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Parks and Recreation Minutes 11/17/2003

Park and Recreation Commission Minutes

Monday, November 17, 2003 - 7:00 p.m.

Approved - Meeting Minutes

The Park and Recreation Commission meeting began with a reception for Ms. Bernice Jones who served on the Commission from 1974 until October 2003. Selectman Kevin Greeley read a proclamation in Ms. Jones honor, Ms. Patsy Kraemer made a tribute to Ms. Jones, and Mr. Joseph Carabello informed the guests that in collaboration with the Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park, a bench, with a memorial plaque, would be placed at a location picked by Ms. Jones, in gratitude of her many years of service to the community and to her commitment toward preserving open space in Arlington.

The meeting came to order at 7:35 PM.

Commissioners Present: Joseph Carabello, Thomas Caccavaro, Nancy Campbell, Leslie Mayer, and Donald Vitters.

Staff Present: Jonathan Jalbert, Recreation Superintendent
Teresa DeBenedictis, Assistant Director Public Works

Recording Secretary: Laura Munsey

Others Present: Nina Fishcher, Carolyn Kenney, Deb O'Donnell, Julie Rackliffe Lucey, and Susan Ruderman (The Arlington Treehouse Coalition)

1. Welcome

Mr. Carabello welcomed the Commissioners and guests. A special welcome was extended to the newest member of the Commission, Ms. Nancy Campbell.

2. Minutes

Ms. Mayer presented the recording secretary with administrative changes. Minutes of October 14th meeting were approved.
(Unanimous Vote: 5-0)

3. Arlington Treehouse Coalition Presentation

The Arlington Treehouse Coalition (ATC) made a presentation to the Commissioners expressing their desire to create a non-profit, self-sustaining Community Center within the town of Arlington. They envision a center where families and friends can socialize, and a facility which will nurture and foster intergenerational relationships. They would like to provide areas and activities to encourage fitness, play space for citizens of all ages, an aquatic center, and a place where community education can happen. They further mentioned the need for quality day care for working families. Members of the ATC expressed their sensitivity to the current fiscal situation facing the town, and are investigating various sources of funding.

MOTION (made by Mr. Caccavaro) (2nd by Ms. Mayer)

THE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION ACCEPTS THE CONCEPT OF A COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY CENTER AND ENCOURAGES THE COMMITTEE TO CONTINUE THEIR EFFORTS. THEY FURTHER REQUEST THAT MR. JONATHAN JALBERT, RECREATION SUPERINTENDENT, MEET WITH THE ATC, AS WELL AS VARIOUS PARTNERS THROUGHOUT THE TOWN (SCHOOLS, BOYS AND GIRLS

CLUB, FIDELITY HOUSE, ETC.) AND DISCUSS A NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND POSSIBLE MASTER PLAN, AND REPORT BACK TO THE COMMISSION AT A LATER DATE. MR. CACCAVARO VOLUNTEERS TO REPRESENT THE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION AT THAT MEETING.

UNANIMOUS VOTE IN FAVOR OF MOTION (5-0)

4. Committee Updates

Field Policy Committee: Mr. Joseph Carabello reported that he talked with Selectmen Hurd to discuss reestablishing a User Group Meeting as a subcommittee of the Park and Recreation Commission. A January Meeting would be beneficial in order to discuss field use in the Spring.

Sports Center Improvement Committee: Mr. Thomas Caccavaro reported there were no meetings this month, however Mr. Jalbert is taking care of all the safety related items discussed at the October 14th Meeting. The emergency lighting has been upgraded, and the Sports Center now has Emergency Lighting in the compressor Room, Boiler Room, and all required areas of the facility. Floodlights have been connected. Quotes are being received for the installation of smoke detectors, and the heat has been repaired after receiving several refusals from Plumbers to provide quotations. There is still an issue with hot water circulation throughout the facility, and consultations are taking place. Safety Guards for stairs have been ordered and will be installed this week. A scoreboard has also been ordered and will be installed by weeks end. This was necessary to accommodate the High School teams who have rented the facility. The former scoreboard was functioning at less than 30% and would not serve the needs of the teams.

Open Space Committee: Ms. Leslie Mayer reported the Open Space Committee had a meeting November 5th. Ms. Mayer informed the Commission that several Friends Groups are forming a new committee called the Parks Coalition. They are in the beginning stages of forming, with the goal of pulling like-minded individuals together, to look at various and collective concerns. Ms. Mayer also reported that Ms. Rose Udicks forwarded a letter by Ms. Anne LeRoyeur expressing concerns regarding Crusher Lot (the woods behind Ottoson Middle School). Ms. Mayer read aloud the letter, which mentioned concerns regarding loitering, alcohol and drug use, and trash disposal. Ms. Mayer will talk to the group and suggest a land stewardship program, which might encourage neighbors to get involved. It was also suggested they work with the Police Department to set up a neighborhood watch. Ms. Mayer will organize a walk-through at a date to be determined and invited the Commissioners to participate. A possible clean-up day may be required, with assistance from the DPW for a rubbish pick-up.

Mr. Vitters suggested the Commission send a letter to the Arlington Police Department, as well as the Department of Public Works regarding this situation, and would like to forward Ms. LeRoyeur's letter as an attachment.

CPA Study Committee: This Committee is no longer active and should be removed from the agenda.

Friends Groups.

Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park sent a letter to Mr. Joseph Carabello, which was distributed to the Commissioners. The letter highlighted improvements that have been made by the Friends of the Park, and expressed concerns and updates regarding use of the fields for soccer practice, vehicular use at the park, mature trees in disrepair, maintenance permitting, and status of dogs unleashed at the park. The letter further thanked the former and present Recreation Superintendents for their work of installing memorial benches at the Park.

Reservoir Committee will have their next meeting on December 16th and the Consultant will come to discuss design work and improvements to the Reservoir. Many trees have been tagged, beginning at the parking lot, but it is uncertain who is tagging them, and for what purpose.

5. Capital Project Review.

Mr. Vitters reported that Robbins Farm is almost complete. The fencing has been taken down and a punch list has been developed

for completion in the Spring. He would like an intermediate rail added to the "big slide" stair railing to assist small children. Also there are clips on the wooden rails, which will need to be replaced, as well as various other punch list items. The Friends of Robbins Park held a meeting, and a letter was written asking why certain items have not yet been completed, such as the damaged memorial tree, and the setting of the memorial rock. Mr. Vitters will contact Mr. Roland Chaput and inform him and the committee of the punch list items required and the proposed schedule for completion. Mr. Jalbert informed the Commission he would withhold \$10,000 of the final payment to the Contractor, until the punch list is completed, and all work is approved. Mr. Vitters also reported that the latest Spy Pond Cost Estimates came in less than anticipated, and believes the Spy Pond Project should be constructed as a One Phase Project rather than a Two Phase Project. By doing so would save a significant amount of money. The Friends of Spy Pond have signed off on the plan, and Mr. Vitters will present the plan to the Commission at the next meeting. Mr. Vitters believes the project can go out to bid and all permits can be in place by next Spring.

Mr. Vitters also reported that there is \$30,000 in feasibility money ready to allocate for various projects. Locke, Waldo, Buzzell, and Crosby Tennis Courts are scheduled to be the next parks renovated.

MOTION (made by Mr. Caccavaro) (2nd by Ms. Mayer)

IN FY-2004, THE COMMISSION SHALL RELEASE FUNDS, (IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$10,000), TO PROVIDE A FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR A TOWN-WIDE, ALL INCLUSIVE, RECREATIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT.

UNANIMOUS VOTE IN FAVOR OF THE MOTION (5-0)

6. Parks Department Update

Ms. DeBenedictis, of the Public Works Department, presented the Commission with the plans for a fencing quotation at Thorndike Field.

MOTION (made by Ms. Mayer) (2nd by Mr. Vitters)

MS. DEBENDICTIS SHALL MOVE FORWARD WITH INSTALLATION OF A FENCE, AS PRESENTED, AT THORNDIKE FIELD MAKING CERTAIN THE FIELD IS INACCESSIBLE TO ANY VEHICLES OTHER THAN AUTHORIZED DPW VEHICLES.

VOTE UNANIMOUS IN FAVOR OF THE MOTION (5-0)

Ms. DeBenedictis also presented an Update from the Department of Public Works of the major accomplishments for the Fall of 2003. Hills Hill is in good condition with the completion of the loam and seed project. Magnolia and North Union will be Aerated with slice seed application within the next week, or two. Crosby field is currently closed and Deerborne Academy has been informed they cannot use the field. Crosby is scheduled for Aeration, new loam, 3,000 s.f. sod, slice seed the rest of the field. Irrigation will be watched closely. A new process of field maintenance will be provided at Buck field this year. The resodding process at Buck field will be tested and evaluated. Aeration has taken place at Hills Hill (deep tine), and also Thorndike. Fertilizing has taken place at various fields. Warning track repairs have taken place at several locations. Equipment purchases of a new sod cutter, and 2nd field marking machine have been made. Ms. Campbell inquired if the girls High School Softball Field is scheduled for regular maintenance and where on the priority list it falls. Ms. DeBenedictis informed her that no major repairs are scheduled, and remarked they are using the Pine and Swallow report as a guideline for priorities. Ms. Mayer inquired if the town marks the field located at the Pit for Arlington Catholic. Ms. DeBenedictis replied in the affirmative and further stated it has been a long standing agreement with the town. Ms. DeBenedictis also supplied the Commission with an update of all work performed by Prescription Turf Services. She further stated that with the future purchase of additional equipment such as a Bob Cat with various attachments, more work could be completed in-house, however chemical application would be serviced by PTS.

Mr. Carabello informed the Commission that although a motion was made and approved at the October 14th meeting to have a representative from the Department of Public Works attend every meeting of the Park and Recreation Commission, it will not be accommodated. However, a representative will make themselves available for periodic updates.

Mr. Caccavaro stated that he appreciated the efforts of the Public Works Department, and thanked Ms. DeBenedictis for her presentation, however he requested clarification as to the Commissioners roles regarding Maintenance issues at fields and parks. Ms. Mayer stated she believes the Commissioners are caretakers of the fields, but it is not the Commissions responsibility to micromanage the Department of Public Works. Mr. Carabello stated that it is important for the Commissioners to be informed of maintenance projects at fields, to respond to inquiries from the public.

7. Recreation and Rink Update

Mr. Jonathan Jalbert, Recreation Superintendent, reported he met with the Principal of Thompson School, Mr. Michael McCabe to perform a safety inspection at the Playground at Thompson School. There have been injuries reported such as a broken arm, and two concussions from children falling on the surface. Mr. Jalbert concludes the surface has become compacted, and does not currently meet safety requirements. He further recommends additional surface materials be added, with possibilities being triple wash fiber mulch or filled in with recycled rubber, which can be more costly. It was discussed that the town may have mulch left over from previous jobs, and Mr. Sanchez will be consulted regarding this situation.

Mr. Jalbert presented 2 special event permit requests.

- 1) Ms. Kelly Greelish, requested a special permit be issued for the use of Peirce field on June 18 and 19, 2004 for the annual Relay for Life Cancer Walk.

The Commission expressed concern regarding issuing any Permits for Peirce field due to the pending renovations. The Commissioners will require a letter in writing from Ms. Kay Donovan, Superintendent of Schools, stating that a Permit can be issued on the above requested days, and that it will not conflict with any scheduled work at that location. Mr. Jalbert informed the Commission he will contact Ms. Donovan, and report back to the Commission at the December 9th meeting.

- 2) The Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee requests a special permit be issued for a Bike Tour of Arlington and related events scheduled for May 16, 2004. They are requesting the use of Veterans Sports fields, various parking lots, tennis courts, and the Bike Path at Thorndike and Magnolia Field.

The Commission would like the Bicycle Advisory Committee to present a formal proposal to the Commission at the December 9th meeting, and include all requirements, requests, and details of this event. Mr. Jalbert will inform the Committee of the Commissioners request.

Mr. Jalbert presented the Commissioners with the Arlington Reservoir Summer Report for 2003. The report provides information regarding the reservoir facilities, equipment, programs, swimming, and staffing. Recommendations for improvements were also submitted. He reported that the Reservoir, as well as the North Union Spray Pool have been Winterized. Mr. Jalbert presented the Commissioners with a Gibbs Gymnasium Permitting Policy Draft, which he would like the commissioners to review. He is extremely concerned with the status of permitting at the Gibbs. The Recreation Department pays \$1,000 per month to rent the space, and pays custodial fees for the gymnasium. The lease of other tenants at the building is being re-negotiated, and they are requesting priority use during the school day. Recreation Programs run out of the Gibbs Gymnasium during the school day, and also permits the gymnasium to outside groups for a fee. A copy of the lease has been obtained and reviewed, however, it is not clearly defined in the lease as to whether or not the Gibbs Gym is totally under the jurisdiction of the Recreation Department. The Commissioners will not review the Permitting Policy until the Town Counsel and the Town Manager clarify if the Gibbs Gymnasium is under the jurisdiction of the Recreation Division.

Mr. Jalbert has previously met with Mr. Kevin O'Brien and will meet with him again, and will further set up a meeting with Town Counsel for clarification of this issue.

8. Park and Recreation Commission Role and Responsibilities

Mr. Carabello confirmed receipt of a memo from Ms. Patsy Kraemer, Director of Human Services, which provided information

regarding Roles and Responsibilities of the Commission. He further stated that Chapter 45 of the General Laws, which Governs Massachusetts Park Boards, governs the Commission. However, it becomes complicated because the Arlington Town Manager Act supersedes Chapter 45. Mr. Carabello referenced a Book provided to him by Ms. Jones, that he uses as a guideline, and he will try to obtain copies for all the Commissioners. It is the Park and Recreation Commission's responsibility to set policy, oversee capital projects, and set fees. Mr. Carabello believes it is not the intent of the Commission to micromanage the Recreation Division or Public Works Department. The Commission is further investigating if the Sports Center Improvement Committee is a sub-committee of the Park and Recreation Commission, as was the original intent. If the SCIC is an active sub-committee of the Park and Recreation Commissioners, a review of appointments is recommended, and authorization. Funds need to be dispersed for improvements at the facility, and improvements cannot be authorized until this issue is clarified. A review of memoranda from the former Town Manager, Mr. Farrington, as well as discussions with the current acting Town Manager, Ms. Galkowski, and Town Counsel, Mr. Maher, should clarify this situation. Mr. Carabello anticipates a January meeting, and will contact the parties to schedule this meeting.

9. Other Business

The Town Manager is negotiating the lease for the Veteran's Memorial Skating Rink. Currently there is no legally binding document.

The Commission adjourned at 10:50 pm