

DURHAM PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, March 25, 2025

7:00 p.m.

Town Council Chambers

Call to Order: Cathy called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. In attendance Erin Guyotte, Lynda Kuhne, Joe Friedman, Al Howland, Matt Swiesz, Chris Gowland, Tracy Schroeder, Cathy Leach, and Rachel Gasowski.

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

Approval of Minutes – Tracy made a motion to approve the minutes from January 28, 2025. Matt seconded. Cathy brought up that the approval vote of the 9/24/24 meeting minutes should be 5-0 as Chris did not attend the Jan. meeting. Also, the explanation of “net revenue” should be added after \$132,000 for financial the rink financial data on page 3.

The 1/28/25 meeting minutes, as amended, were approved, 5-0.

Public Comments:

Ethan O’Leary introduced himself, he is a UNH graduate student who is working on the UNH ARRC project with Dr. Ferguson.

Maeve Sogoloff is a UNH student observing the meeting on Zoom.

Roundtable (10 minutes)

Cathy thanked Joe for continuing to be our Council representative. Cathy thanked Al and Chris who have both requested to extend their committee terms.

Joe provided the following:

- A reminder of the Cat Trax free bike program in Town and at UNH.
- Two bike repair clinics: April 18 (location TBD) & May 2 (at Durham Public Library).
- Exeter voters approved a million dollar renovation of their community center and \$599,000 for a new parks and rec building.

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

- Summer camp registration opened on February 19 and almost full
- 9 weeks of summer camp June 23 - August 22

- Camps include STEM camps, themed weeks, field trips, outdoor adventures, surfing camp, Let Go Your Mind, and others!
- 5 weeks of Reach Camp: 35-40 students in Gr 7-8; 50 in Gr 1-4 each week. Numbers are up - there are wait lists.
- 16 returning camp staff this summer, since it's an experienced staff, Rachel and her staff felt more comfortable in increasing capacity
- CIT program (Counselor in Training) has 4 returning, looking to bring on 4 more
- Looking to hire 1 junior counselor and one regular counselor. Good # of applicants.
- Camps are portable and will be held at various locations: high school, Middle school, Churchill rink, Wagon Hill.
- Family Sweetheart Skate - 63 participants will reevaluate
- March 16: Slush Cup hockey tournament, 30 teams participated in 6 divisions. An all day and fun event.
- Annual egg hunt April 19 at the High School. In partnership with ORPP
- Rink officially closed on March 19. Rink staff hosted an event that acknowledged all OR skating sports that utilize the rink. Special guest was Swaggy P.
- Adult programs and After school programs continue to have good participation
- Partnering with Land Stewardship Sub Committee for three more Discover Durham Trails events. Such good participation that DPR will need to set up a pre-registration. Dates are: Thompson Forest April 19; Doe Farm May 18; Wagon Hill Farm June 11.

Business:

Veronique Ludington, Town Land Stewardship Coordinator, spoke to the committee about the following:

- An important part of her role is community outreach and education
- She is hoping to update the Town's online Scavenger hunt activities, as they are a good way to reach out to families. She will rely on DPR & the committee to market them as Land Stewardship Subcommittee doesn't have social media
- Would like to create handouts for each trail explaining the property and what one might see while walking the trail, such as 'Discovering Habitats.' Presented to the committee a sample – committee members agreed it was helpful and colorful!
- Shoreline restoration- will have a UNH professor speaking on it. Need to educate community about importance of project. Feels lots of outreach can be done over next 2 years
- Durham Public Library has asked that she do a talk on the trails. Date TBD.

- Would like to do a BioBlitz in the Fall. Community members identify and catalog birds, plants, and more. These events can strengthen the community's understanding of local habitats. UNH Extension can help. Get professors, biologists, etc. on the property to lead groups.
- Joe commented that the new boardwalks on Longmarsh Trail are great.

Discussion of e-bike usage on town trails:

- Committee had been provided information on e-bikes. Veronique said that Class 1 and 2 e-bikes are usually allowed on trails. Class 3 & 4 can go faster which are tougher on trails and there is concern of safety issues with walkers and are banned on many trails.
- Many parks do not recommend that people ride bikes in parks as it is tough on the environment. Sweet Trail is shared with the Nature Conservancy, which does not allow bikes. Land Stewardship Subcommittee is talking with partners and local communities to determine what allowances may be created for Durham Trails. Enforcement is difficult, and there are no solid conclusions at this point.
- Rachel provided more information, and the committee generally felt it appropriate that Class 1 & 2 e-bikes be allowed.

Woodridge & Jackson's Landing Maintenance

- The committee had been provided a list of maintenance needs and responses from Public Works on what could be done.
- Wood chips at both playgrounds will be spread by Liberty Mutual. They will also paint the Woodridge shed.
- Tennis courts need power wash but no running water at Woodridge. Committee wondered if the Fire Dept might be able to assist. Chris mentioned that the court sides can be slick and present a fall risk.
- Dugouts need a paint job, Rachel will reach out ORYA. Matt said that ORYA has a field clean up day, and thinks they may be able to do it. Rachel will reach out to the ORYA director.
- Chris had suggested to Rachel about possibly providing a sun shade at Woodridge. Rachel is looking into it, but it is expensive.

- Rachel & staff have taped temporary lines for pickle ball, she wants to paint lines with a stencil for a more permanent solution. She will bring more information to the next meeting for the committee to determine if it will spend some of its budget for this purchase. The tennis court lines would remain. The pickleball lines would be placed on six courts, and one court would be left strictly for tennis. Also need new nets.
- For other maintenance items, committee members agreed to assist if needed.

Committee Goals 2025

- Committee members had been sent draft of goals after the committee discussion at the last meeting.
- Cathy mentioned that she added Goal 4, Assist Director with Continued Parks Improvement Planning (Woodridge & Jackson's Landing). She explained this was so that we wouldn't lose sight of the work that will need to be done after the final ARRC report.
- For the data impact reporting, Rachel suggested that it be done as a series, such as quarterly, instead of all at one time. Al suggested that perhaps some data for the committee could include trends in recreation. The committee agreed with Rachel's approach.
- Cathy was wondering if we should have sub-groups to work on the specific goals of data impact and assisting Veronique with her projects, or what the committee members preference was. Tracy mentioned that she liked to help when she could, Lynda thought it might be a mix as some of the goals may take more time and effort. Cathy agreed that we all do what we can, in whatever way works for each of us.
- Rachel stated that our goals should be aligned with the Council and Town goals. Joe thought they were.
- Al made a motion to approve the 2025 committee goals. Tracy seconded. The goals were adopted, 7-0.

Next Meeting: April 22, 2025

Adjourn at 8:30 pm: Al made a motion to adjourn, Matt seconded. Motion passed, 7-0. Meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm.