



DRAFT Meeting Minutes
DURHAM PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE
Tuesday, August 30, 2022
7:00 pm
Town Council Chambers



Call to Order (7:00pm): Meeting was called to order at 7:02 by Cathy Leach. In attendance in house: Cathy Leach, Rachel Gasowski, Al Howland, Joe Friedman, Tracy Schroeder. Michael Drooker attended via Zoom.

Approval of Agenda Motion made by Al Howland, seconded by Tracy. Agenda was approved, 5-0.

Approval of Minutes:

- May 24, 2022 - Motion made by Al Howland to approve the minutes, seconded by Tracy. Cathy noted a misspelling of Sheryl Bass's name. May 24 minutes approved, 5-0.
- June 28, 2022 - Motion made by Al Howland to approve the minutes, seconded by Cathy. June 28 minutes approved, 4-0, with Tracy abstaining as she was not present at that meeting.

Public Comments (limit to 5 minutes per person): No public comments

Roundtable

Cathy noted at our last meeting the committee talked about involvement at Wagon Hill. Cathy and Joe met with Administrator Selig, who encouraged us to be more involved with the barn at Wagon Hill, rather than the house. The barn is more applicable to DPR needs. The roof and the siding of the barn are the highest priority to make it more weather tight. The need for a sprinkler system is the limiting factor for public assembly, as well as ADA bathrooms.

Google maps did accept a change to 66 Main St. location per Joe Friedman.

Michael provided an update from the Land Stewardship Subcommittee:

- Questionnaires from people using Durham properties: Doe Farm, Wagon Hill, some were online, some were on site. Most responses are positive. One recommendation was "don't change anything." Oyster River Forest will be the next site to have a survey conducted.

Cathy asked when it might be appropriate for DPR and/or the committee to be part of the conversation when this information is compiled and presented to the Land Steward subcommittee. Michael said he is representing our interests. Al thought it will be important to see the final report.

- The ramp off Mill Road to the UNH lands has been paved, and the potholes filled in.

Update from the Parks & Recreation Director

DPR Director Rachel Gasowski provided the following updates:

June 20 - August 26 summer camps. A great and busy summer camp season. Strong attendance. Partnership camps:

- Let go Your Mind ran 2 weeks of camp for 2 age groups. Used the Middle School. Out of 80 spots we had 59 campers.
- Mad Science - filled all 20 available spots; held at Churchill rink
- 7 Rivers Paddling - 9 spots of 12 filled; held at Wagon Hill

Reach program in partnership with ORSCD. P & R did the afternoon part at Mast Way. Was able to work through some of the issues they had last summer. 95% of the time was spent outside.

264 camper registrations over 5 Reach weeks of the summer. 5 theme weeks. Each of the age groups went to UNH pool twice a week. UNH accommodating. No morning Reach program on Friday, so field trips were done. Maxed out with 20 kids each week and had a wait list.

Outdoor adventure camp - maxed out at 12 kids. Zip line, kayaking, water fall hike, aerial adventure course, surfing. Pictures posted on website.

Introduced a counselor in training program for the Reach Program. Captured kids that were aging out of camp giving them leadership roles. Assisted camp staff. 4 counselors in 7-8th grade. A great success; students really embraced the role. Builds the next group of staff. May have to limit to just 8th grade next year.

Lots of moving parts and challenges with the Reach Program. Lots of communication needed. A few glitches will need to be fine-tuned for next year to make a smoother process. Most likely at the Middle School next year which will come with a new set of challenges. DPR staff are already thinking about logistics.

A big thanks to the school district, Let go Your Mind, Mad Science and 7 Rivers Paddling, the staff was A+.

No issues with Covid at all. Busiest summer yet. Great summer!

Snafu with rental van – was not available due to insurance issues. Staff had to make numerous trips to the pool.

Did a family movie night. Most likely will not do that next summer and will look to go back to Music on Main.

A couple other summer programs: Get on Board skateboarding program and some youth Mountain bike meet ups together with Oyster River Cycle and Sport.

Opened fall registration August 15th. Within the first day of registration strong numbers.

Upcoming Events:

Trot in the Trees - October 16 at Tibbets Field

Trick or Treat Downtown - October 23 (Sunday). Rain date: Oct. 29.

Feather Fest - Thanksgiving morning with ORPP

Frost Fest - December 3

Partnering with Gunstock again. Registration will open in October. Last year 250 kids in lessons, may need to downsize that as Gunstock had a difficult time staffing the lessons.

Business:

DPR Budget:

Rachel indicated that department heads have been tasked with presenting a flat line budget. Tricky with contracted services expense vs revenue and trying to predict numbers and revenue.

Joe indicated it will be a challenging year budget year for the town and contracting services will increase as well.

Rachel said that pay for P & R staff in Durham is not competitive. Need to look at numbers each year, Covid made looking at growth difficult.

Joe suggested looking at wait lists may give information - if it is consistently high would justify increasing staff.

Rachel has a budget meeting scheduled with Gail Jablonski and Administrator Selig.

Joe encouraged that if there are important needs, to bring it up. Even if it is not funded, still important to bring it to the Council's attention.

Mill Pond Dam – Section 106 Review:

Cathy reported that she listened to informational meeting and provided committee members notes from the meeting. She led a discussion about whether the committee wanted to apply to be a "consulting party" for the project. Rachel and Cathy felt it was not necessary for the committee to be a consulting party. The status has more to do with a committee's interest in the historical aspect of the project. This is not the focus of our committee. P&R is more interested in usage and some preservation.

Joe agreed, saying that it was a lot of paperwork and issues regarding history and stream bed, etc. will be covered by others.

Committee agreed that it would not apply for consulting party status but would keep informed of the project and attend public informational meetings.

2022 Goals Review & Planning

- Working Group for Fields Maintenance and Upgrades: Rachel met with Rich and Sam from Public Works. Woodridge Park is in need of maintenance and Rachel has many ideas to improve the Park. Rich suggested doing a Master Plan which would prioritize needs and would help gain both community and Council support. Al asked if there were any grants that would help fund renovations. Rachel indicated there was a State grant that she thinks we would qualify for but a plan needs to be in place to be able to apply. In the meantime, maintenance needs to be done; costs are in the Public Works budget.

- Working Group for Churchill Rink: Cathy indicated that Rink Manager Bill Page is making progress on putting together the group to help fundraise for the renovations. Rachel mentioned that a rink design was done a few years ago. Committee agreed that the rink needs to be in the recreation strategic plan, despite being financially independent of Parks and Rec.
- Strategic Plan/Community Input: Rachel spoke with Barrington P&R, who recently put together a comprehensive Strategic Recreation Plan. It was quite expensive (\$65,000) and in speaking with the same company, Rachel was told the cost may be around \$75,000. She and Cathy are meeting on Sept. 7 with UNH Rec Management & Policy faculty, Michael Ferguson and Matt Frye, about assistance with needs assessment, land usage, and strategic planning. Dr. Ferguson heads the ARRC (Applied Recreation Research Collaborative). and they can help with needs assessment, programing, and a strategic plan. Hopefully they will be able to help develop a plan at a cost our town can afford.
- Discussed putting together a survey for the community. Committee agreed that we need to decide on content areas - programming, facilities, etc. and then come up with questions under each area for the survey. Distribution to the community through email, Friday update, social media, etc. Responses will help with development of a multi-year strategic plan.
- Lee & Madbury Communication: Joe and Cathy talked with Administrator Selig; he agreed this would be a good thing to do.

Committee Report to Town Council: Cathy is preparing a written report she will forward to committee members for input. It will be presented to the Town Council on Monday, Sept. 12.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, Sept. 27

Adjourn: Al made a motion to adjourn; Tracy seconded. Motion passed, 5-0.

The meeting was Adjourned at 8:58 pm