



**MINUTES**  
**DURHAM PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE**  
February 15, 2022  
7:00pm Town Council Chambers



**Call to Order (7:01)**

Michael Mullaney called the Parks & Recreation Meeting to order.

Attending in Town Council Chambers: Michael Mullaney, David Leach, Tracy Schroeder, Cathy Leach, Al Howland, Rachel Gasowski. Attending remotely via Zoom: Michael Drooker, Nate Fitch

**Approval of Agenda**

Cathy made a motion (David second) to approve the agenda as amended by Mike. Mike Drooker asked that the Woodridge Trail Proposal Update be taken off the agenda as there wasn't an update. Unanimous roll call vote to approve the agenda as amended.

**Approval of Minutes**

Cathy made a motion (David second) to approve the January 25, 2022 meeting minutes with one minor correction. Mike M. noted that the roundtable feedback was to the Land Stewardship Subcommittee. All members with exception of Nate Finch who abstained approved the 1/25/22 minutes through a roll call vote.

**Public Comments** (please limit to 5 minutes per person)

There were no public comments from members of the public

**Update from Parks and Rec director** (10 minutes)

February vacation week is an outdoor adventure camp with 16 participants. Snow shoeing, ice skating, skiing planned but may be thwarted due to warm weather. Sugar Shack at Moharimet will be used as home base with high school gym as a back-up indoor space.

Sweetheart Skate last Saturday, maxed at 100 participants – multi-generational ages.

Gunstock Ski program is done and received lots of positive feedback on program. Rachel states that it is a lot of work and coordination. Al mentioned at the last Town Council meeting that the former middle school ski program was lost due to COVID. If not for Rachel's program the ski opportunity would have been lost. We gave a lot of business to the ski area.

Indoor program space at the high school: Pickle ball will start after vacation week with 3 courts instead of one. Expect to be busy; program at HS will run Monday & Wednesday. Will have a 2-day a week beginner intro class. Booked first reservation at the new middle school robotic camp.

9 weeks of summer camp planned working with the school Reach program. Looking at March 14 to open registration.

We have a number of returning summer staff. Some will be returning for the 4th or 5th summer. Some have aged up and can drive the van, may need to hire one. Going to introduce a counselor in training program for age 14-16.

DPR staff member Megan Johnson who has been part-time, will be transitioning out due to the new assistant director hiring. Rachel indicates that it has been so helpful to have Megan's help and couldn't have done the ski program without her.

Woodridge fields will be very busy with many sports activities this summer. Mike M. asked who was responsible for the maintenance at Woodridge. The work ORYA coordinated in 2021 will be good for about 3 years. Some work will need to be done; infields will need to be raked out. Rachel will talk with ORYA to determine who is responsible for the maintenance.

### **Roundtable**

Al updated the committee on the Trail Tromp set up by Brian Keegan from OR Cycle and Sport and Brian Bessette from the Freedom Cafe. Trails used were Wagon Hill, Milne Trail, Sweet Trail, and Stephens Woods – there were fire pits and someone at each trail. Each participant had a card stamped at each site; if you went to 2 business and bought something you were entered into a raffle. Good idea for the businesses and Al said a lot of families participated.

Mike Drooker updated the committee on the Land Stewardship Subcommittee (LSS). A working group was started up last year and one of the efforts was to devise a survey to look at the use of town lands. For initial survey (Doe Farm), the response was good – 30 of 77 surveys returned. More surveys will be done – will be an announcement in Friday Updates to do the survey online.

LSS heard a presentation from Alix Contosta, a research faculty member at UNH. She is proposing an environment sensor suite at the Spruce Hill Bog that is designed and used by students.

Spruce Hole Bog is a National Landmark per the Park service. It is also in the middle of the Durham Aquifer, so we don't allow people to go into the Bog due to its environmental importance. These issues were discussed and public concerns will be met before the study gets underway.

The Durham Conservation Commission is sponsoring a presentation by Dr. Doug Tallamy at its meeting on Feb. 28. Presentation will be on Nature's Best Hope - how individuals can contribute to the natural world.

### **Business:**

#### **Review of committee goals chart**

Cathy and Rachel presented a draft chart that listed common goals of the P&R committee, DPR, Town Council goals w/timelines for committee discussion.

Mike M. asked to add looking at new programming. Discussion that it was a good idea but may need to wait until after the community survey is complete.

There was discussion of the survey being done in the fall, which would help to look at new possible programming for implementation in 2023. Still to be decided is whether we use the UNH Survey Center or try to determine if we/the Town could distribute the survey itself.

For the strategic plan, Cathy asked if we may want to consider hiring a facilitator and if there may be funding. Rachel indicated there may be funding from the survey that was not done in 2020 due to COVID.

Al mentioned that the new assistant director may have been through this process and have that experience. Barrington Parks & Rec recently went through this with an outside group to help with the process. It will be good to talk with others to see what they have done/

Rachel feels the survey should be done before the Strategic plan to help guide it. Community engagement important for strategic planning. May want to do more than a survey, possible a community meeting. Nate mentioned that people are not in rhythm, as we get towards normalcy and resources are in place (Middle school, fields) that would be a better time to begin.

Committee members indicated which goals they would be interested in working on. Cathy will update the spreadsheet for another review at the March meeting.

Al is hoping that he and Sally Tobias will get the Celebrate Durham connection with the businesses going again. Takes a lot of connections which don't exist right now, they need to be rebuilt, and hoping that by this spring it will get going again. Wanting to get more events downtown to help the businesses.

David asked to add to our goals that committee members work on filling vacant committee positions.

Mike M. mentioned that we had discussed having guest speakers. Not sure if it fits within the goals but he would like to see speakers who could give us knowledge and share areas of expertise.

Rachel thinks we can move up meeting with the Lee and Madbury committees to 6/1. Lee has a new Town Manager, Rachel mentioned it would be good to introduce ourselves and start a conversation.

Rachel talked about having a working group for the Churchill rink. The full-time rink manager has helped move the rink forward. A group that can meet on a regular basis to help guide and be supportive to the manager. People that have fundraising expertise would be helpful. Rachel and Bill have some people they have identified that may be able to be on the rink committee. Mike M. is interested. Set this as a goal for May.

David said that he would like the idea of a community recreation center to be kept alive. Now that the middle school is done it might be time to work on it again.

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### **Outdoor Recreation Site Map Update**

Rachel distributed a map that was done by the town's former economic development manager. There are some concerns regarding inaccuracies and missing items. Rachel met with Steve Letterman, the new GIS person at DPW and Tom Brightman, the new Land Stewardship coordinator about what we could do to correct it. Going to wait until all the surveys on the trails done. DPW has an interactive map which is all online; includes a clickable and interactive story map that provides information regarding parking, dog walking, etc. Interactive maps can embed videos, gives much more information than a static map can. Strafford regional planning has something similar; Cathy will send links to Rachel.

**Assistant Director Update**

Offered the job to Kellie DiSimone, she accepted and tentative start date March 7.

Rachel and the committee are looking forward to her starting, she has lots of experience and has done some great things for the city of Nashua.

**Spring Events**

Slush Cup at Churchill rink: March 19

Egg Hunt at HS turf field: April 16

Memorial Day celebration: Rachel just beginning to work on with Lee Alexander

Durham Day: June 4. Rachel discussed with Police, Fire, and Todd and Gina of Durham Business Association. Will talk with the business association after February break to identify the elements of the event and where to put everything. Several businesses have already contacted her and are very excited. Great potential to grow and highlight downtown.

**Churchill Rink Update**

Briefly reviewed the report from Bill Page, rink manager. Very positive revenue for the 2021-22 season. putting \$66,000 into the revenue fund. Fun skate was one of the success stories, providing an outdoor safe activity. Rentals were also strong.

Dave asked if we would also receive a report that was less revenue-oriented, for instance, reporting on program/user attendance. Feels it's important to have that information to show the rink's value to the community.

Dave continued that those numbers will help explain why things are needed-i.e. new Zamboni, ventilations system, programs, etc.

Rachel indicated that Bill has done a great job, upgrades have helped esthetically, and have opened up space allowing for more people to use it.

Rachel indicated that public skates are very well-attended. Cathy wondered if there was a way to collect those attendance numbers for next year to support the data.

Thank you to Al!

This is Al's last meeting as the Town Council representative. Mike M. recognized him for all his contributions to the committee.

**Adjourn (8: 23pm)**

Cathy made a motion to adjourn, (Dave second). The vote was unanimous to adjourn.