

## **ARLINGTON PARK & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING MINTUES**

*October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020*

The Town of Arlington Park and Recreation Commission came to order for its online virtual meeting via Zoom on Tuesday October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at 7:05pm.

**Commission Members:** Leslie Mayer, Jen Rothenberg, Shirley Canniff, Phil Lasker, Scott Walker, and associate members Sarah Carrier and Scott Lever. Recreation Director Joe Connelly and Program Supervisor Zachary Vaillette were also in attendance. Commission Member Scott Walker was not in attendance.

**Anticipated Speakers:** Diane Welch

**Members of the Public:** Lindsay Keach Bronstein, Elaine Backman, Jim Hampe, Josh Fenollosa, Sarah McDonald, Lily Chung

**Preliminary Matter:** Leslie Mayer, Park & Recreation Commission Chair, took formal attendance via a roll call. Ms. Mayer read a statement pertaining to Governor Baker's Public Meeting Law change due to COVID-19 regarding virtual meetings. Meeting business ground rules and procedures were also covered by Ms. Mayer.

### **Open Forum – Public Comment**

N/A

### **Off Leash Dog Discussion with Animal Control Officer**

As the Commission discussed at a previous meeting, there has been an increase of dog walkers in Town parks due to the current situation with COVID-19. This also includes an increase of off leash dogs. Several complaints have been received regarding off leash dogs, including from a mother who did not feel comfortable using park space with the amount of off leash dogs present. Discussions occurred previously with the Commission about getting information to the public about dogs on Town property, including specifics and rules regarding off leash dogs. It was decided that the Commission would speak with the Town of Arlington Animal Control Officer, Diane Welch, for advice and prior to sending out any information to the general public. Ms. Welch was present for the meeting and discussed the current process in regards to off leash dogs in Town. Citations can be issued to members of the public if they are not following the Town's Off Leash Laws, outlined in the Town Laws Title IV Section 8. This information can be found on both the Town and Recreation websites. Ms. Welch stated that contacting her directly is the best thing to do if an individual encounters someone not following these rules. She will be increasing patrol and enforcement. Ms. Welch will also be requesting that Arlington Police Officers on patrol contact her directly if they see unleashed dogs during unauthorized hours. It was stated again that more focus need to go towards getting the information out to members of the public and dog owners in Town. Ms. Welch does not believe extending off leash hours or having a process to certify if a dog is under voice command are options currently. Mr. Connelly reiterated that this issue has increased in the recent months with the current COVID-19 Pandemic. He shared that all communication decided on would be sent out through the Town Channels and A-DOG. Ms. Canniff shared with the Commission what she is currently observing at the Dallin School in relation to off leash dogs. Individuals are walking their children to school with their dogs as well. Once children are in school, they then allow their dogs to run freely on the fields. Shortly after, school groups are going outside to use the field and playground and off leash dogs are still in the area. She hears reports of this occurring at other locations in Town as well. Ms. Canniff stated that off leash dogs have never been allowed at Dallin. She requested if it is possible for Ms. Welch to stop by one day at drop off time to observe this. Ms. Canniff also suggested the possibility of school principals sending information out regarding this issue to families. Ms. Welch spoke on issues of dog waste being left in areas where children play, stating that this cannot be occurring. Ms. Mayer believes the voice of authority should be Ms. Welch. It was noted that Menotomy Rocks Park is not a dog park, as there are many users who bring off leash dogs all hours of the day. Mr. Vaillette asked if dog owners in Arlington are required to have dog license. This was confirmed, but it was noted that not all individuals follow this and also that some park users with dogs ar non-residents. Mr. Lever asked if only residents are allowed to have their dogs off leash during specified hours. Ms. Welch stated that it is open to both residents and non-residents. On a side note, Ms. Welch shared her concerns overall on unlicensed dogs, stray cats, and wild animals with rabies. Ms. Rothenberg suggested more targeted education in parks. Ms. Welch stated that she will work with Mr. Connelly and Joan Roman on getting information out on this through the proper channels. This has been a reoccurring problem and not an easy fix, but she will do her best to help spread information and enforcement.

### **Spooky Walk Exhibit at Menotomy Rocks Park**

N/A

### **Crusher Lot Scavenger Hunt**

Mr. Connelly reported that Recreation received a request from the Friends of Crusher Lot Group regarding holding a scavenger hunt event. Lindsay Keach Bronstein was present to speak on this request. The proposed event at the Crusher Lot would be a scavenger hunt for families to do together while they walk through the woods, anytime during a time period of several days. QR codes would be placed around the property and once scanned with a phone, it would direct participants to a link with clues. Ms. Bronstein stated the group is looking to hold (2) separate events, one autumn themed and one Halloween themed. Information on these events would be shared with the public through flyers and Facebook events. Ms. Mayer and Mr. Connelly stated that this event request is very consistent with the recent event approved at Menotomy Rocks Park. They like that QR codes will be used. Mr. Connelly will speak with the BOH and stated that similar guidelines to the Menotomy event will need to be followed if approved. Lilly Chung was also present and stated that the timeframe for the Halloween themed scavenger hunt would be a week and a half. She added that people would use the QR code clues and then take pictures of what they found. Photos can then be sent by families to the friends group, which they will then post some on the website. Ms. Rothenberg asked for more clarity on what individuals make up the Friends of the Crusher Lot Group. She likes the event idea but has concerns about posting the event information on Facebook, as it could be widely shared and attract more participants than originally anticipated. Ms. Canniff also agreed with this. Ms. Chung said that a Facebook event was optional and does not need to be done. Ms. Chung also stated that there will be no prizes for participants. Ms. Canniff and Mr. Lever both suggested this sharing this with specific schools like Dallin so the information can be sent in the weekly newsletter to families that live close to the property. Commission Members are okay with this request to move forward, stating that no vote was needed to approve the request. Mr. Connelly will work with the group on the COVID-19 guidelines that will need to be followed.

### **Robbins Farm Slide Discussion**

Mr. Connelly stated to Commissioners that he would like have a discussion regarding the (2) slides currently at Robbins Farm Park. Jim Hampe and Elaine Blackman of Friends of Robbins Farm Park were also present for this discussion. Mr. Connelly provided information on the condition of the current slides at Robbins Farm. Over the last several years, numerous repairs to the plastic slides have taken place due to damage from overuse and incorrect use. Mr. Connelly stated when a specific section of one of the two plastic slides was damaged or cracked, it needed to be replaced. Each time this occurred, it cost an estimated \$2,000 (labor included) to remove the existing section and replace it. Recreation was informed several years ago from the slide's manufacture that they would no longer be making replacement parts for this model. At this time, Recreation purchased several remaining replacement parts which the manufacture had, in order to have replacement section if needed. Since then, all purchased replacement pieces have been used and there are currently none remaining. Recreation has reached out to the manufacture again about possible replacement parts, as well as to other playground manufactures. The department has even inquired about making a mold for the part, but has not had any luck with this request or finding replacements. With that, the department no longer has or has access to replacement parts. Looking back historically, there will be the need to again replace a damaged piece some point in the future. Mr. Connelly stated that the Commission has submitted an FY22 Capital Request to replace both of the existing slides at Robbins Farm. If funding is awarded, it would become available in July of 2021. Recreation is requesting \$100,000 for the design and replacement of the current slide. The design process for the project would start at this time and from this point, would be at least a year until the new slides were installed. Mr. Connelly is currently concerned on how Recreation will move forward if a plastic slide piece breaks and needs to be replaced during this time frame. As recommended by Playground Safety Instructor, Jody Reale, both slides would need to be closed and plywood would be placed at the top of each slide.

With this feature being very popular and the potential safety concerns if the slide is damaged/closed, Mr. Connelly is proposing that (1) of the (2) slides be removed in the near future. By doing so, it would ensure the ability to keep (1) slide at Robbins Farm open until a replacement(s) is installed potentially sometime in 2022. The sections from the removed slide would serve as and provide the department with multi replacement parts in the event of damage to the remaining slide. The area of the potentially removed slide would then be covered with woodchips to create a safety surface. Mr. Connelly reported that the cost estimate to remove (1) slide and install a safety surface in the area was around \$6,000. While there will be push back from park users and the community on this, he believes this push back would be less than the amount of negative feedback that would be received in the event a slide is damaged during this time period. If both slides are kept in place, any damage in the near future would result in both slides needing to be closed. Mr. Connelly is looking to be proactive rather than reactive. He stated that he wanted to discuss this idea with the Commission and Friends of Robbins

Farm Park before moving forward with anything. Mr. Rothenberg requested that Mr. Connelly speak more on what the slope of the hill would be if a single slide was removed. Mr. Connelly stated that all existing hardware would be removed and that the area would then be filled in and leveled off, with a top layer of mulch serving as the safety surface. Ms. Rothenberg shared concerns about multiple possible safety issues if a slide is to be removed. Mr. Connelly acknowledged these concerns and stated that he is proposing this as it is the least expensive option. Removing both slides at once and resurfacing the area could cost up to \$25,000. Mr. Walker asked if the mulch would be covered in netting, as he is concerned about possible erosion. Mr. Connelly stated that the DPW is aware of this potential project. Netting made of burlap would be placed over the mulch to keep it in place. Ms. Carrier shared concerns regarding that this netting may be used as a climbing feature. Mr. Lasker suggested the possibility of placing hay bales at the bottom to help prevent possible erosion. Ms. Carrier asked about the possibility of using rubber surfacing as the safety material. Mr. Connelly liked the idea and will look into this option, but is unsure if this would be cost effective. Mr. Lasker shared with the Commission that there is a rubber matting product, ELayer, which can be ordered in various sized rolls. This option may be more cost effective than a typical sprayed rubber surfacing. Ms. Rothenberg asked Mr. Connelly how long a single slide could last if the other is removed. Mr. Connelly believes with (8) extra sections from the removed slide, Recreation would have enough replacement sections on hand until new slides are installed. Mr. Connelly reiterated that this agenda item was only beginning the discussion and that a decision on how to move forward did not need to be determined tonight. Mr. Connelly confirmed that from tonight's discussion, Commission Members are not against this suggestion but rather have concerns regarding the status of the embankment/possible erosion if a slide is removed. He will be reaching out to Jody Reale about the possibility of using a rubber surfacing and will also be requesting for her to attend the next Commission Meeting. Mr. Connelly suggested that Ms. Carrier and Mr. Lasker meet Ms. Reale on site to view the slide and assess potential possibilities, due to their professional line of work/experience. Elaine Blackman requested that in addition to cost and safety that the Commission also looks into the potential of vandalism, as issues have occurred there in the past. Jim Hampe stated that he believes removing one slide is a reasonable approach to keep one open and extend its current life. He understands the Commissioner's concerns regarding safety, but would like to see at least one slide open until the feature can be entirely replaced. Mr. Hampe also asked how long the removal process would take. Mr. Connelly stated about two days. Mr. Hampe requested the Commission make sure that the design on replacement slide has the potential to match/fit in nicely with potential playground upgrades in the future. On this, Mr. Connelly noted that he would like to see a medal slide with a shade structure rather than a plastic slide, so they avoid issues with consistent part replacement in the future. More information on this will come during a future Commission Meeting.

#### **Bench Donation McClennen Park – Mr. Otto Cordero**

Recreation received a Donation Request for a bench to be placed at McClennen Park. Mr. Connelly recently visited the site to look for a suitable location for the bench. He stated that there is an existing bench that overlooks the playing fields. The specific location that he is suggesting for placement is to offset the existing bench and place the donation between the bike rack and tree which overlook the first soccer field. A concrete slab would be poured for placement. The bench would be handicap accessible, match the color scheme and style of other benches on the property, and feature an "In Honor Of" plaque. The Commission had no feedback on this request and stated that no vote was need for approval. Mr. Connelly will be moving forward with the Bench Donation Request.

#### **Correspondence Received: Feedback on Reservoir Project, Playground Adjacent to Schools, Mask Compliance on Playgrounds**

Correspondence received from the public included feedback on the Reservoir Project. This feedback was noted and shared with KZLA. Several individuals reached out with feedback on the Town's current order regarding playground use. This order states that playgrounds adjacent to schools building will only be allowed to use by school groups on in person learning days from 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. These specific playgrounds should only be used by students attending in-school learning on their respective days and will be closed to the public during this timeframe. While some positive feedback was received on this, most was strongly negative. Some individuals believe that this order is not fair and that its time frame is extended too late into the day. A majority of the negative correspondence was specifically regarding the usage limitations for the Lussiano Playground at North Union Park, as there is an additional adjacent playground at the Thompson School. Members of the public, including families have chosen a full remote learning option, are looking to use this facility during the time frame restricted by this order. Mr. Connelly noted that changes have since been made to the order restrictions specifically regarding Lussiano. The Lussiano Playground will only be closed to members from 10:00am to 2:00pm days that in person school is occurring, reducing the previous daily time by (4) hours. It was also noted that all playgrounds outlined in the

order will be open to public all day on Wednesdays and weekends. Ms. Canniff stated that she has already seen improvements in relation to usage and the problems which were previously occurring. Ms. Carrier asked if information had been posted at playground sites regarding the order and limitations. No signage had been placed yet with the order going into effect only yesterday. Ms. Rothenberg followed up saying that signage should be in place. Mr. Connelly confirmed that Recreation staff would be placing signage at all playgrounds tomorrow included in the order. Additional correspondence was received on mask compliance on playgrounds. The Commission stated that masks should be worn when using the playgrounds and in areas where social distancing is not possible. It was noted that compliance and enforcement is a much larger topic and something that would need to be discussed/determined by Town Officials.

### **Capital Project Updates**

#### **Arlington Reservoir Phase 1 and 2**

Mr. Connelly confirmed the Reservoir Pump House has power. There was a several month delay on this and its completion will mark the end of Phase 1 of the project. As for Phase 2 of the Reservoir Project, an onsite walk of the path around the Reservoir recently occurred with Commission Members and representatives from KZLA. Members of the Commission found this to be very useful as it provided clarification on the site and current design plans. Mr. Lasker stated the site visit provided light on the erosion area. Pushing the path out further from the shore line will make it possible to not use rubber surfacing. By doing so, some smaller vegetation will need to be removed but allows them to create an 8ft wide footpath using stone dust. The alternative would be a 6ft wide path if they were to use rubber surfacing. Mr. Connelly stated that a Public Hearing on the Phase 2 Design will be held on at 7:00pm on Thursday, October 27<sup>th</sup> virtually via Zoom. Official Notices with information on this has been mailed to all abutters of the property. Mr. Connelly also stated that he will be sharing KZLA's most up-to-date design set and cost estimate with Commission Members.

#### **Feasibility Study**

Mr. Connelly stated that the contract has been signed with the design firm, Stantec, for the Recreation Capital Feasibility Study. Mr. Connelly will be meeting with representatives from the firm on Wednesday and Thursday of this week for additional site visits. A kickoff meeting, which included walkthroughs of all sites, occurred last week. Mr. Connelly stated this was very successful. He informed the Commission that he stressed to Stantec the importance of visiting all sites to assess existing conditions and to provide feedback prior to them moving forward with any design work. Representatives from Stantec will be present at a future Commission Meeting. Mr. Connelly was happy to report that the firm also anticipates having the entire Feasibility Study complete by the end of December, which is sooner than requested.

#### **Snow Melt Pit for Ed Burns Arena**

Mr. Connelly noted that work on the new snow melt pit at the Ed Burns Arena continues. Current project work does not impact the rink's operations. Work on the new snow melt pit should be complete within two to three weeks.

### **Task Force Group Updates**

In relation to the Playground Task Force Group, Mr. Connelly noted that a meeting will be taking place with DPW Superintendent, Michael Rademacher, to discuss park & playground related issues. Mr. Connelly noted that discussions on the proposed playground ambassador program will occur at this time. Mr. Lasker reported that the Mountain Biking Task Force Group is currently trying to schedule their last location site visit.

### **Recreation and Rink Updates**

Mr. Connelly provided the Commission with updates on Recreation's Kid Care Center for Remote Learning. This child care program will take place in the Town Hall Auditorium and now begin on Monday, November 9<sup>th</sup>. Additionally, it was noted Ms. Carrier will be sharing the Remote Learning Center program flyer and information with PTO groups. Mr. Connelly noted that Rink Supervisor, JJ O'Sullivan, was meeting with representatives from Arlington Youth Hockey to discuss various topics including rink operations in relation to COVID-19. Mr. Connelly gave the Commission an update on the current situation and plan for Travel Basketball through Arlington Recreation. Mr. Connelly would like the program to see the program take place this winter if it is logistically possible and in a manner that ensure the best safety of participants. The department is currently exploring several options on how to move forward with league representatives/coaches. More information on the plan for basketball this winter will be provided to the Commission and members of the public once it is available. Mr. Vaillette provided an update on the department's general programming, reporting that fall programs have been going well so far and that current sessions will be ending over the next few weeks. It was also reported by Mr. Vaillette that between fall and winter programs sections, over 1,000 participant registrations have been received thus far. Mr. Lasker asked the Commissioners on their thoughts regarding the setup of an outdoor ice skating rink this winter. This topic was discussed

amongst Commission Members. Items noted were the current situation with COVID-19 and if it was logistically safe to offer an outdoor skating rink. In a normal year, there has always been the challenge of maintenance of the ice surface. This takes a great deal of time/effort by individuals in a volunteer group and weather over the winter is unpredictable. In addition to these, COVID-19 presents many additional challenges and unknowns. Items discussed regarding this included on how the situation is constantly changing, what guidelines and restrictions will be over the winter, and the unknown of if volunteers will be interested to help manage the surface. At this time, Recreation does not have the staffing availability to have individual's onsite to insure proper usage and guidelines are being followed to ensure that all users are safe. Mr. Connelly will speak with other Town Department Heads and the BOH during the weekly COVID-19 Conference Calls. However at this time, Recreation believes it is very unlikely that an outdoor rink will be set up this winter.

**Approval of Minutes – September 22, 2020 & October 6, 2020**

The approval of the September 22<sup>nd</sup> & October 6<sup>th</sup> Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes was discussed. The Commission determined to table the approval of both Meeting Minutes to allow more time for review.

**Comments and Items for Future Meetings:**

- *Block Scheduling*
- *Afterschool and Preschool Program Review Period*

**Other**

- It was noted that the scheduled Park and Recreation Commission Meeting on Election Day, Tuesday November 3<sup>rd</sup>, will be moved. All scheduled meetings in the remaining year will be pushed back by (1) week. The Commission plans to continue meeting every other week as they have, with the next meeting occurring on Tuesday, November 10<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm remotely via Zoom. It was noted that the Commission will meet the week of Thanksgiving on Tuesday, November 24<sup>th</sup>.
- Mr. Vaillette reported on several messages from members of the public, received through the GovQA portal, which had not yet been addressed. These items were discussed and Mr. Vaillette will be directly contacting individuals with the information discussed on the suggestion/question received.

Ms. Canniff motioned to adjourn the meeting. This motion was seconded by Mr. Lasker. Motion to adjourn the meeting was approved by Commissioners, 5-0, at 8:54.

The Arlington Park & Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes were respectfully submitted by Program Supervisor, Zachary Vaillette.