

## **DURHAM PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE**

### **Meeting Minutes**

**Tuesday, January 28, 2025**

7:00 p.m.

Town Council Chambers

**Call to Order:** Cathy called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm. In attendance were Joe Friedman, Matt Swiesz, Myrta Janosz, Chris Gowland, Tracy Schroeder, Cathy Leach, and Rachel Gasowski. Myrta was a voting member this evening. Lynda Kuhne was a meeting visitor.

**Approval of Agenda:** Tracy made a motion to approve the agenda, Matt seconded. Motion passed 6-0.

**Approval of Minutes** – Tracy made a motion to approve the minutes from September 24, 2024. Cathy seconded. Motion passed 5-0. Chris abstained as he was not present at the Sept. meeting.

**Public Comments:** No public comments

#### **Roundtable (10 minutes)**

- Myrta reported:
  - The Town's new land steward is Veronique Ludington.
  - The Land Stewardship Subcommittee is looking at repairing trails and a bridge in the Oyster River Forest.
- Cathy spoke to the committee about our roles and expectations. There are currently two alternate positions open. She welcomed Chris Gowland to his first meeting. Chris is filling a regular position until April, with the hope that he will continue in a 3-year term after that.
- Cathy noted that Tracy Schroeder was highlighted in Friday Updates on board volunteerism. Thank you, Tracy!

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

2025 attendance has already started out strong with high attendance

Adult programing:

-Pickle ball, 4 levels. Limited space 2 nights at High School, 1 at Middle School. 6 sessions

-New: open play Pickle ball Sundays 9-11, 11-1 going into 3rd week at Middle School.

Registration fills up

- Boot camp, tai chi, yoga, strong bones and balance, strong registration
- Partnered with NE Sports Hub in Somersworth for adult golf, woman only, newbie, early bird - driving range, golf simulators

#### Youth programs:

- Seven Rivers program 5 days/week - almost full -lots of activities
- Local B partnership- after school boot camp
- Wheel house pottery partnership- offering another session starting next week
- Mad science after school program- almost full
- Teacher workshop field trip, one yesterday another in March. Went to Smitty's in Sanford
- February vacation week camp planned
- Gunstock ski program wraps up next week- weather has been unfortunately terrible. 58 kids in ski school sessions, 81 in pass only option

#### Discover Durham Trails:

- West Foss Farm highlighted next, looking for animal tracks and how it connects to other trails. Registration encouraged, not required.
- Numbers have grown, 130 people have indicated they are interested on Facebook.
- Full moon walk in Oyster River Forest in March, over 200 indicate they are interested. If numbers grow may have to require registration due to parking concerns.

#### Upcoming:

- Sweetheart skate Saturday February 8 at Churchill Rink
- Slush Cup pond hockey tournament
- Annual Egg Hunt - April 19 support from ORPP also UNH Hamel Scholars
- Registration for summer camps- Feb 19 at 7am. 9 weeks of camps are being offered plus 5 weeks of Reach camp for a total of 12 weeks of camp.

#### **Business:**

##### Churchill Rink Update –

- Rachel reported that the season will be extended 3 days due to HS state championship to allow ORYA to hold its tryouts. Closing date is scheduled for March 18. Bill Page, Rink Manager, is planning a celebration of Youth Hockey on March 19, and the ice will be out by March 20.

- Financial data indicates another record year with a \$132,000 net revenue. Learn to Skate program grew with 35 in the first session 65 in the second session. This program is led by a UNH student on the club synchronized skating team.
- Bill is looking at a Zamboni purchase after receiving Town Council approval.
- Rachel showed preliminary plans for the rink update/remodel. Bill gave a shout out to his great staff.

#### ARRC Update & Next Steps:

- Cathy recapped the work of the ARRC group in 2024:
  - 3 focus groups done in April
  - Population survey created and administered, including those w/Qr code
  - 454 completed surveys; ARRC directors are happy with that return. The breakdown of responses were 60% from Durham residents, 30% from Madbury, and 10% from Lee. 80% of Qr code driven responses were from Durham.
  - ARRC will have a final presentation in May. Cathy will check with them on the committee's role with input before the final report.
  - Cathy brought up whether the committee should begin thinking about next steps for the committee and Rachel (DPR) in terms of timeline and planning for actual playground design, equipment, funding requests, etc. Is there some of this we can anticipate before the final ARRC report? If we want anything in the CIP for 2026, Rachel needs to have that information in August at the latest.

#### Durham Day:

- Rachel asked the committee's opinion on the date of Durham Day and provided this context:
  - It's been 3 years downtown on a Saturday in early June. First year had great weather, but the last 2 years the weather was rainy and windy and the event closed early.
  - Rachel suggested the event be held on a Thursday evening in August, possibly Thursday, Aug 7. The committee discussed and supported Rachel on moving the Durham Day event for 2025 as a trial.

#### Committee Goals 2025:

- Cathy distributed a list of ongoing committee goals and asked for any additional input from the group.
- She highlighted the goal of data/impact reports & graphics and that it would be great to get that done this year so we can highlight all the Parks & Rec does for the community.
- Cathy also mentioned Goal 6 of promoting town trails awareness. Rachel suggested it might be good for Veronique Ludington to meet with the committee. She is new to the Land Stewardship position and has lots of ideas on trails.
- The committee ultimately thought the list of goals was reasonable but didn't leave much room to add more. Cathy will update the list for all.

Additional Comments: Myrta asked if there was any follow up in regard to the work force housing presentation. The Parks and Recreation made recommendations for trails, and community space in the developments to Sally Tobias of the Housing Task Force, as well as to Town Planner Michael Behrendt. Cathy will follow up again.

**Next Meeting:** February 25, 2025

**Adjourn at 8:30 pm:** Tracy made a motion to adjourn, Cathy seconded.

Motion passed, 6-0.