



DURHAM PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 28, 2023
7:00 pm
Town Council Chambers



Call to Order: Cathy Leach called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. In attendance in the Town Council Chambers: Joe Friedman, Rachel Gasowski, Cathy Leach, Tracy Schroeder, Matt Swiesz, Brian Keegan, and Genevieve Brown. Michael Drooker and Erin Guyotte attended via Zoom. Madison Davine, a UNH student, observed the meeting via Zoom.

Approval of Agenda: Tracy made a motion to approve the agenda. Genevieve seconded. No discussion, approval by roll call vote, 6-0.

Approval of Minutes: Genevieve made a motion to approve the minutes from January 24, 2023. Tracy seconded. Approved by roll call vote, 6-0.

Public Comments (limit to 5 minutes per person): There were no public comments.

Roundtable:

- Cathy welcomed Erin as a new committee member.

Update from the Parks & Recreation Director

Rachel provided the following updates:

- Wrapping up winter programs this week. New set of programs to start next week running through April.
- Lots of new adult fitness programs with good attendance.
- February vacation camp did not have enough attendance, so the department offered 3 days of drop-in programs which turned out to be very popular. The full February week camp may need to be re-evaluated, with daily offerings may be the way to go.
- Summer camp registrations open March 17. Morning and afternoon camps will be at the Middle School. Can walk to the UNH outdoor pool. Still looking for summer staff, including counselors and a camp director.
- Durham Day event is coming together. New this year will be a Durham Day 5K Dash on Friday, June 2. Growing Places will coordinate two mini-dashes for kids. Also partnering with Tideline to provide the first 200 participants with a \$10 dollar gift certificate to their business. Flyer and online registration is just about ready. Durham Day planning committee is meeting regularly. Downtown Durham Day event is on Saturday, June 3. Cathy suggested we have DPR data & information at our table as well as the activity/treat.
- A Bagdad Woods resident, Candy Olsen, reached out to Rachel about ideas for senior programming and may attend a committee meeting in the future.

Business

Review & discuss ARRC Proposal for Parks/Playground Planning:

Cathy and Rachel provided brief updates since last meeting regarding the community needs assessment proposal:

- Met with Administrator Selig and Business Manager Jablonski as Joe suggested. They provided the proposal and reviewed the CIP submission. Neither Selig or Jablonski thought anything was out of scope. Other clarifications: the funding can be utilized over multiple fiscal years.
- After that meeting and at the next Council meeting, two counselors expressed concern that it may be out of scope and asked questions of Joe and Selig. The focus of the study will be on Jackson's Landing and Woodridge Park, but we will also look to get community input on additional items such as programming and possibly other facilities as they are all intertwined and can better inform the final recommendations and future planning.

The committee listened to a presentation and engaged in Q & A regarding the UNH ARRC (Applied Recreation Research Collaborative) Lab, UNH Department of Recreation Management & Policy from the authors: Dr. Michael Ferguson and Prof. Matthew Frye, UNH Dept. of Recreation Management & Policy.

Mike said they are flexible in what they do. The community needs assessment is to find out what is desired/needed. This can be done through community outreach, and through following trends. The outreach is the data collection, then there is data analysis and study. Of the tasks outlined in the proposal, numbers 1, 5 & 6 are included in all studies: Study Development & Literature Review; Data Analysis & Report Prep; Final Report & Outreach Presentations. The remaining task components can be flexible: Focus Groups, On-site survey; and Population Survey.

It's important to look at programs and facilities to see what the community wants and needs.

Matt said that it is important to look at the wants and needs of the broader community.

The initial proposal was written to be broad but can be focused on specific areas. Focus groups are a critical first step to determine what people want and the data collected will help define the survey. With onsite surveys, the benefit is a very high response rate and current information. A population survey is a sample that would be representative of all of Durham. Matt outlined the population survey method of 'knock and drop.' Response rates for surveys are around 8% response for a mail survey while knock and drop surveys have a response rate of about 27%. Combining onsite and knock and drop population surveys is the gold standard as it includes those who use parks and those who do not.

Cathy asked if some of the data from the Land Stewardship Committee surveys would be useful. Michael Drooker spoke about the surveys and what they ask.

Mike Ferguson said they were fans of any type of data and the data they collect would be helpful in looking at usage of those outside the community.

Genevieve asked what the timeline would be, and how would the survey be season proof. Mike said that typically the study runs about two years; data collection is typically over the 3-month summer season, but it can be adjusted. Rachel said the seasonal consideration would be important at Woodridge when the fall looks very different than the summer.

Mike Ferguson recommends bare minimum we do the population survey. Onsite surveys typically get the same users.

Genevieve feels if we want to identify gaps, we should definitely do the knock and drop population survey.

Matt suggested that if a population survey is done this is a great opportunity to get as much information as you can. The sweet spot is about a 5-page survey.

The technical management report will be one succinct document that will be a tool for the department and the Town to use in future planning. It will include data, descriptive information, data interpretation, and recommendations regarding needs and future planning. That the ARRC staff are non-biased gives DPR direction as to where to allocate resources.

Cathy asked what the responsibilities would be from DPR staff and the committee. Mike and Matt indicated there would be no expectation for data gathering. If we hold focus groups, ARRC will ask help getting those groups together. Mike said there would be minimal asks of DPR.

Cathy asked for clarification of the data collection priorities. Mike prioritized the data collection as 1. Population survey; 2. Onsite surveys; 3. Focus groups. Each study provides more depth.

Rachel wondered if we are able to survey youth or just their parents. Mike indicated that it can be more difficult to gather data from someone under the age of 18, due to legal concerns. It can be done with parent/guardian permission, it's just logistically trickier. Easiest way to do that is through focus groups with youth with permission from a parent/guardian.

Cathy, Rachel and the committee members thanked Mike and Matt for their time and information.

Committee Discussion of ARRC Initial Proposal:

Brian mentioned that he thought that we should ask questions on the survey that might look at recreational needs that are outside of the two parks. Joe mentioned that the focus remains on

the 2 parks. Rachel said the 2 parks are aging and we need to assess how to make them safer and more inclusive. Cathy clarified that this report will not include a maintenance plan, but outcomes will help the department with future decision making as to where to put resources.

All committee members were in favor of including a population survey. Rachel felt it important to have focus groups, particularly to include youth opinions. There was discussion that perhaps the department and committee could do the on-site surveys.

Committee members agreed that the discussion with Mike and Matt was informative and in general, were in favor of recommending we move forward with Scenario 2 (removes on-site surveys) which is within the funding amount.

There were a few more questions that Rachel and Cathy will follow up:

Joe: can we ask the ARRC if the cost of Scenario 1 (that includes everything) can be done with the funded amount?

Gen: if we administer the on-site surveys ourselves, is the project timeline different?

Rachel: can ARRC still help with questions and instructions for on-site surveys?

Joe feels that once the committee and Rachel makes a decision as to what scenario is preferred, it be brought back to Administrator Selig and there isn't a need to bring it to the Town Council.

Next meeting is Tuesday, March 28.

Adjourn: Tracy made a motion to adjourn. Genevieve seconded. Roll call vote to adjourn, 6-0. The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 pm.