



DURHAM PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 27, 2024
7:00 pm
Town Council Chambers



Call to Order: Cathy Leach called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm. Committee members in attendance: Matt Swiesz, Cathy Leach, Brian Keegan, Erin Guyotte, Joe Friedman, Michael Drooker on Zoom, and Rachel Gasowski. Erin and Matt are voting members this evening. Guest: Sara Callaghan, Durham Land Stewardship Coordinator.

Approval of Agenda: Matt made a motion to approve the agenda; Cathy seconded. Approval by roll call vote, 5-0.

Approval of Minutes: January 23, 2024. Matt made a motion to approve the minutes of January 23. Joe seconded. Cathy brought up one minor change. Minutes were approved, 6-0 (Erin was able to get audio working on Zoom to vote).

Public Comments: There were no comments from the public.

Roundtable:

- Joe provided an update from the Town Council:
 - LCHIP renovation grants for Wagon Hill renovations were approved.
 - Wagon Hill shoreline restoration efforts will continue.
- Brian asked Rachel how issues such as fighting are handled at Churchill Rink. Rachel provided information related to a specific and minor incident the weekend before. It was resolved quickly and the police were called. The incident occurred during the teen night skate; Cathy asked if perhaps parents should be asked to remain at the rink, or at least have a certain number of parent chaperones.
- Cathy mentioned that she can now make changes to the committee pages on the Town website. Currently, all members are listed with address and phone number. She asked if anyone wanted any of that information removed, as it is not required.
- Cathy updated that she had not heard back from the Energy Committee chair, but that the Council rep to that committee had requested a discussion of potential collaboration be put on the next meeting agenda.

Update from the Parks & Recreation Director & Upcoming Events:

- Summer Camp registrations opened and filled, although there are still openings in the AM REACH programs. REACH is run by the ORCSD in the AM, and those students can join the DPR camp in the afternoon. DPR made enrollment adjustments for the middle school age to accommodate more campers due to greater interest. DPR also offers camps in non-REACH weeks through partnerships with Let Go Your Mind, Seven Rivers Paddling, and Mad Science. DPR runs an Outdoor Adventure camp.
- Currently holding interviews for summer camp staff. There are 9 returning staff. There is interest from 14-17 year olds, but need more staff from 18-20 year olds.

- After School Winter Sessions are almost done. Current sessions are Mad Science, Local B, and Mud City (Pottery). After School program in partnership with Seven Rivers averages 30 students per day (max cap). ORCSD provides bus transportation from ORMS to Moharimet.
- There are some adult program instructors who are voicing concern about class size limits due to space limitations. The DPR building's challenges are limited parking, building access, and room size. Durham Public Library has been a good partner in providing space when needed.
- February School Break – offered three field trips and all are filled. DPR will offer drop-in activities at low or no cost for April vacation week.
- The new DPR spring guide is out. New programs include Pound Fitness, Strength & Flexibility, and Local B Boot Camp.

Business

Discussion with Sara Callaghan, Town of Durham Land Stewardship Coordinator

Sara provided an overview of her role:

- Oversees 10 town owned conservation lands with trails
- Enhanced trail stewards program: Currently 20 stewards that observe and report issues to Sara. They also assess if there is a need for public works to do work (i.e. large tree overhanging trail)
- Work with Land Stewardship Subcommittee's "Stewarding our Land" working group that:
 - Inventories property assets
 - Surveys about lands/trails sent out to community via Friday updates
- Wildlife and Habitat Management
- Doe Farm Forest management plan
- Oyster River Forest Trail signs
- Possible focus spot would be the Stolworthy trail between ORMS and ORHS
- Sarah mentioned town GIS coordinator as a helpful resource for maps, as well as UNH Extension NHtrails.com
- Sarah brought up the idea of creating a working group to create an education and outreach program. Rachel thought that perhaps that's what the Conservation Commission and the LSSC could work toward, instead of forming another group.
- Rachel asked if the Conservation Commission rep attended the LSSC meetings. Sara indicated yes, but not often. Currently, Mike and Rachel attend the meetings to represent Parks & Rec.
- Rachel indicated that DPR could help with marketing events.
- Mike reiterated the "loose" network of residents that help maintain the trails.

Trails Subgroup Update

- Brian and Mike met briefly about the committee's trails and active transportation goals.
- Mike provided the committee a written overview that Cathy sent to the full committee before the meeting. Mike reiterated some of the information:
 - He presented our goal and purpose/outcomes to the Land Stewardship Subcommittee's "Stewarding Our Lands" working group. General feedback was positive, and a cooperative and coordinated effort supporting maintenance and use of Town lands is welcome.
 - Trail Mapping and Trail Maintenance activities are existing ongoing processes, carried out by a number of Town entities. Help with these would be appreciated.
 - Trails Awareness and Active Transportation activities look like good areas for new initiatives.

- Brian and Mike thought the main purpose of the subgroup and P&R committee is to:
 - Get the community to use active transport more
 - Create maps to show how trails connect to areas of interest around town.
- Cathy asked about subgroup Next Steps; consensus was to create awareness of trails
- Rachel suggested the subgroup could plan events like the “Discover Durham Trails” events from the past.

UNH ARRC Update:

- Rachel met with Matt Frye from ARRC about focus group planning. It was decided there would be three focus groups with a focus on Woodridge Park:
 - Neighborhood residents
 - Youth & Families who utilize Woodridge
 - Active ‘older’ Adults without young children who use or have an interest in Woodridge
- Looking for 6-12 participants in each focus group.
- Rachel has started reaching out to potential youth and family groups (ORYA and ORPP) and looking for suggestions for the adult group.
- Focus groups will be held in March or April at the Library.
- ARRC will do some Pop Up surveys at Jackson’s Landing.
- Cathy asked why pop ups at Jackson’s Landing and whether committee members could attend to observe. Rachel will follow up with Matt.

Fees Subgroup Update:

- Group met to review the data needed
- Rachel provided similar towns to get comparison data
- Committee was provided a spreadsheet of data before the meeting that compared a sample of programs, the cost, whether there was a different fee for residents vs non-residents, and whether residents had priority registration.
- Cathy and Matt reviewed the following re. the data:
 - In general, resident priority registration and fees were primarily for summer camps
 - Non-camp programs with higher fees and priority registration tend to be the more popular ones.
- Next Steps:
 - Subgroup will try to gather comparison data on DPR revenue, expenses, and how DPR revenue is used as a budget offset
 - Consider facilities – availability, costs, etc.

2024 Committee Goals

- Cathy presented an updated goals sheet after discussion at the last meeting. She will remove the column about Council goals from 2023, but it can be updated once the Council adopts its goals for 2024.
- Brian made a motion to adopt the committee’s 2024 goals; Matt seconded. The goals were adopted by roll call vote, 6-0.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, March 26, 7 pm

Adjourn: Brian made a motion to adjourn; Matt seconded. Passed by roll call vote, 6-0. The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 pm.