



DURHAM PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, January 23, 2024
7:00 pm
Town Council Chambers



Call to Order: Cathy Leach called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. Committee members in attendance: Matt Swiesz, Cathy Leach, Tracy Schroeder, Myrta Janosz, Brian Keegan, Erin Guyotte, Joe Friedman, and Michael Drooker on Zoom, and Rachel Gasowski. Erin and Matt are voting members this evening.

Approval of Agenda: Tracy made a motion to approve the agenda; Brian seconded. Approval by roll call vote, 7-0.

Approval of Minutes: Dec. 19, 2023. Cathy relayed a request from committee member Gen Brown that a comment she made be added to bullet 5 of the revenue discussion (Page 2). The committee agreed to add the comment. Erin made a motion to approve the minutes of December 19, 2023, as amended. Tracy seconded. Approval by roll call vote, 5-0, 2 abstentions due to absence.

Public Comments: There were no comments from the public.

Roundtable:

- Mike shared a photo of the town pump house to show the water height after last week's storm.
- Joe relayed feedback from the last Town Council meeting regarding its questions about revenue, fees, etc. and that they hope the committee and staff will get started on that project sooner, rather than later. Cathy reiterated the committee has this analysis as part of its 2024 goals. Additionally, from last month's meeting where Administrator Selig was present, the understanding is that the committee will gather the data, may or may not make recommendations to Rachel, who will then work with the Administrator and Business Manager during the budget process. The timing outlined was that we'd have this data ready by August for the start of budget planning.

Update from the Parks & Recreation Director & Upcoming Events:

- First session of the Gunstock ski season ends tomorrow. Conditions have been good. Session 2 begins in February.
- DPR is planning summer camps with registration scheduled to open on February 19. There will be 9.5 weeks of camp offered from June 19-Aug 23. Hoping to have full brochure, with Reach programs, ready by Feb. 5. Summer staff – will have to hire some staff and to rent a van for the summer. Van rentals are difficult and costs have increased. Rachel may need to look into van use as it's getting expensive to rent for the summer.
- Downtown Durham is scheduled for June 22 in early afternoon. Rachel has spoken with reps from the Rotary club, who will have their Summer Fest from 4-9 pm on the same day. They will be using Boulder Field and possibly doing fireworks that night.

- Winter after school program started the 2nd week of January. 64 kids enrolled K-8. This includes a new program, Out and About, for middle schoolers to do some activities and field trips.
- Churchill rink has been busy. December vacation week had record breaking attendance. There have been minor maintenance issues, and the new lights are not functioning adequately due to the amount of moisture in the rink. Bill Page has determined a solution, and new light will be installed over the summer.

Business

Discussion with Sarah Liles, Durham Business Assoc.:

Sarah joined the meeting via Zoom to bring the committee up to date on the status of the Durham Business Association (DBA). Sarah is the current secretary. There has been a lot of changeover of the DBA board recently. Sarah is working on various projects with other members and is hoping the DBA will have an annual meeting in February.

Businesses can become DBA members and pay a membership fee. Cathy asked what the general pulse was in regard to the events that Parks and Rec holds downtown. Sarah has recently surveyed businesses to see how aware of the events, some were not aware of some events Parks & Rec holds downtown.

Cathy asked if the DBA could be a conduit for Rachel and/or the committee to communicate with businesses and keep them informed of events. Sarah thought it could be. Rachel also mentioned that she could attend a DBA meeting.

Sarah is working on an updated email list of DBA members and non-member businesses.

Sarah also mentioned that from her conversations with business owners and through the survey, businesses are wondering why people are passing by Durham, and how to get more visitors to stop in town.

Cathy thanked Sarah for attending the meeting, and Sarah agreed to keep Rachel and the committee updated on DBA progress over the next few months.

2024 Committee Goals & Subgroup Planning:

To continue a discussion of 2024 committee goals, Cathy distributed an initial framework for the goals, subgroups, and potential topic/tasks starting points. She said the idea is that subgroups will do their work in between meetings and report each month on progress, discussion, ask questions, etc.

Brief update of Subgroups:

- I. Trails/Active Transportation – Brian, Mike, Myrta
Potential topics:
 - Trail awareness

- Trail mapping – what exists?
- Trail maintenance – what exists currently?
- Active Transportation event/activity?

Rachel indicated that the Land Stewardship Sub Committee working group is working on improving trail awareness that is an easy resource showing GPS, facilities at trails.

Mike said that trail maintenance is distributed throughout the town - DPW, and volunteers coordinated by Land Stewardship Coordinator. He also mentioned that mapping of trails does exist.

For Active Transportation, Cathy reported that she emailed the Chair of the Energy Committee and was waiting for a reply.

Brian thought next steps are to connect with the other groups involved with trails to get a sense of what's being done and how our committee may assist (i.e. Land stewardship, Energy).

- II. DPR Enrollment and Other Data - Gen, Cathy, Rachel
Create digital and non-digital data graphics to promote DPR.
- III. Fees/Revenue, Budget Prep - Matt, Tracy, Rachel, Cathy, Erin
Potential topics:
 - Comparisons with similar Town Parks & Rec Departments for items such as fees, resident vs. non-resident fees, recent fee increases, financial comparisons including P&R budget offset.
 - Resident priority registration

Mike brought up land use as a non-fee service Durham provides; Brian mentioned the use of other town's facilities.

IV. Reach Out to Lee & Madbury

Cathy indicated that she and Rachel had talked about this and would like to put this off until after the fees analysis and any recommendations affecting those two towns are decided.

Rachel & Cathy don't believe asking these Towns for monetary contributions or other fee increases should come directly from the committee, but instead from the Town Administrator and/or the Town Council.

Cathy explained that when this item was initially put into the committee goals (back in 2022), the intent was to learn more about each town's offerings to avoid duplication, potentially share resources, and to create a comprehensive calendar. Now that the Council has introduced fee increase discussions, Cathy and Rachel feel that meeting with those towns for the initial purpose would be helpful, but it would be disingenuous to meet and not discuss what the Council or Administrator may or may not recommend over the next year. Committee members generally agreed to put this goal off for now.

Rachel said she had done some research of fees in 2023, and a \$10 increase charge to Lee and Madbury residents would make a difference of approx. \$2,000. She agrees that until we have more data and analysis, it's premature to enter any discussions.

2024 Meeting Dates:

Cathy distributed 2024 Meeting Dates. She will ask if Sara Callaghan, the Town's Land Stewardship Coordinator, can attend our Feb. meeting.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, Feb. 27; 7 pm

Adjourn: Matt made a motion to adjourn; Brian seconded. Passed by roll call vote, 7-0. The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 pm.