



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



Call to Order: Cathy Leach called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. In attendance: Matt Swiesz, Rachel Gasowski, Cathy Leach, Joe Friedman, Tracy Schroeder, Al Howland, Michael Drooker. Erin Guyotte and Brian Keegan joined via Zoom.

Approval of Agenda: Tracy made a motion to approve the agenda, Matt seconded. No discussion, approved by roll call vote 7-0.

Approval of Minutes – Feb. 27, 2024: Matt made a motion to approve the minutes, Joe seconded. Roll call vote to approve the minutes, 6-0 with Tracy abstaining as she was not at that meeting.
March 26, 2024: Al made a motion to approve the minutes, Matt seconded. Roll call vote to approve the minutes, 6-0 with Brian abstaining as he was not at that meeting.

Public Comments: No public comments

Roundtable:

- Joe reported on the Seacoast Economic Development Stakeholders meeting he attended that morning. It was all about outdoor recreation. Joe will send the committee some information and links from the meeting.
- Joe also reported that the town council approved the funds to improve the house at Wagon Hill.
- Michael reported that this was his last meeting after at least 8 years on the committee. He stated he was glad to be in the company of people who put in time for service to the town. He gave thanks to Rachel and Bill for all they do. Cathy thanked Michael for all his service and insight. Rachel thanked Mike for his valuable contribution to our committee and his work keeping us up to date with the land stewardship committee.
- Cathy asked that members please tell her if we will be attending a meeting.

Update from the Parks & Recreation Director & Upcoming Events:

- A great turnout for the annual egg hunt even though it was extremely windy that day.
- Vacation week drop-in activities are going well this week.
- Starting up spring session of afterschool activities
- added a week long half day surf day camp at Jenness Beach
- -Getting things in order for summer, schedules etc. Majority of camp staff is returning, which is great. A couple of summers ago started the counselor in training program, now several have cycled into paid junior counselor positions.
- Rachel attended the same Seacoast Economic Development Stakeholders meeting as Joe. The group has grant funding available that we may be able to apply to for playground upgrades after the ARRC project is complete.

- Woodridge is open but very wet. ORYA hasn't been able to get on the baseball fields and the landscaping company hasn't been able to work on them.
- 2 temporary pickle ball courts are going to be set up on tennis courts at Woodridge
- Matt Glode, Director of ORYA, is leaving his position. Rachel thanked Matt for his work with ORYA and for the collaborations they worked on together.
- Rachel met with Sara Liles who said that the DBA is essentially nonexistent. She is talking with people getting Durham Day organized.

Business

Churchill Rink Annual Report

- Bill Page, Rink Director, presented an annual report for the Oct. 2023 – March 2024 season.
- Bill reported this was the best fiscal year ever with an \$88,000 profit.
- No fees were increased this year as the rink is doing well enough financially.
- Numbers/data:
 - Up a bit in group rental hours; ancillary sales did well; 15,037 public session admissions. Public skate attendance was up and went longer into the season.
- Bill thanked his staff who were excellent this year.
- Facility Updates:
 - Switched refrigeration companies this year and system worked better
 - There was a problem with the lights, although lighting was still better this year. The new LED lights were not as waterproof as they should be so were failing when damp. The manufacturer will provide new lights and Bill will install over the summer.
 - Installed a new sound system and disco lights!
- The Zamboni is 30 years old and is on its 2nd or 3rd engine. Bill hopes to purchase a new Zamboni, although there is a 300-400 day lead time once ordered. A Zamboni has been added as a placeholder to the 2025 Town budget.
- ORHS boys hockey won the 2024 state championship for the first time. The rink hosted a celebration of Oyster River hockey to honor the coaches and players.
- Bill is meeting Friday with the architect re the possible building renovations. Considering including a proposal for locker room for girls and boys high school teams. Next step is a feasibility study to see necessary funding can be raised.
- Cathy asked if Bill thinks the rink is at usage/scheduling capacity. Bill doesn't think so. Weeknight rental time is at capacity. If rentals drop, the public skate is so popular, and is good revenue. Cathy asked that he send the information regarding his fees.

UNH ARRC Update: Cathy gave a quick recap of the ARRC research/survey project:

- Three focus groups were completed, facilitated by Matt Frye. Cathy attended 2 of the focus groups.
- Matt indicated they were helpful in developing survey questions as participants had a lot of ideas on what could be done to improve Jackson's Landing and Woodridge Park.
- ARRC has drafted a survey, survey cover letter, and follow up post card. These items and additional information from Mike Ferguson were sent to committee members just yesterday.

- Joe expressed concern that the information seemed to suggest the survey would be distributed equally to Durham, Madbury, and Lee residents. Committee members agreed and Rachel and Cathy will follow up.
- Joe also questioned references to the Oyster River Community as the focus should be on Durham.
- Because the information and survey were received yesterday, Cathy asked that committee members review the information and provide input by April 30.

Trails Project Update: Rachel reported that Myrta attended her first Land Stewardship Subcommittee meeting. Myrta and Mike met to review the overlap and relevance of the committee to DPR. Rachel has reached out to members of the Conservation Commission in regard to partnering on Discover Durham Trails initiative.

Fees Project Update: Rachel, Cathy, Erin, and Tracy met on Zoom to review the data gathered relating to fees and registration priorities in other Towns. They group was going to get information on how Parks & Recreation revenues were included in town budgets, but that information was not readily available on the town websites. The group decided not to pursue that data for now.

Cathy asked whether the next bit of data should be related to what facilities other towns have for recreational purposes. Al indicated that lack of facilities limits Rachel and the revenue she can bring in. Rachel feels our fees are in line with other P&R departments.

Matt said even within towns the fees are all over the map.

The committee decided to have the group do some research on other town facilities. Rachel suggested we ask who uses the facilities.

Data Infographic Update: Rachel, Cathy and Gen met and put together a list of data points that would be good for the infographic. It was shared with the committee, and committee members agreed the list was good.

Revisit Meeting with Lee & Madbury Parks & Rec.: Erin suggested that we revisit meeting with Parks & Rec representatives from Lee and Madbury. Committee agreed to put this back on the table for a future meeting. Purpose would be to learn about their Parks & Rec programs, facilities, etc., and think about developing a 3-town master calendar. Rachel suggested we invite a representative to speak at one of our meetings.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, May 28; 7 pm.

Adjourn: Michael made a motion to adjourn; Al seconded. Roll call vote, 7-0. The meeting was adjourned at 8:33 pm.