



DURHAM PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, September 26, 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: Cathy Leach, Rachel Gasowski, Joe Friedman, Tracy Schroeder, Matt Swiesz, Erin Guyotte, Myrta Janosz. Mike Drooker attended via Zoom. Erin, Myrta, and Matt were all voting members. Bill Page, Churchill Rink Manager, also attended the meeting.

Approval of Agenda: Cathy made a suggestion that we move Rink manager Bill Page up on the agenda (to right after Public Comments) so he can present earlier. Tracy made a motion to approve the adjusted agenda, Myrta seconded. No discussion, Approval by roll call vote, 7-0.

Approval of Minutes – Tracy made motion to approve the minutes of 6/27/23; Myrta seconded. There were no adjustments. Minutes were approved, 5-0; Joe and Tracy abstained.

Notes from the August 22, 2023, meeting were reviewed. There was not a quorum at that meeting, so no formal minutes were taken.

Public Comments: There were no public comments.

Churchill Rink & Working Group Update:

Rink manager Bill Page updated the committee on the Rink fundraising/renovation working group:

- Bill has had multiple meetings with a fundraising consulting group. He is also working with an architect to create a feasible building plan.
- The fundraising consultant has advised Bill and the working group to generate a list of 60 individuals that have interest and the capacity to make a gift of \$10,000-\$300,000. The consulting group will then advise the working group on how to ask for donations. The goal is to make the rink a year-round facility.
- Bill has acquired new lights and they are great – clean and very bright. He’s also installed a disco light. Also acquired the old sound system from the Whittemore Center. It was a complicated set up, but Bill had help from the person who originally installed it at the Whitt, and it sounds great.
- Rink is set to open on October 17. He has an idea to set up a wall for business promotion at a cost of about \$50 for the frame.
- Committee members asked Bill a few questions.
- Cathy thanked Bill and his staff for their work.
- Rachel commended Bill for all the work he has done; his creativity has saved money, and he really cares about the rink.

Roundtable (10 minutes)

Cathy made a comment about the committee using language moving forward that Parks & Rec events include and support Durham businesses, as opposed to only downtown businesses. Committee members agreed.

Joe provided information that a grant of \$321,000 has been applied for to renovate the house at Wagon Hill. Joe was not sure when they will hear if it approved. Would be used for a caretaker and more security. Currently the roof is being fixed.

Update from the Parks & Recreation Director & Upcoming Events (10 minutes)

Rachel provided the following updates:

- After school program started on September 11. DPR has absorbed this from Our Time and has incorporated an adventure program in partnership with 7 Rivers Paddling. All is going well and there will be fall, winter, and spring sessions. There are 69 kids registered (max is 70) with an average 25 kids a day. Program is for K-8 kids and is held at Moharimet. Town breakdown: 37 kids from Durham, 17 from Lee, 15 from Madbury. School supports by providing space for a monthly fee. 7 Rivers provides much of the staffing. Organizing the program and registering the kids has been a lot of work as they are accommodating to parent's individual schedules.
- Rachel gave DPR budget presentation to Town Council last week. Budget went up slightly due to growth in programs and an increase in camp staff salaries. Projected \$180,000 in revenue this year, which they should meet. Rachel is projecting \$210,000 revenue for 2024. Parks and Rec revenue goes into the General Fund.
- On Monday registration opens for the Gunstock ski and ride program. Very popular program. It starts in January.
- DPR partnering with the library and police to offer a Lunch and Learn program about scams in late October or early November.
- Two teacher workshop days in October and November. Use the van so only 12 spots available and it sells out quickly. Both sessions are full. October going to Taste Buds Kitchen for cooking and then a local farm for pumpkin picking and ice cream.
- Trot in the Trees road race is on Sunday October 15. Need help if anyone is interested.
- Downtown trick or treat October 22 from 2-4pm. Great response so far. Cathy suggested that Rachel email committee members with requests for event help.
- DPR offering a number of adult programs this fall, well attended-yoga, boot camp, tai chi easy class, and pickleball. Pickleball registration filled up in less than 10 minutes.

Biggest challenge for pickle ball is space. Currently held at the Middle School with 3 courts; will move to Multi-purpose room at the High School in November.

- Tennis backboard at Woodridge was in very poor condition and presented a safety concern so has been removed. Hope to have it rebuilt; potentially through an Eagle Scout project.
- Rachel is meeting with resident Joan Osbourne tomorrow. Ms. Osbourne is planning an event to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the raid on the Fort William and Mary. Considering the date of June 15, 2024. Event may include a reenactment, cooking demonstrations, blacksmithing, handling cannons, and a parade from Laurel Lane to Town Hall. Would like to involve the Gundalow. Parks and Rec would be limited in what support they can provide, may be able support the event up to with communication, but not so much on the day of. Cathy asked if Ms. Osbourne had approached the Durham Historic Association. Rachel believed she had and that organization may be providing some financial support.

Business:

- UNH ARRC Lab Timetable & Update: Mike Ferguson from UNH provided Rachel a summary update of the project that is just getting underway. Rachel, Mike, and Matt Frye from UNH are going on a site visit to Jackson's Landing and Woodridge Park in October. We will ask them to attend our November meeting for an update. Cathy suggests we talk about it our next meeting to come up with questions. Cathy wondered if Town trails should be included in the ARRC project.
- Town Council Committee Report Update - Cathy and Rachel went to the Town Council on Sept. 11. The report went well. Councilor Lawson asked about the ARRC project timeline trying to get an understanding of future budget requests for actual equipment or other updates suggested through the population survey. Councilor Emily Freidrichs asked if the committee has done any planning regarding "active transportation." Cathy provided a definition of active transportation found through a brief web search: Different types of transportation that involve some sort of physical activity, i.e biking, walking. The Energy Committee is also discussing this. Rachel mentioned a group that promotes bike to school and work day and is something Parks and Rec could support and promote. Cathy asked committee members if this topic was something it wished to get more information on – members thought it would be.
- Committee Budget Request: Cathy submitted a 2024 committee budget request for \$1,500 – same amount as in 2023.
- Future Meeting Possible Guests:
 - UNH ARRC Reps – November 2023
 - Durham Business Assoc. Rep – October. Rachel will look into getting a representative to come speak with us. The goal being to see how we can support and what their needs are.

- Bill Page or Matt S. could come more often to update on the Churchill Rink project.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, October 24; 7:00 pm

Adjourn: Tracy made a motion to adjourn; Matt seconded. The meeting was adjourned by roll call vote, 7-0.