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Parks and Recreation Minutes 10/14/2003

Park and Recreation Commission Minutes

Tuesday, October 14, 2003 at 7:00 p.m.

Approved Meeting Minutes

The Park and Recreation Commission meeting came to order at 7:05 PM.

Commissioners Present: Joe Carabello, Leslie Mayer and Tom Caccavaro

Staff Present: Jon Jalbert,

Recording Secretary: Laura Munsey

Others Present: Alex Hoffinger, 66 Waldo Road, Arlington (Friends of Waldo Park)
Robin Dratch, 70 Teel Street (Friends of Waldo Park)

1. Welcome

Mr. Carabello welcomed the commissioners and guests. Mr. Don Vitters and Ms. Bernice Jones were not able to attend tonight's meeting. Both were out of the State on Travel. A quorum was however present. Ms. Mayer and Mr. Carabello stated that they prefer all future agendas and minutes be sent to them via e-mail rather than mail.

2. Minutes

Minutes of September 9th meeting were reviewed and approved with changes indicated below:

Ms. Mayer indicated concern regarding the following record in the draft minutes:

Page 2, Line 11 of September 9th minutes

Ms. Mayer remarked there was a large list of items presented. She thought the commission had identified 2 or 3 items, which should be approved immediately, but not the entire list.

Mr. Caccavaro indicated that he believed the commission voted to send the list to the Sports Center Improvement Committee (SCIC) for all the projects, but also to establish priorities.

Ms. Mayer indicated she would not have voted in the affirmative on the motion if it were to accept all the items on the list. She believed it was for prioritization by the SCIC not approval.

The Commissioners requested that all future motions be read back before taking a vote, which will be accommodated.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY MS. MAYER AND AMENDED BY MR. CARABELLO TO AMEND THE MINUTES TO INDICATE:

THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT THE SMOKE DETECTOR SYSTEM, EMERGENCY LIGHTING, SIGNAGE, NON SLIP GUARDS, HOT WATER HEATER, AND RADIANT HEAT GUARDS, WORK SHALL BE COMPLETED IMMEDIATELY AND COSTS INCURRED FOR THIS WORK SHALL BE FUNDED FROM THE GRANT.

Unanimous vote in favor of the Motion. (3-0)

Ms. Mayer also wants the record to note the reasons for her no vote:

Page 3, Line 17 of September 9th Minutes.

“Mr. Caccavaro motion to accept the [ice time schedule] proposal, seconded by Mr. Vitters. Approved 3-1 (Mayer no vote)”

The following reasons are noted by Ms. Mayer for her no vote: 1) She feels that the reduction in time block from 60 minutes to 50 minutes should result in a reduction of fees. 2) She also does not understand why Arlington’s game rate is higher than other surrounding towns, and 3) she does not believe that it is equitable for rink users to fund capital expenses through fees and not just operating costs.

3. Committee Updates

Friends of Waldo Park: Mr. Alex Hoffinger and Ms. Robin Dratch addressed the Commission. They told the Committee that 23 separate households are currently actively involved, and approximately 20 people attended a meeting last Wednesday regarding the renovation of Waldo Play ground. They have also had discussions with Selectman Jack Hurd regarding the process and funding. There are a lot of wonderful ideas, and the neighbors would also like to get additional ideas on items such as: how to reduce after hour loitering, prevent vandalism, etc., and would like to meet with the Police Department and others regarding these issues. They further indicated the police have been terrific, and have stepped up patrols at the park, especially at night, which has improved the condition of the park, and reduced loitering, alcohol consumption, and broken glass, etc. They are also planning a focus group for kids to elicit their ideas, and are discussing how best to meet the needs of dog lovers/haters. All are working cooperatively. Mr. Carabello asked if they are considering a dog park, and Mr. Hoffinger said it had not been discussed yet, and he doesn’t want to get ahead of himself. Mr. Hoffinger also asked how in the past neighborhood groups worked together with the town on such endeavors, what is their formal role, and how does the process work.

Mr. Carabello stated that the commission encourages the neighbors to be part of the process. It is the Boards responsibility however; to make sure plans are conducive to the community at large. The Neighbors, will work with the Architect and can be shown books, and designs, and types of equipment available. He also noted that the town is no longer going with wood structures and would like to keep similarities with other recent parks using Landscape Structures (as was used at Hardy, Cutter, Robbins Farm, etc.). The Friends of Waldo Park will make recommendations, present wish lists, and the Commission will provide feedback and recommendations, based on their collective experience.

Ms. Mayer indicated that there would be collaborative meetings held with the Architect, Park & Recreation Commission, and at least 1 public meeting scheduled to meet with the community at large. She informed Mr. Hoffinger and Ms. Dratch that some groups raise additional funds if they choose. It is up to each group how involved they would like to become. Mr. Hoffinger asked if there was a process to raise funds, and he was informed by Mr. Carrabello that donations could be made and earmarked through the Park Beautification Fund.

Mr. Caccavaro wanted clarification regarding the Architects Bidding Process and was informed that Bids will be sent out, and Mr. Vitters, also makes calls and invites Architects we have worked successfully with in the past to present a proposal. After lengthy interviews, an architect is chosen. Architects traditionally look for a percentage of the total cost. Mr. Caccavaro further indicated that the Architect would be qualified to address some of the neighbors concerns (i.e. placement of the structures, lighting, basketball courts, etc.)

The town has committed \$150,000 of CDBG funds of the Capital Plan towards the renovation of Waldo Park. \$92,500 was approved for the current fiscal year and the remainder should be approved the following year (according to Selectman Hurd, as relayed by Mr. Hoffinger).

Mr. Hoffinger had a different understanding that an Architect will be chosen in the next month or so. They will plan over the winter, develop priorities, and work might even begin as early as this Spring (based on the \$92,000 already approved).

Ms. Mayer indicated that Town Meeting does not convene until the Spring, and Town Meeting must make approval of the additional funds. She also believes based on the size of the project that this should only be a one-phase project, and not a two-phase project.

Mr. Carabello also indicated that funds need to be approved by the Attorney General's Office, and he doesn't want to get hung up on the additional \$60,000.

Field Policy Committee. Mr. Carabello could not attend, but spoke with Bill Gore of the Recreation Department, who gave him an update. Mostly complaints were made regarding maintenance issues. They talked about the possibility of getting an article on the Warrant at the Special Town Meeting being held on Wednesday October 15th, but it was made clear to them that the Town did not want to open the Special Town Meeting up to other issues, especially large issues. We will have to wait until next spring to address this. Currently there are no other scheduled meetings. Mr. Carabello will follow up with Selectman Hurd. Mr. Jalbert indicated that user groups are concerned with field use conditions, and issues such as day light savings time. It is dark by 6:00 – 6:15 pm, which doesn't provide enough time for practices, games, etc. Additionally, some groups are using the fields during rainy weather, and they are damaging the fields.

Mr. Carabello mentioned that after the issues last spring regarding user's fees, some user groups are now doing their own thing. He will follow up discussion with Selectman Hurd.

Ms. Mayer stated that she would like to see, a Master Schedule of all the fields in Arlington, and wants to know when they are all being used and by whom. She would further like this master schedule to be put on-line so that users groups, the Commission and the public would have better information about field availability.

Mr. Jalbert indicated that this request to put a master schedule on-line and to constantly send updates could become a difficult and time-consuming task. Permit schedules are changed frequently. He also mentioned that converting the Rectrac software to the web-site format could also prove difficult and would require further investigation.

It was agreed by all in attendance, that user groups all want the "newer/higher quality fields (i.e. Thorndike)" and are not interested in using some of the lower quality fields, even if they are available.

Mr. Caccavaro said it would be very helpful for the Park Commissioners, to receive; at least periodic permit schedules of fields, if they could not be posted on-line, and Mr. Jalbert said that could be accommodated if the Commission would like.

Ms. Mayer also inquired if all groups are paying their maintenance fees. Mr. Jalbert indicated that some have and some haven't. Mr. Jalbert will check the figures and report back to the Commission. When asked by Mr. Carabello if the projected \$10,000 - \$14,000 fees were still accurate, Mr. Jalbert replied in the negative because it was decided to reduce the fees. They were cut in half so he now projects only between \$4,000 - \$8,000.

Ms. Mayer was very concerned about the reported surplus of \$8,000 from previous years and wants to know what happened to it. She indicated discussions regarding this surplus were brought up at Town Meeting. Mr. Jalbert indicated an itemized breakdown will be available in the November Report.

Mr. Carabello informed the Commission that the DPW won't be attending on a regular basis, but only at our request. Next month Mr. John Sanchez, Teresa Benedictas, or a representative will come to the meeting with Prescription Turf Analysis.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY MR. CACCAVARO THAT A REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS MUST ATTEND EVERY REGULARLY SCHEDULED PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING.

THIS MOTION WAS 2ND BY JOE CARABELLO.

VOTED UNANIMOUSLY IN FAVOR OF MOTION (3-0)

Mr. Caccavaro also inquired what are the duties and responsibilities of the Park and Recreation Commission. He would like clarification of what jurisdiction the Commission may or may not have, and what is the charge of the Park & Recreation Commission.

Sports Center Improvement Committee (SCIC). Mr. Caccavaro reported that at the SCIC meeting there were concerns issued about saving any of the grant money (\$300,000) for a rainy day fund. The SCIC further voted to use all the grant money to fund the projects as referenced. Since then, however, the Arlington Fire Department (Mr. Wayne Springer) inspected the property and indicated that Smoke Detectors need to be installed, and various other safety issues (i.e., signage) must be addressed. It was also reported that it is not a requirement to have a sprinkler system installed. Mr. Jalbert has received one quote in the amount of \$22,000 for the smoke detector system, and needs to obtain 2 additional quotes. There was further discussion that perhaps this should be capital spending and not used from the grant money. There was discussion that the town is leasing the property, and it might be the landlord's responsibility (i.e. the State). Mr. Carabello believes, the State gave us the \$300,000 Grant for updates, and renovations, and we should use it for Safety Issues first, and then prioritize all other projects. He does not believe the State will give more money for the Smoke Detection System.

Mr. Jalbert was asked by Mr. Caccavaro if the town provides any funds to the Sports Center/Rink. He responded that the Sports Center is an Enterprise fund. It receives no money from the town, and has to be self-reliant. All money is raised through fees, and rentals. All budgets need approval from Patsy Kraemer, as well as the Town Manager.

It was further discussion by the Commission that the rink may be operating without a current lease, and this should be investigated further before complications arise.

Open Space Committee. Ms. Mayer reported the Open Space Committee would like to further the Stewardship Program. She also asked for an update on events being held at the Res. She indicated that it was raised at the Open Space Committee meeting that the Alliance for Animals had a fundraiser at the Res and nobody from the Conservation Commission, Reservoir Committee or Open Space Committee knew about it. She was asked at this meeting if the Park & Recreation Commission had issued a permit and why others were not informed. Mr. Jalbert indicated that he issued a permit. Mr. Jalbert was informed by the Commission that all Special Events should be voted on by the Park and Recreation Commission before any permits are issued, and that the Commission will decide whether or not a permit should be issued. Mr. Jalbert verified that [every] event must go through the Commission (i.e. Special Olympics @ Spy Pond, Police Benefit @ Hurd, Hershey Track Meeting or Walk for Cancer at the High School, etc.) He was informed that this has always been the policy. Mr. Jalbert indicated he was not aware of that policy, and would now submit all requests for Special Permits to the Commission for approval.

Ms. Mayer also indicated that in discussions with the Open Space Committee, Ms. Kraemer committed that the Recreation Department would keep a calendar of all events that could be posted on-line or on a bulletin board at each park where the scheduled events take place. Mr. Jalbert indicated this was the first time he has heard this and will discuss it directly with Ms. Kraemer. He has concerns about using his already limited staff, to manually post schedules at every park due to the constant changes in schedules.

Mr. Carabello indicated he received a letter from Marie Krapelka regarding a request for a permit for a Wedding/Reception to be held at Robbins Farm. Mr. Carabello read the letter aloud. Upon review of the letter it was determined that the reception would create many problems. The individuals requesting a permit would like the park until midnight, music will be played, and the event would be catered. Mr. Caccavaro indicated it would need coordination with the Police, Board of Health, and could be an issue for neighbors.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY MR. CARABELLO, THAT THE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION RESPOND TO THE BOARD OF SELECTMENS LETTER REGARDING A REQUEST FOR A WEDDING AT ROBBINS FARM PARK. THE COMMISSION WOULD ENTERTAIN HOLDING A WEDDING CEREMONY AT THE PARK, BUT IT DOES NOT FEEL IT CAN ACCOMMODATE THE REQUEST FOR A RECEPTION AT THE PARK. IF THE INTERESTED PARTIES WOULD LIKE TO PERSUE HAVING A CEREMONY AT THE PARK, THEY SHOULD COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION WITH THE PLANS, AND DETAILS, BEFORE A PERMIT IS ISSUED.

2nd BY MR. CACCAVARO.

UNANIMOUS VOTE IN FAVOR OF THE MOTION (3-0)

Mr. Carabello will reply to Ms. Krapelka on behalf of the Commission. He further inquired what Mr. Jalbert would have done with such a request. Mr. Jalbert indicated that in a situation like this he would have referred the request to the Commission or Board of Selectmen.

4. Capital Project Review.

Mr. Vitters was not available to report. Ms. Mayer asked Mr. Jalbert about the completion dates of the Robbins Farm Project. He indicated that Mr. Vitters has not yet updated him on the completion dates, so he is not certain.

Mr. Jalbert also reported that the DPW did provide him with a letter as to planned actions on several parks, and Mr. Jalbert read aloud pertinent information to the Commission.

5. Parks Department Update

Fencing Quote – Not presented.

6. Recreation and Rink Update

Res Beach Report will be presented at the November Meeting.

The Recreation Department would like to welcome Laura Munsey as the new Administrative Assistant.

Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park have raised and donated \$400 for the replacement of the vandalized park bench. They would like the bench to be in the same area as previously designed, and would like to know if the funds are sufficient for replacement. The plaque is being evaluated for approval.

The staff has been working hard evaluating exact fees for all the programs. They are looking at all administrative charges. Currently the Gibbs Gym is rented out for \$35/hour. Leslie Ellis School/Dearborn Academy often uses the gym without knowledge, and without being charged. Mr. Jalbert had discussions with Kevin O'Brien and Mr. Ted Wilson, who is the CEO of Leslie Ellis / Schools for Children). A meeting will be held to discuss this matter further. Mr. Wilson has said he will refuse to pay. A member of the Commission should be present during this meeting.

Currently there is no written policy in place for the Gibbs. The Commission would like to write a policy for use of the gym. The Recreation Department currently pays \$1,000 a month in rent to the Redevelopment Board. There was concern that program fees are being used to pay for capital improvements to the gym (air conditioners). The original charter should be tracked down, and analyzed before any meetings are held.

7. Other Business

Ms. Mayer was upset that she had learned that the Arlington High School's boy's hockey team was denied ice time for Captain's practices and wanted to know why out of town teams were being given priority. Mr. Jalbert indicated that was not accurate. He indicated that the AHS boys were offered time at 6:00 am. All other time slots were previously booked. He further indicated that they wanted two separate one hour slots, twice per week at prime time. Mr. Jalbert stated that 1) they didn't want to pay the cost of the ice time, rather they wanted to pay only \$5 per person instead of the hourly rate, as they had in previous years. He further indicated that last year he observed only 6-7 kids at several sessions. Ms. Mayer disputed this and said that she had witnessed 20 students in the past. Mr. Jalbert also stated that currently there is a full Middle School program scheduled during those "prime hours", and he didn't feel it would be fair to bump them, for only a few kids. 2) Mr. Jalbert stated that during these Captain's practices they would need adult supervision, which was not provided last year, and 3) They were offered ice time, but refused due to the time of 6:00 am. Mr. Caccavaro shared that approximately 5 years ago, 6:00 ice times were often given out and accepted. He further shared that he would also like to see Arlington kids get preferential availability to these prime hours.

Ms. Mayer stated that this was discussed last year, and the Commissioners were told it would be resolved. It was her understanding, according to the minutes of December 2002, that a subcommittee would be established and come up with a permit policy and procedure for ice time rentals. She said both Mr. Jalbert and Mr. Dan Brothers, told her that other out of town teams would not get preferred scheduling to Arlington teams. She would like the Board of Commissioners to set Policy for prioritizing who gets ice time and when they get it, since the subcommittee was never formed. She would like to see a similar policy to field use. She would like Arlington High Hockey to get first priority every Monday through Friday from 3:00 – 5:00, followed by Arlington Youth Hockey, followed by Arlington Catholic, followed by Adult User Groups, and lastly out of town users. She is further upset that the rinks in other towns can accommodate these captain's practices and Arlington didn't. She further stated she does not understand why the Town cannot accommodate a discount for the Arlington High Hockey Teams Captain's Practices. She stated that Mr. McKeown use to accommodate them. She also shared her concern that last year the Girls Hockey Team had to negotiate practice time when they made the tournament. She would also like all scheduled ice times to be listed on the internet, and for the Commission to be provided copies of all ice rental schedules.

Mr. Jalbert addressed Ms. Mayer's concerns and indicated that to accommodate the AHS Boys Captains practices in this instance, he would have to boot and reschedule all the middle school students that currently have that ice time (many of whom are Arlington residents). He also indicated he would have to bump Arlington Catholic if Arlington High get all the prime hours of ice every M-F from 3-5 or whichever prime hours they like. He further stated that both Athletic Directors from AHS and ACHS, as well as a Coordinator from Youth Hockey (who are the 3 major users) were invited to Mr. Jalbert's office over the summer and they collectively and collaboratively worked out a schedule, which was fair to all. They worked cooperatively between all three major user groups, and no one voiced concern at that time. Mr. Caccavaro indicated that Arlington Catholic has always been supportive of the rink and have given back in many ways through volunteer programs whenever asked. It was further stated that Arlington High has not always been so accommodating.

Mr. Jalbert further acknowledged there was one scheduling problem last year with the Girls Hockey Team, and he does not foresee this to be an issue this year.

Mr. Carabello is concerned with the ramifications of setting such policy guidelines. He is not sure if it is the Commission's responsibility to schedule ice time, and determine who gets discounts, and who doesn't.

Mr. Caccavaro believes that if possible, Arlington should get first priority for ice time, especially before out of town teams, but we also can't provide prime ice time for only 6-7 players, at the expense of others. He agrees that policy should be set, but would like some time to think about it in further detail. He believes if the Commission takes this step, it has to go all the way, or not at all, and be prepared for the fall out.

It was agreed that no vote will be taken this evening and it will be postponed until November's Meeting.

Ms. Mayer also wanted to know how we are enforcing the unauthorized use of fields without permits. She gave an example of an out-of-town group that has been playing on the fields at Thorndike every Sunday (with Referees), but have not been issued a permit.

Again, Mr. Jalbert indicated, he does not have the staff to police the fields, especially on weekends, and there is no town by-law to address this issue. Currently, if a permit has not been issued, anyone can go on public property, and use the field. The Police cannot enforce or prohibit this use, because there is currently no policy or by-law stating otherwise.

Ms. Mayer also brought to Mr. Jalbert's attention that when you call the Rink Information Line 781-316-3887, you get transferred to Sandy Whittier's line. It appears to be a programming error that will be looked into and corrected.

The Commission adjourned at 9:50 pm