



DURHAM PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, September 24, 2024
7:00 pm
Town Council Chambers



Call to Order: Cathy called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. In attendance: Joe Friedman, Al Howland, Matt Swiesz, Myrta Janosz, Erin Guyotte, Tracy Schroeder, Cathy Leach. Rachel Gasowski arrived a few minutes late as expected.

Approval of Agenda: Al made a motion to approve the agenda, Tracy seconded. Motion passed 7-0.

Approval of Minutes: Al made a motion to approve the August 27 meeting minutes, Erin seconded. Cathy noted a couple spots that were missing who made the motions and who seconded. She watched the DCAT replay and filled in the blanks. The minutes were approved as amended, 5-0. Cathy abstained as she was not at the August meeting.

Public Comments: No public comments

Roundtable:

Cathy reported:

- She was unable to present the committee report to the Town Council scheduled for Sept. 9. It has been rescheduled to Nov. 18.
- Gen Brown has left the committee due to scheduling conflicts. Erin was approved by the Council to become a regular member. We now have two alternate spots open.
- The Strafford Regional Planning Commission Active Transportation plan was forwarded to committee members at the request of Town Council member Em Friedrichs.
- Requested \$1500 for the committee's FY25 budget, same as in the past several years.

Joe reported:

- Spoke about the Town budget process, which is just beginning. Department heads have met with Administrator Selig and Business Manager Jablonski. Joe doesn't expect there will be difficulty in the budget requests for Parks & Rec. Lack of Town's growth makes it a bit more difficult to budget.
- Mentioned Cat Trax, a UNH and town supported bike use program. He's not sure people are aware of it or how to access the bikes.
- There is interest within the Town Council about the ARRC project. There has been mention of connecting a sidewalk to the rink.

Myrta reported on the Land Stewardship Sub Committee:

- Sara Callaghan, the Town's Land Stewardship Coordinator, has left the position, but will remain on the subcommittee.

- Trails updates: A new bridge will be built on the Sweet Trail. Roadside signs alerting vehicles that pedestrians may be there will be added at the Beaudette Trailhead.
- Discover Durham Trails walks coming up on 10/6 & 11/10. The first walk was well-attended.

Update from the Parks & Recreation Director & Upcoming Events:

- Fall programs are underway. Very busy.
- Gunstock Family Ski Program registration opens on October 1.
- Pickle Ball registration open, unfortunately will not be able to accommodate everyone due to popularity. They'll be held at the Middle School for the first session, High School for second session where there are only two courts.
- The school system informed Rachel that DPR can no longer use the middle school unless custodial staff are present. This particularly affected the AM Boot Camp. Fortunately, the Community Church has offered space once they need to move indoors.
- Rachel presented her 2025 budget request to Administrator Selig and Business Manager Jablonski and a few Town Council members. She is projecting a revenue close to \$300,000 for 2025.
- Rachel provided the following information relating to the number of participating Durham residents in Adult programs:
 - Pickle ball - 103 of 158 Durham residents
 - Adult pottery - 24 of 29 Durham residents
 - Fitness Classes with Kathy Kerrigan - 109 of 155 Durham residents
 - Boot Camp - 64 of 78 Durham residents
 - Tai Chi - 38 of 68 Durham residents
 - Yoga - 50 of 59 Durham residents
 - Pound Workout - 9 of 15 Durham residents
- Upcoming Events:
 - Downtown Trick or Treat Oct 26, rain date 10/27.
 - Frost Fest Dec 7, rain date 12/8

Business

Presentation from the Workforce Housing Task Force – Sally Tobias:

- Sally presented a power point related to a housing needs assessment and the work of the Housing Task Force. Briefly, the recommendation is that Durham add 455 affordable units by 2040 given the current stagnant growth. There has been a significant decrease in the 35-64 age group and a significant increase in ages 65 and over in Town.
- Al noted that housing facilities are inadequate for the demographic that is declining in Durham. He said that some of these properties have land that can link Durham through new pathways, trails, or sidewalks. Recreation facilities should be encouraged as part of new development.

- Michael Behrendt, Town Planner, indicated that passive recreation considerations (e.g. trails) are currently required as part of new developments and are fairly easy to build. Active recreation is different. Negotiating with the developers to build active recreation would require some give and take.
- Committee members asked whether the housing task force ordinances could require/suggest that developers do more than just trails in their planning, and possibly include things like small playgrounds, community space, etc.
- Al said that new development will put added stress on DPR so this is something we would want to encourage and leverage.
- Rachel mentioned that she would like to be sure the HTC zoning could encourage a broad range of types of homes that would bring in a diverse population. This would mean increases in families, older residents, etc.

Wagon Hill renovation project:

Rachel reported that resident Carolyn Singer had reached out requesting the committee support Option 3 regarding the planned renovation project at Wagon Hill Farm. Rachel had sent committee members information for each option from Rich Reine, DPW Director.

In brief, Option 3 is considered full scope, full occupancy. It includes the complete building, finishing of the barn, adding 2 bathrooms, and having full fire alarm and sprinklers. The overall cost is just over \$2 million, with \$1.3 million needed from the Town after the LCHIP and other grants are factored in. It includes renovating the barn to a 4-season facility.

There was committee discussion on Option 3 and the others. There were some questions raised concerning what the usage would be for DPR and the community, who would manage the space, plans for expanded parking, etc. Rachel will see if she can get more detail.

Joe mentioned that funding to support the project will be in the Town budget, and he recommended that the committee wait to see which option the Administrator endorses.

Rachel said that if there was space at Wagon Hill for DPR programming use, they would use it.

There was some discussion about the rink project, and committee members agreed that this seems to be a more comprehensive plan that would provide more cohesive program space and potentially DPR offices. It would also provide year-round usage.

Al also mentioned that the rink project is an investment that can bring in revenue and potentially support a bond.

Ultimately, the committee concluded that it would not support Option 3 at this time without knowing more about the planning, actual DPR usage, and answers to the questions that were raised.

ARRC project update:

Cathy provided an update from UNH Prof. Michael Ferguson from early September:

- 3000 surveys and reminder postcards sent.
- 60% of survey drops resulted in contact with residents and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive for DPR.
- Response rate to the survey is 17% which is above average for this type of project.
- Now that data collection is complete, ARRC will begin the data cleaning process, which is time-consuming. Report writing will begin as well.
- Final data should be ready in January 2025.

Joe asked if the final report will include a list of items to purchase, Cathy and Rachel indicated it would not. Cathy will reach out to Mike Ferguson again for further clarification. Cathy will see if Mike can attend the January committee meeting.

Adjourn: Al made a motion to adjourn, Tracy seconded. All in favor 7-0. Adjourned at 8:59.