



MINUTES
DURHAM PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE
June 28, 2022
7:00 pm Town Council Chambers



Call to Order (7:01)

Cathy Leach called the Parks & Recreation meeting to order.

Attending in Town Council Chambers: Cathy Leach, Joe Friedman, Al Howland, Rachel Gasowski. Mike Drooker attended remotely via Zoom.

Approval of Agenda

Given a lack of a quorum for voting, there was no vote on agenda approval.

Approval of Minutes – Minutes from the May meeting were not yet available.

Public Comments

There were no comments from members of the public.

Roundtable (15 minutes)

Mike Drooker provided information from the Land Stewardship Subcommittee:

- The Historic District Commission/Heritage Commission is working on plans for the Wagon Hill Farm house renovation and are seeking grant support. Ideas from that group include a public historic gallery, compost toilets, solar panels, and other public access.
- Work will begin on the Portsmouth water main – underwater piping under the bay. Work will be done with minimal disruption the Wagon Hill Farm.
- The mudholes are now dry at WHF!

Cathy brought up the committee's desire to be a part of the discussions about WHF house and barn renovation and usage.

Al encouraged there to be a clearer idea of usage before more funding is spent on current plans. The community has invested a lot in WHF, and the community should be able to get something out of it. Joe provided information that there is grant funding for the roof renovation.

Mike agreed that there could be many ways for public access and to utilize the space. He added that federal historic preservation regulations can be met while still accommodating public access. There are little historic guidelines for the barn, which could be used to support DPR and other organizations.

The committee discussed how to get representation for any future planning. Rachel, Joe, and Mike provided information/contacts for follow up. Joe will bring that request to the town administrator and the Council; Rachel will check with the administrator and leadership team.

Update from Parks and Rec Director

- 10 weeks of DPR summer camps in Week 2; collaboration w/ORCSD Reach camps begins next week – at Mast Way for 5 weeks. All summer camps are full – approx. 60 kids M-Th; 20 more for Friday field trips. There are 166 unique campers for the summer.
- Department activities offered from Jan. 1 until today:
 - 26 youth opportunities
 - 36 adult opportunities
 - 4 community events
 - For programs that take online registrations: approx. 876 participants (not including camp numbers).
- Dept. beginning fall planning (i.e. after school programs, community events such as trail race, downtown trick or treat, Frost Fest)
- Rachel asked the committee about a Music on Main event this summer, typically held in early August. The committee felt that given the timeline, the current workload the department is handling, and the movie night event, Rachel should not feel compelled to offer the event. Also thought it could become part of a larger planning conversation in hopes of holding it in 2023.
- Rachel thanked her staff, particularly Hannah and Kellie, who have taken on many of the summer camp responsibilities and are doing a great job!

Upcoming community events

- Wednesday, July 27: Family Movie Night at 66 Main St.

Business

Memorial Day Review:

- Rachel recapped the Memorial Day event and thought it went well with a good turnout and all elements meaningful to the day. Joe attended and agreed with Rachel's assessment.
- Rachel mentioned possibly involving more kids next year, although a live performance and the Gettysburg Address recitation from youth was part of the program this year.
- Rachel thanked resident Lee Alexander for his continued leadership in this activity. Lee and Rachel thinking about possibly forming a committee for 2023 planning.

Durham Day Review:

- Rachel recapped Durham Day and thought there was fantastic participation from town boards/committees and businesses. Outlined that a planning committee was formed in Jan/Feb that met every other week until the event on June 4. The food samples were good, the weather was beautiful, and resident turnout was very high.
- Rachel mentioned areas for improvement next year, for example: If use 66 Main again, better signage and information for people to find it; more restaurant or business participation, and input re downtown business staffing.
- Cathy agreed that it was a great community event and with Rachel's comments. She referred to the event survey completed by participating boards/departments/businesses, and all were highly supportive and excited about the turnout. There were good suggestions for improvements and offers to help with 2023 planning. Cathy suggested that Rachel form a planning committee in the fall to begin 2023 planning.

- Al thought the event was a 'win-win' for residents and businesses. He suggests that he and Rachel and others have a meeting with the Durham Business Assoc. by late summer to get input on how to use the momentum of Durham Day to continue supporting downtown businesses.
- Joe agreed that the event was a big success and agreed that survey information and other citizen input received will be helpful for 2023 planning. He also mentioned one of the survey comments which was to have a 'picnic day' at Wagon Hill Farm either as part of Durham Day or a separate event. Al agreed that perhaps something else could be done at WHF trails but set up for everyone downtown was easier than in the past at WHF. Rachel agreed that WHF is a special place, but past Durham Day events there have had limitations. Cathy cautioned against more events being put on the P&R Department. Her opinion is that an event at WHF could be organized by others, with some assistance by P&R committee and department. Al thought perhaps the Conservation Commission or LSSC could consider holding a community event there.
- Cathy suggested that perhaps the Town, DBA, DPR and others might develop a comprehensive yearly calendar of events. This would increase awareness of activities for residents, businesses, town departments, etc. and possibly provide streamlined organization, planning, and resource sharing.

2022 Goals Review & Planning:

Working Groups

- Cathy changed the wording slightly on the goals list for the committee to "support" the creation of working groups.
- Parks Planning Group:
 - Rachel updates: the Woodridge working group is moving forward. Rachel has upcoming meetings with Brian Keegan (Oyster River Bike & Sport) for potential mountain biking planning at Woodridge. She also has a meeting with Sam and Nick from Public Works for maintenance and improvement planning.
 - Rachel indicates there is a lot of work needed at Woodridge Park. For 2023 budget/CIP requests, upkeep is the priority over new initiatives. Rachel will have more information for the August meeting.
 - Rachel indicated Jackson's Landing is also in need of upkeep and maintenance. There may be grant funding available, usually offered in April each year.
- Churchill Rink Group:
 - Rachel updates: she and Bill Page, rink manager, have met to discuss budget and working group formation.
 - Joe asked whether there might be value in rink and Jackson's Landing planning occurring together due to proximity.
 - Cathy asked if we should consider a rink consultant to help with future planning. Rachel said there was previous work done by an architect and engineer Mike Seivert. Those plans included a rink and community center, which became too costly given that the rink is self-funding. Rachel said the town of Wolfeboro could be a resource as it completed a recent addition that has parks & rec and community space.
 - Al feels that at the least, the rink needs to be enclosed.
- Lee & Madbury Communication
 - Committee discussed this goal and how to move it forward, including the purpose and information to discuss. Al suggested we talk about each town's Parks & Recreation wish list, what they may want to expand, what are the most successful programs, how we all measure needs.
 - Joe mentioned that through DPR collaboration with school district, it's a more 'regional'

- program, where the Town Council is Durham-focused.
- Rachel brought up the idea of a community calendar for all three town's activities, and perhaps the towns P&R groups could meet quarterly.
- Cathy and Joe will set up a meeting with Administrator Selig for thoughts on being in touch with Lee and Madbury.
- Town survey/strategic planning
 - Cathy received input from committee on idea of getting a facilitator to assist with strategic planning. Asked if there was funding; Rachel indicates it may be possible to request funding. Committee agreed with trying to hire a consultant.
 - Rachel and Cathy met with Sheryl Bass, Durham Library Director, for insight on the library's strategic planning process.
 - Rachel will follow up with the Town of Barrington, as they recently underwent this process. Cathy will reach out to the UNH Dept. of Recreational Management & Policy.
 - Rachel stated that the rink should be part of the strategic plan. Al agreed there should be a facility component, program component, etc. Al also encouraged looking into potential grant funding.
 - Rachel will work on a request/proposal draft for our August meeting.

Committee Report to Town Council

- Cathy will present a committee update to the Town Council on Monday, Sept. 12 and provided a draft outline of topics.
- The committee provided input on additional topics and clarifications, including strategic plan facilitator request. Joe asked if we should begin to talk about future funding for rink planning. Committee agreed, although not sure if any specific information or planning will be available at that time.

Future Meeting Dates

- No Meeting in July
- August meeting date changed to **Tuesday, Aug 30** at 7:00 pm.

Adjourn (8:38 pm)

The meeting was adjourned at 8:38 pm.