



MINUTES
DURHAM PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE
Tuesday, January 25th 2022
Hybrid Meeting (Zoom & In Person at Town Hall)
7:00-9:00pm



Call to Order (7:02pm)

Michael M. called the Parks & Recreation Meeting to order at 7:02 pm

In attendance: David Leach, Tracy Schroeder, Cathy Leach, Rachel Gasowski, Al Howland, Michael Mullaney, Michael Drooker on zoom.

Approval of Agenda

Cathy made a motion (David second) to approve the agenda. Agenda was approved, 7-0.

Approval of Minutes

-from 11/23/2021

Al made a motion (David second) to approve the November 23, 2021 meeting minutes. Minutes were approved, 7-0.

Public Comments (please limit to 5 minutes per person)

There were no public comments.

Update from the Parks & Recreation Director (10 minutes)

-After school programs 5 days a week. All outdoor based events, enrollment high. Lack of snow has been a problem, particularly for cross country skiing. 2-month blocks, programs locked in for the rest of the school year.

-Gunstock program onto lesson number 3, a makeup day due to ice storm. Last lesson on February 2. A time-consuming program for staff w/180 kids wanting lessons, 240 total signed up. Most involved of any programs we do. Start communicating with Gunstock in September. Challenging coordinating with Gunstock at times, staffing issues has made communication difficult at times. Organization has been good. 28 chaperones that we coordinate each week, thankful for their support. Cathy wondered if it would help relieve staff stress to limit the program next year. Rachel recommends potentially limiting lessons to beginner and intermediate.

Al had been involved with the middle school program. Highest priority was given to those who needed to learn to ski.

-Churchill rink. Things are going very well - Extremely busy. Zamboni broke down once, but manager was able to make repairs. Fun Skates extremely busy. Rink has provided opportunity to get together through COVID. P & R has used it twice on teacher workshop days. Rentals have been high, 80% skates rented for a public skate last weekend.

-Teacher workshop days fill up fast. 16 kids participated. Used the vans. Partnered with Seven Rivers Paddling. 21 kids on the wait list, demand is high but we are small. Use the Parks and Rec space for lunch so it limits the size. Hopefully going forward we will be able to use a space at the high school or middle school so it can expand.

-Update with the COVID guidelines, staying consistent with the school district. Kids have been great following the guidelines.

-Outdoor recreation map done a couple of years ago by Christine Souter. Worked with Parks and Rec and Ellen Snyder and others. Resident Dennis Meadows highlighted several things that were inaccurate about the map. Met with Tom Brightman the new Land Stewardship director and Stephen Ludderman the new GIS coordinator and talked about having accurate up-to-date information. He does a story board, a way to tie in a QR code at the trail sites. Lots of good ideas. Handed out maps to get feedback from committee- making things alphabetical, address parking issues. Listing things like where hunting and fishing are allowed, click on QR code to get more information about each site. Also link some of the businesses into it. Stephen had some great ideas. Need to make sure UNH sites are accurate. Cathy will look at the Strafford Regional Planning Committee website to review the map feature they have and if any of it can be a part of the Town map.

- Brian Keegan, owner of Durham Cycle and Sports. Trying to get businesses to work together to do a trail tromp starting February 4, highlighting 4 trails-Stephens Woods, Milne Preserve, Long Marsh Preserve, and Wagon Hill. Participants get a passport from participating businesses, buy something from the business, get it stamped and then it will go into a raffle and you could win gift cards that will be donated. Michael M mentioned that it looked similar to a lottery, and it might need to be registered. Brian K did this last year as well.

-February vacation week camp this year, haven't done it for awhile due to COVID. Opened up registration last Friday, 3 spots left.

Community Events Update – Upcoming Events

- Sweetheart skate February 12
- Slush cup pond hockey tourney scheduled for March 19
- Egg hunt April 16 if HS turf available
- Summer camp planning underway. Meeting w/morning REACH coordinators tomorrow.

Roundtable (10 minutes)

Michael Drooker spoke about some residents of the Woodridge Park area who are looking into building a trail to connect Woodridge to West Foss Farm trail. Access and parking to West Foss Farm trail is limited and can be treacherous. Trails would cross wetlands, requiring bridges. Would also have to be discussed with UNH. Plan is in process, with obstacles to overcome. Showed images of the 2 possible options.

Cathy asked who would build the trails, does it need a permit given going over the wetlands, how much would it cost and who would pay? Proposal is by members of the Woodbridge neighborhood, and they have looked into some of the permits and would do some of the work. Cost would depend on which route is chosen (the 2 routes were chosen as they don't go over private land), it would be paid by community-raised funds and would not be a capital cost to the town. Cathy also asked if parking for the new trail would be the same as for the park, and wondered if that might a conflict when other events were happening at the fields or courts.

Michael M asked if there would be funds raised to maintain it in the future. Parking at Woodridge is already limited so that may be a slightly limiting factor.

Rachel brought up a concern about the proposed trailhead (currently behind the back stop). She recommends a designated trail around the tennis courts so walkers/bikes don't go through the playing field.

In general, Rachel and the committee agrees this is a good idea but with the general concerns discussed. Mike D. will bring the concerns/questions back to the citizen group.

- P & R Asst. Director Job Search Update

Michael M spoke to the amount of work going into the P & R Assistant Director position.

6 people applied, 3 were offered interviews, 2 accepted. Interviews were last night. Next move is to meet again and possibly invite candidates back for an in-person meeting. Rachel will coordinate a zoom meeting with committee members for this week.

-Durham Day: possible date change to Spring

Rachel proposed that Durham Day occur in the spring, instead of Fall.

Fall is a busy time for DPR staff and for all supporting groups such as fire, police, schools, etc. Also, downtown businesses are looking for more support. Rachel proposes Durham Day move to May or June and it be held downtown, not at Wagon Hill.

Michael thinks businesses would appreciate something in early June. Consider June 4?

Cathy suggested forming a Durham Day committee. Al and Town Councilor Sally Tobias are talking with businesses and Gina, head of the Durham Business Assoc., on Thursday and will get their input.

Rachel would like not to feed everyone, it makes things really complicated. She hopes the businesses take up some of that so the budget could be used for the band and other activities. Rachel thinks we need to identify the elements of the event, better define the space, using multiple spaces in town. Ideas include kayaking, movie in the park, dance, 5K, tastes of restaurants, etc...

-Committee Goals 2022

Review, prioritize, plan

Committee goals, Rachel/departmental goals, Town Council goals. Cathy looked at the common goals of each: 1. field use agreement, 2. working group to plan for updates/maintenance for parks & rec spaces, 3. fostering relations bringing people downtown, 4. Talking with Lee and Madbury, 5. Community input. 6. 1-3 yr strategic plan. Common goals of P & R and departmental goals are the ones more likely that the committee could be helpful with.

Cathy will create a chart of the goals for the committee to consider how to move forward.

Begin discussion on contributions to Council goals for 2022

Cathy looked at the Town Council goals and highlighted how DPR supports those goals.

One of the goals of the Council is to renovate Wagon Hill farmhouse and the Courthouse where Parks and Rec is housed. Also Smith Chapel. Cathy expressed the opinion that Smith Chapel is not really an area for Parks and Rec. The committee agreed. Al thought a goal related to the Chapel should be placed in a historic commission goal.

One of the goals is to renovate the Wagon Hill Farmhouse and the Courthouse. Both are in need of rehabilitation as they are deteriorating, particularly the Farmhouse. Not clear what the Wagon Hill Farmhouse and barn will be used for. Someone from Parks and Rec should be in on the discussion on what it is going to be used for. Many proposals have been made but no consensus has been reached. Al mentioned there was an architectural study making recommendations as to what was needed to be done to make both structures sound.

The question was raised if the committee is able to provide input to the Council in regards to their goals. Rachel stated that Todd does ask for input.

Rachel's goal of improving the parks is an important goal and Council support is important.

Next meeting: February 15, moved due to school vacation and multiple people being out of town. Location to be determined.

Motion to adjourn by Cathy (David second). The meeting was adjourned at 8:26 pm.

Adjourn 8:26