



MINUTES
DURHAM PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE
April 19, 2022
7:00 pm Town Council Chambers



Call to Order (7:00)

Cathy Leach called the Parks & Recreation Meeting to order.

Attending in Town Council Chambers: David Leach, Tracy Schroeder, Cathy Leach, Joe Friedman, Al Howland, Rachel Gasowski. Bill Page was in attendance as a guest. Mike Drooker attended remotely via Zoom.

Approval of Agenda

Tracy made a motion (David second) to approve the agenda. Cathy requested to add an agenda item to discuss Town Council goals. Adjusted agenda approved, 5-0.

Approval of Minutes – March 22, 2022

Tracy made a motion (Dave second) to accept the minutes as amended. Minutes were approved, 5-0.

Public Comments

There were no comments from members of the public. Two UNH students introduced themselves as observers.

Roundtable (15 minutes)

Mike Drooker had some comments regarding the land stewardship subcommittee. Doe Farm and Wagon Hill projects to improve signage; Doe farm signage will include a new trail that connects the trail from the end of Bennett Rd to downtown. New regulations regarding crossing waterways may put a crimp into access to Mote Island. Eagle Scout project to repair a bridge at Wagon Hill.

Joe Friedman had a question about a tree being planted at a cemetery as to whether or not that was going forward. Rachel replied that Lee Alexander is meeting with the cemetery committee and discussion has begun.

Joe asked about public paddling access maps, which were updated in 2020. He wondered where they could be accessed and if they should be on the Parks and Rec website. Rachel reply?

Joe provided a DPR & committee update to the Town Council and was asked about summer camp enrollments and whether any local youth were kept from enrolling over out of town campers. Rachel indicated the camps were open for two weeks only for the Oyster River Community and that no local students lost a spot to an out of town camper. Reach camp is a partnership with the ORCSD. There was a brief discussion of whether camps could grow larger; Rachel indicated that the bigger you get the more challenging it gets, and quality can drop if you get too big, it's an ongoing question. Facilities are also a limiting factor.

Cathy thanked our former committee member and chair, Mike Mullaney, for his service and leadership. A chair and vice chair will need to be elected at the May meeting.

Rachel and Cathy confirmed that we currently have 6 regular voting members. To achieve a quorum, we need to have four members attend in person.

Update from Parks and Rec director

- Last session of after school outdoor camps is after April break. Wraps up June 10.
- Summer camps taking a lot of effort to get everything planned. Happy to be able to use UNH pool again. Lots of registration changes from participants, lots of communication. This year there is a tiered cancellation policy. There is small penalty for changing at the last minute.
- All returners for camp staff except for one new hire. Camp director returning from last summer.
- Adult basketball, volleyball, and pickle ball numbers are picking up. Doing another session of basketball and volleyball. Pickle ball is at the high school gym, moving outdoors eventually (they do it on their own), currently we don't have outdoor courts, goal is to get them at Woodridge.
- Rachel is meeting with DPW to plan Woodridge renovations and maintenance. Lots of use expected this spring/summer.
- Egg hunt this past weekend, biggest turnout yet. Eggs were collected in 5 minutes. We had 3000 eggs; Rachel plans for 2000 more next year. ORHS National Society members helped stuff eggs and showed up that morning, they were a great help. ORPP also helped which is a great partnership.
- 2 large trees down, one at Wagon Hill and another at Jackson Landing-problematic due to access and difficulty to remove.
- Rachel met with Tom Brightman, land stewardship chair, about getting some monthly activities back up and running.
- Thinking of using 66 Main for family movie nights.
- David Leach is retiring from the committee after over 15 years. Rachel thanked him for his contributions and specifically appreciated his perspective and thinking big.
- Woodridge Park user agreement was presented to Todd and sent to the Town's legal counsel. The response from the legal rep had many questions; some need to be clarified. One specific question for committee input was related to our priority usage structure, specifically the difference between profit or non profit groups. It was not presented as a legal issue, but something to consider. Rachel explained that she meets with groups who typically use the facility before the start of the season to set up a schedule and the number of for profit groups is very minimal. The committee agreed that having that meeting works better than first come, first serve as it's important to support the local community. The committee recommended leaving the priority usage as is.

Upcoming events

Durham Day:

- 4 meetings (held on Wednesday AM) lots of good ideas
- 3 key areas of the event:
 - Education-booths from local groups
 - Entertainment/Activities-6K, bike parade, movie night at the Library
 - Food-working with the restaurants. Al and Gina (from Durham Business Association) and Sally Tobias have talked with all restaurants and gathered contact info. Restaurants were interested in participating.

Memorial Day planning: Rachel met with Lee Alexander. This year will be continuation of last year with primarily just the ceremony and some music from the community.

Business:

Churchill Rink Update - Bill Page, Rink Manager:

- Overall, the rink had a great year. Bill provided the committee with a comprehensive financial and usage report.
- Fees were increased
- Usage:
 - Sold 894 hours of ice time, slightly more than last year.
 - Group rentals remained strong
 - Public skating way up
 - 289 hours of public skate this season-fun and public skate combined. 13,000+ people at public sessions this season
 - Net profit of \$66,433.82 this season, added to fund balance which now has a total of \$306,000.00
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- Replaced 1/2 of the brine pipe with great results, the ice froze wonderfully after they were replaced
March 5th a pipe broke and exploded, the next day had to shut down. Was this in 2022?
Only one brine pipe at the rink, needs to be replaced, will be a large expenditure
- Zamboni getting old. Restoring it for now, hopefully can get a new one in the future which would provide a backup
- Hoping to do new LED lights this summer since the money for a new zamboni won't be spent, feels that will be a great improvement
- Portsmouth looking to build a rink, we may lose groups if they are able to offer things that we can't, such as not enclosed, not humidified, locker rooms are an issue. **Can't do high school games. ?**
- Hard for Bill to work on fundraising during the season as he is so busy. Bill is planning to form a working group primarily for the purpose of fundraising to address building concerns.
- Part of the appeal of the rink is that it is open and feels like you are skating outside. We were in Yankee magazine about outdoor rinks, getting people from Massachusetts.
- The committee commended Bill and his staff for their continued and forward-looking work at the rink. Members agreed that the financial and usage numbers were impressive and supports the rink as an important community resource.
- Cathy also offered that Bill involve the committee as needed for assistance with the working group, fundraising planning, etc.

Updates to committee vision/mission on Town website

Cathy brought an updated version of the committee vision/mission information from the Town website that the committee discussed at its March meeting. Only changes were:

- Update the accuracy of meeting schedule
- Update the accuracy of committee composition
- Deleted the 'history of the committee' section
- Rachel suggested we change the wording on 'setting' policy to 'advise' on policy. The committee agreed with that change.

- Joe had spoken with Todd Selig on this and reported that the Parks and Recreation committee makes recommendations, it goes to the Council to be approved and then returned to Committee for implementation.
- Joe suggested the paragraph citing the State RSA be removed. The committee agreed with that change. Rachel will make final changes to the document and request it be updated on the Town website.

Town Council Goals

Cathy had provided the committee excerpts from the draft Town Council goals that pertained to parks and recreation items for review and discussion.

- Joe reported Council goals are anticipated to be approved in May or June.
- Rachel noted lack of facilities limits Parks and Rec's ability to meet the needs of the community.
- The committee discussed the following Parks & Rec contributions to the Council's draft goals:
 - Maintaining/upgrading the rink
 - Parks and Rec events bringing people downtown
 - Mike Drooker presented ideas on the removal of the Mill Pond that might tie into Parks and Rec, he thinks there is the possibility of a park and maybe some of the dam be preserved as a monument.
 - Cathy suggested that the P&R committee and/or DPR staff be included on dam/Mill Pond planning, as well as planning for Wagon Hill Farm.
 - Cathy supported the Council's draft goals removing reference to Smith Chapel as it relates to recreation.

2022 Parks & Recreation Goals

The committee reviewed the goals worksheet:

- Reiterated committee may be able to assist in forming working groups for the rink and for fields and parks
- Communicating with Lee & Madbury: Mike Mullaney was the point person for that, so the committee will need to rethink that
- Community survey: Rachel has historic information from the committee's prior work. She also received helpful info from the library's survey process. Mike Drooker said the Land Stewardship subcommittee has developed questionnaires for people using the trails and town lands, getting good response. He will collect a summary of information sought and gained. Looking for actionable information.

May meeting Agenda Planning – brief discussion on agenda items for the May 24 meeting.

Adjourn (8:52 pm)

Tracy made a motion to adjourn, David second. Adjournment approved, 5-0. The meeting was adjourned at 8:52 pm.