



RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

March 3, 2020

7:00 p.m.

RECREATION CENTER, 50 AUDUBON DRIVE, ACTON, MA 01720

Present: Christopher Hardy, Commissioner; Hema Santhanakrishnan, Commissioner; Stephen Trimble, Commissioner; Joe Will, Commissioner; Melissa Rier, Recreation Director; Mary Lou Repucci, Recreation Office Manager.

Absent: Ed Holcomb, Commissioner; David Martin, Board of Selectman Liaison

Opening: Chair Stephen Trimble opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

I. Regular Business

1. Review of Meeting Minutes from February 4, 2020: Minutes from the Recreation Commission's February 4, 2020 meeting were reviewed and approved by a vote of 4-0, with amendments.
2. Reports:
 - a) **Fields and Facilities:** Melissa Rier reported payment of rental fees coming in from various leagues. The NARA Picnic Pavilion is expected to be completely booked for the coming summer by May.
 - b) **Rail Trails:** Nothing to report.
 - c) **Events:** Recreation presented a concert in February by Studio Two-The Beatles Before America at the indoor 50 Audubon Recreation Center. Due to significantly lower attendance this event did not do well financially. This summer's outdoor concert and special event series at NARA will start with the Classical Concert on June 17. This concert is free of charge, as is the Beach Party Blast, June 20, the July 4th concert, and Loose Connection on August 19. Remaining events will be priced at \$20.00 per ticket. Funding for the July 4th Celebration fireworks as presented in previous years is inadequate and will likely result in a shorter display this year. Cost of the fireworks is \$1,000 per minute. \$12,000 is in place from the Town's celebrations account, sponsorship by local businesses and matching funds from Atlas Fireworks. A 12-minute show is anticipated. Approximately \$30,000 is paid annually from the Recreation Revolving account to support the July 4th event. As July 4th does not provide Recreation with any source of revenue, the funding comes from fees collected for NARA Summer Camp, NARA Beach, Recreation programs, ticketed concerts,



facility rentals, and other sources. The COVID-19 virus and possible economic impact on Recreation events was discussed. Measures are presently being taken by Super Soccer Stars to protect children participating in its programs. A letter went out to all parents of children enrolled in Super Soccer Stars, and its partner, Amazing Athletes, detailing procedures to ensure public health with changes in equipment used and strict protocols for cleaning it. The Commissioners were invited to participate as volunteers in future Recreation events.

d) Community Preservation Committee:

- CPA Projects: A summary of the overall CPA grant process was given for the benefit of new Commission members. CPA grants were approved at the February 11, 2020 meeting in the amount of \$200,000 for the NARA Sports Pavilion and \$30,000 for a feasibility study for the Gardner Playground renovation. 2.9 million dollars in CPA requests had to be reduced to 1.4 million available for allocation.
 - *T.J. O'Grady Skate Park:* Last fall the bid to finish the Skate Park came in at more than \$100K over budget; the project therefore needed to be re-designed to fit within available funds. Since the simplified new design is different than the design approved by Town Meeting, approval is being sought to move ahead with this revised plan. The new design will include an ADA-compliant walkway into the park, re-surfacing of a damaged area, landscaping, and several features for skaters that appeal to a more elementary skill level than the current bowl. These added features will be made of pre-fabricated, weather-proof materials, not the more expensive concrete. Melissa has contacted skaters for their input as to what they would desire for added features. A beginner-level half-pipe is under consideration. She has also contacted Town Counsel, Nina Pickering-Cook, for an opinion about changing the project scope. The finished project is expected to cost less than the available funds with a large sum to be returned to CPC.
 - *NARA Picnic Pavilion Restroom:* Architect Andy Brockway is working on a bid package. It was explained to the Commissioners that the restroom is termed “modular” because it is pre-fabricated. Melissa passed around a handout with her notes, “Recreation Project Updates,” summarizing Recreation’s five capital projects. She emphasized that all of the Modular Restroom numbers are real except for the estimate provided by Jeanson Contractors. The possible use of the Recreation Revolving fund to pay for a substantial portion of the overall project (CPA funding is \$155,000) was discussed. If the \$237,000 needed to build is not available this summer, Recreation will apply for a CPA grant next year after demonstrating progress with its other capital projects.



- *NARA Sports Pavilion:*
The project is out to bid. The north building is slated to be finished by fall with an accessible restroom to serve The Miracle League of Massachusetts.
- *Jones Playground Renovation:*
The clothing drive raised over \$1,000 with 400 pounds of donations, exceeding its \$650 goal. The existing playground equipment is being removed by the Town. Lombardo Loam and Gravel Co., Inc. will donate the site excavation in exchange for keeping the loam. Melissa is working with the Highway Department to put in the parking area. The new playground is being funded in part by CPA in the amount of \$269,000. A citizen group and SmileMASS, a non-profit corporation dedicated to helping communities build accessible playgrounds, is attempting to raise additional money through grants. SmileMASS prefers a community build while Recreation staff think that because the project is located on Town land, it should be supervised by professionals.
- *Gardner Playground Renovation:*
Fundraising for this project by the citizen group, Friends of Gardner Field, is going well; a comedy night to bring in money is scheduled. CPC has awarded \$30,000 toward a Master Plan/Feasibility Study and two quotes have been obtained. The grant will be up for approval at Town Meeting next month. Questions under consideration are the parking lot size and location of the proposed splash pad.

II. New/Special Business:

3. Update on Revolving Fund 53E1/2:
Recreation will not be moving as directed by the Town Manager from the existing 53D Revolving Fund to a 53E1/2 Revolving Fund. The article will not appear on the April Town Meeting warrant. Melissa met with members of the Finance Department regarding the proposed change and presented the Commissioners' draft list of questions about specific consequences the move would involve. She shared the answers with the Commissioners with the conclusion that Recreation is not ready to move forward with this change. Recreation does not presently have a reliable system for tracking its revenue and expenses, and data available from the Town's Munis accounting system gives only a bottom line. Without detail as to expenditure allocation it can't be determined whether Recreation can in fact support itself to the extent that section 53E1/2 requires. The topic will be re-visited next year. Various possible accounting software programs were discussed that might provide a solution.



III. Consent Items:

None

Adjournment: At 8:45 p.m. it was moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved 4-0.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

- February 4, 2020 Draft Meeting Minutes
- Handout: Recreation Project Updates
- Handout: Recreation Commission Questions



Handout:

RECREATION PROJECT UPDATES

1. TJ O'Grady Skate Park – Phase II: \$191,937.42

- a. Recreation team has met, and decided to completely change the scope of the project.
 - i. Cement walkway with skate-able features leading to the park and on the cement slab.
 - ii. Removing the poorly conditioned cement pad and replacing it with new cement.
 - iii. Plant trees and landscape the surrounding area.
 - iv. Put up parking signs and replacing the current rules sign with a new one.

2. Jones Field and Playground Renovation: \$310,000

- a. Jones Group decided they wanted an inclusive playground after the CPA money was granted.
- b. The group is now fundraising on their own and has a deadline of April 2020.
 - i. The group has applied for multiple grants and has been receiving donations.
- c. Parking will be paved in the spring of 2020.
- d. June 2020: Construction for new playground.

3. NARA Sports Pavilion: \$318,241.27

- a. Project out to bid in February 2020.
- b. Contract awarded end of March 2020.
- c. Project completed in July.
 - i. Installation of septic system / leaching field – May/June 2020

4. Modular Restrooms at the NARA Picnic Pavilion: \$155,000

ONYX	\$68,434.78
ROMTEC	\$58,679.49
General Contractor	\$96,000.00 (Jeanson Builders Contracting, Inc.)
Tank	\$4,500
Architect	\$ 9,750
TOTAL	\$237,364.27

Onyx quote is for installation of septic tank and trench/pipework to tie into existing leach field, and concrete pad for the modular bathroom provided by Romtec.

Existing Funding:

CPA Grant	\$155,000
Rec Rev Fund	\$82,364.27
TOTAL =	\$237,364.27

- a. Architect contract signed.
- b. Go out to bid.
- c. Accept or deny bid compared to existing funding.
- d. If denied, go to CPC in the fall for the remaining amount.

5. Gardner Field and Playground Renovation

- a. Three phases of CPA:
 - i. Phase I: Master Plan/Feasibility Study
 - ii. Phase II: Design
 - iii. Phase II: Construction of Playground & Parking Area
 - iv. Phase III: Construction of Splash Pad & Bathrooms
- b. CPC awarded \$30,000 for Gardner



- c. Three quotes for a Master Plan/Feasibility Study

Handout:

Recreation Commission Questions re: Transferring 53D Recreation Revolving Fund to 53E1/2 Revolving Fund

1. If the stated objective of transferring the current 53D revolving fund to a 53E1/2 is to self-fund a fourth Recreation Department staff position, we would like to see a report of money flows in and out of the Department over the last five years and for the following five projected years.
Cannot do that due to expenses not being recorded into MyRec. We can generally show it from MUNIS.
2. We would like to know what percentage of the Recreation budget the anticipated salary and benefits of the proposed fourth staff position would require. How specifically would that expense be paid?
Unsure at this time.
3. What happens if the Department is unable to raise sufficient funds to cover the fourth staff member's salary and benefits? How will that employee be compensated?
There are no reserves for this position. Personnel would be laid off.
4. Is there any expectation to shift existing staff salaries and benefits to the proposed 53E1/3 fund in the future, and if so, exactly when? The Commissioners are skeptical whether Recreation can in fact support even one salary -- how then will it support four salaries?
Unsure at this time.
5. Are any other departments going to be funded in this manner?
Health and Building are already.
6. If the fourth salary cannot be funded, it represents a 25% reduction in Recreation Department resources, and yet additional recreational areas continue to be added, such as 53 River Street, [Dog Park, and Pump Track]. [The Fourth of July Celebration is growing exponentially, incurring considerable expense to Recreation with no revenue stream.] The staffing and management of so many Town facilities and activities under this department seems too much for a staff of three.
7. What alternatives are there? Is the proposed 53E1/2 fund realistic?
Unsure at this time.