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Town of Acton
Recreation Commission

AUG 09 2017
TOWN CLERK
ACTON

ROOM 121
ACTON TOWN HALL
7:00 PM

Minutes

DATE: July 11, 2017

ATTENDEES	Present were Ms. Carol Gerolamo, Commissioner, Mr. Stephen Trimble, Commissioner, Mr. Joe Will, Commissioner, Ms. Barbara Willson, Commissioner, Ms. Cathy Fochtman, Recreation Director, Ms. Mary Lou Repucci, Recreation Secretary, and Mr. Ed Holcomb, resident.
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TOPIC: CITIZEN'S CONCERNS

DISCUSSION	Nothing to report.
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CONSENT AGENDA

DISCUSSION	May 2, 2017 minutes
ACTION ITEM	May 2, 2017 minutes accepted as amended, 4:0.

ACTION ITEM REVIEW FROM MAY 2, 2017 MINUTES

DISCUSSION	None to report.
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TOPIC: ELECT COMMISSION CHAIR AND CO-CHAIR

DISCUSSION	Mr. Trimble was nominated Chair. Mr. Will was nominated Co-Chair. The slate was approved unanimously.
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TOPIC: NARA PARKING STICKER AND FEE PROPOSAL

DISCUSSION	Ms. Fochtman and Mr. Tom Tidman presented an overview of the NARA Master Plan, including history and future goals, to the Board of Selectmen at their May 22 meeting. Ms. Fochtman also outlined the need for a weekend non-resident parking fee at NARA to help pay for three park rangers and four parking lot attendants. (One of the park rangers was promoted to waterfront director; there are now two park rangers, although the new waterfront director continues to provide customer service.) The increase in staffing is key to maintaining order and safety as NARA visitation grows. Mr. Trimble asked about feedback received in response to the parking fee; Ms. Fochtman related an incident involving a non-resident objecting to the fee where police had to be called, but feedback from Acton residents has been overwhelmingly positive. Many residents have been asking for the non-resident parking fee for some time. Parking lot procedures and overall traffic control at the Park on weekends and during events were reviewed in detail. It was clarified that participants in organized events and users of facility rentals are exempt from the parking fee as are NARA Beach members. Mr. Holcomb asked if the parking lot attendants have a job description; Ms. Fochtman replied yes, and that the attendants are adults.
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TOPIC: NARA MASTER PLAN PRESENTATION

DISCUSSION	<p>Ms. Fochtman presented the final draft of the NARA Master Plan to the Board of Selectmen (BOS) on May 22 and answered their questions. The Recreation Commissioners have reviewed several drafts of the document in progress. Similar in format to the Open Space and Recreation Plan, it will be published by Lynn Horsky of Process Corporation and will be provided to the Recreation Commissioners with copies available at Town Hall, Town departments and at the libraries. It will also be posted online. Ms. Willson inquired as to the time frame and Ms. Fochtman replied that it covers the years 2016 – 2026.</p> <p>Ms. Willson asked what questions the BOS posed; Ms. Fochtman replied that there were no major concerns. The Draft Plan was shared with the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) which also did not pose any major concerns, although Ms. Amy Green did suggest adding the annotated NARA map.</p>
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TOPIC: DEPARTMENT'S MOVE TO 50 AUDUBON DRIVE

DISCUSSION	<p>The Acton Senior Center at 50 Audubon Drive is moving this summer to a new facility in South Acton. Ms. Willson described the new facility on Sudbury Road off from Route 62. When the senior center moves to its new location, the Recreation Department, temporarily housed at 33 Nagog Park, will move to 50 Audubon Drive. Proposed moving dates were discussed.</p> <p>The Recreation Department is excited about the possibilities for indoor program space at 50 Audubon, although a disadvantage is the distance from NARA Park.</p> <p>Ms. Maura Haberman, Recreation Event and Program Coordinator, has conducted youth and adult focus groups to see what types of programs the community would like the department in its new home to develop. A survey will be conducted along with other data-gathering. At the focus group Ms. Amanda Bailey, Acton-Boxborough Special Education PAC chair, voiced a need for inclusive opportunities. Mr. Holcomb related a news item about an accessible water park in another state. A spray ground for NARA is mentioned in the NARA Master Plan as a possible future amenity. Adaptive gardening was also discussed. Ms. Willson pointed out that Recreation has the opportunity to balance out the Town investment in opportunities for children by offering more enrichment for adults. Ms. Fochtman agreed that all ages are to be served.</p>
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REPORTS:

DISCUSSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Rail Trails – Ms. Fochtman reported the Assabet River Rail Trail slightly ahead of schedule, to open next spring. The Bruce Freeman Rail Trail is behind schedule but work will be carried out in the NARA Park interior this August. Eleven parking spaces dedicated to the Rail Trail are to be added to the lower parking lot near the entrance. Parking lot attendants will monitor the spaces which will be free to Rail Trail users. Mr. Will predicts a "bike incursion" next July Fourth.b) NARA Sports Pavilion – A grant proposal to help fund ADA compliance will be resubmitted for next year. Volunteers will assist tree removal in the parking area. Mr. Ed O'Neill will help install the septic system. Ms. Fochtman will meet with the Office of Michael Rosenfeld to finalize engineered drawings to put the retro-fitted buildings out to bid.c) Morrison Farm – A Community Preservation grant was received to install a well. Mr. Tom Tidman is looking into the electrical service to determine whether a second meter for the well can be added to the property.d) T.J. O'Grady Skate Park – A banner is being discussed to publicize the fund-raising effort. \$40,000 is still needed to fund Phase II. Crowdfunding is also under consideration.e) Playgrounds – Jones Field: Ms. Melissa Rier's fundraiser is bringing in donations from local
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	<p>businesses. CPC funding will be sought for Phase I including playground equipment and some amenities.</p> <p>Goward – Insulet Corporation will provide volunteers as part of a community service program. They will collect tree limbs that have fallen on abutting properties as a result of trimming. The limbs will be moved to a dumpster on Putnam Rd. Insulet volunteers will also spread mulch at the NARA playground.</p> <p>f) Community Preservation Committee (“CPC”) – Mr. Will reported that the CPC will meet this Thursday. Principal business will be to approve the 2018 Draft Plan. He handed out copies of “Section B. Recreational Resources, Needs, and Goals” (attached), part of a 50-page document relative to CPC funding.</p> <p>g) Rules for Drones/Model Aircraft – Ms. Fochtman received a call from Alan Yost of the Volpe Center wishing to use the School Street Field to test drones for feedback to the FFA about drone operator ability to visually track drones flying up to 300 feet. They were advised on how to obtain a permit to use the Field.</p> <p>h) Community Gardens – Progress at the Hebert Farm Community Garden was reviewed. Conditions at the North Acton Community Garden were also discussed. Ms. Fochtman has been approached by Ms. Kimberly Arms, of Benchmark at Robbins Brook, about donating an amenity for North Acton. Various options were discussed. Mr. Holcomb recommended emailing the gardeners for their input.</p>
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NEW BUSINESS/DISCUSSION: None to report.

MEETING ADJOURNED TIME:	Meeting adjourned at 8:55pm.
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**Supporting and referenced documentation relating to these minutes are available on the Docushare site: <https://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-1985>*

B. Recreational Resources, Needs, and Goals

The CPA statute defines recreational use as "active or passive recreational use including, but not limited to, the use of land for community gardens, trails, and noncommercial youth and adult sports, and the use of land as a park, playground or athletic field." The Town's priorities for recreational opportunities and facilities are documented in the 2014-2021 Town of Acton Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP). A key goal in that document is to improve Acton's recreational opportunities, recognizing the importance of adequate passive and active recreational areas as critical to preserving the character of the Town and the quality of life for its citizens. More specifically, recreation needs for the Nathaniel Allen Recreation Area (NARA) are documented in the 2017 Town publication, "NARA Park Master Plan 2016-2026."

Recreation Resources

Active recreation is a very high priority among Acton's youth and adults, many of who participate in the Town's athletic leagues. NARA and Acton's active recreation fields, not including fields on school campuses, make up about 63 acres.

CPA funds have helped to improve and expand opportunities for active recreation. Ongoing and recently completed CPA-funded recreation projects are:

- Acton Arboretum Fern Boardwalk replacement and tree removal (completed).
- Acton Arboretum Well, Irrigation, and Electrical Service installation to replace a failed irrigation system (completed).
- Acton Arboretum Cedar Arbor replacement, new Kiosk, and Culvert replacement.
- NARA Sports Pavilion construction to provide accessible concession and bathroom facilities for NARA patrons and users of the nearby Miracle Field, and office and storage space for Recreation and NARA staff.
- NARA Parking Lot Expansion to provide additional parking near the Sports Pavilion
- NARA Picnic Pavilion Restroom installation, to provide a facility close to the Pavilion for its patrons, and for NARA summer campers who use the Pavilion.
- Water Chestnut Removal by mechanical harvesting for the second of three years at two impounded sections of Nashoba Brook, Ice House Pond, and Robbins Mill Pond.
- A handicapped-accessible walkway along the west side of Ice House Pond. It will include a 680-foot boardwalk and one day will be part of a trail system that could link the Morrison Farm/Ice House Pond properties with the adjacent Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.
- Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Phase 2B to complete its 100% Engineering Design Plan
- Renovations to the parking area at Ice House Pond, adding a small picnic area adjacent to the parking area and refurbishing the nearby boat launch.
- Morrison Farm Well, Irrigation, and Electrical Service installation, to become independent of Town water supply and services.
- Phase I (Skate Bowl) expansion of the T. J. O'Grady Skate Park (completed). Funding support for the Phase II (Skate Plaza) expansion (not yet fully funded).
- Renovation of basketball courts at Gardner and Goward Playgrounds into modern, junior-size facilities.

Recreation Needs (many from the 2014 – 2021 OSRP)

- Move the Recreation Department into the former Acton Senior Center.
- Prepare for opening of two regional bike trails currently under construction in Acton.
- Provide background and support for the newly-formed Acton Dog Park Committee.
- For persons with disabilities, ensure accessibility for recreation activities (e.g., trails, picnicking, water-based recreation and camping) at both recreational and conservation areas.
- Improve and expand recreational opportunities.
- Prepare for and address demographic trends.
- Ensure playground facilities are up-to-date, safe, and accessible.
- Enhance the quality of Acton's athletic fields through improved, environmentally-conscious maintenance techniques.
- Optimize the condition and allocation of athletic fields to meet the needs of the Town's growing population.
- Acquire and develop pocket parks/commons in Acton's villages.
- Expand public outreach to better inform the public of available passive and active recreation opportunities.
- Improve communication with residents regarding facilities available, events, and procedures (e.g., for reserving fields and facilities at NARA).
- Improve communication and coordination with neighboring towns, such as information-sharing regarding procedures and coordination of similar events.
- Establish easier access to internet-based resources regarding Acton's passive and active recreational opportunities.
- Identify and communicate which of the 18 conservation areas are conducive to specific recreational activities.

Recreation Goals (many from the 2014 – 2021 OSRP)

- Relocate and centralize operations of the Recreation Department; provide equipment storage for the Natural Resources Department grounds crew.
- Expand universal accessibility to open space and recreation sites.
- Improve and expand the facilities at the NARA.
- Develop the Ice House Pond Recreation Area.
- Secure recreational indoor space.
- Improve and update existing facilities.
- Create additional facilities to meet the diverse needs of the town.
- Ensure playground facilities are up-to-date, safe, and accessible.
- Enhance the quality of Acton's athletic fields.
- Acquire and develop pocket parks/commons in Acton's villages.
- Expand public outreach to better inform the public of available passive and active recreation opportunities.