medicare and FICA.

Mr. Weist had a similar question about the rate table. He asked if it could be written in a way to have it updated every year. Mr. Ponziani suggested adding it as an agenda item once a year.

Some discussion regarding phasing increases regarding the rate of inflation occurred. Census was that Ms. Checko should be able to increase the fees if needed without approvals.

Ms. Checko asked Mr. Ponziani about the Ordinance changes. She believes that they have to go to a Town Meeting, not sure about the Regulations. Mr. Ponziani believed that it has to as well.

Mr. Ponziani congratulated Ms. Checko and her staff for doing a great job. Ms. Jackson added that her son was amazed at the changes at camp.

Mr. Droppo asked about the next steps for the turf field. We were so close and now the project has come to a screeching halt. Mr. Jadovich added that we'll have to go through all of this all over again. Ms. Checko replied that he should make some phone calls to Mr. Robertson for an update. He may have suggestions.

Mr. Weist suggested making people aware of the cost in the event that they have a windfall and want to donate to the project.

Mr. Ponziani asked if there was anything else. Ms. Checko replied that Ms. Jackson reminded her that Farmington Valley Soccer donated about \$3,700 which she used to purchase goals. Soccer Club donated \$7,500. She used that to purchase goals too.

Kelly Jackson motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:19 AM. Don Droppo seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted by Usha Srivel

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