

ARLINGTON PARK & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING MINTUES

March 9th, 2021

The Town of Arlington Park and Recreation Commission came to order for its online virtual meeting via Zoom on Tuesday March 9th, 2021 at 7:00pm.

Commission Members: Leslie Mayer, Jen Rothenberg, Phil Lasker, Scott Walker, Shirley Canniff, and Associate Member Scott Lever were present. Associate Member Sarah Carrier was not present for this meeting. Recreation Director Joe Connelly and Program Supervisor Zachary Vailllette were also in attendance.

Anticipated Speakers: Alison Swayne, Rebecca Rutta, and Ali Carter

Members of the Public: N/A

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

Correspondence Received: Dean Milite, Fitness in Parks; Mustafa Varoglu, Off Leash Dogs Mountain Biking; James Benn, Arlington/ Belmont Crew

Mr. Connelly briefly informed the Commission Members of these topics. These matters will be discussed later in this meeting or in future meetings.

Tufts OTD Student Project Review

Mr. Connelly stated that a former Arlington Recreation employee, Ryan Whitney, reached out to the department regarding this matter. Ms. Whitney worked for Recreation for several years and is now currently a faculty member at Tufts University. The proposed project would be in collaboration with the Occupational Therapy Department at Tufts University and Arlington Recreation. Two Doctoral students in the program, Alison Swayne and Rebecca Rutta, are proposing this project as their Doctoral Capstone Project. Ms. Whitney, who serves as the mentor for these two students, briefly discussed what occupational therapy is and introduced both students.

Ms. Swayne and Ms. Rutta each spoke on the collaboration project being proposed and why they believe it is a good fit with Arlington Recreation. Ms. Swayne began by outlining the importance of participation in play and recreation for individuals of all abilities. Through a holistic lens from an occupational therapy standpoint, it is evident that the Town is committed to inclusion. Ms. Swayne outlined how this project will look into Arlington Recreation's current practices with inclusion and accessibility for children with higher needs, both diagnosed and undiagnosed. She will focus on an inclusion audit of Arlington Recreation's summer programs including Kids Corner and Club Rec. It was noted that Arlington Public School's currently serves over 1,600 students that are identified as high need which includes individuals that have a disability, those who speak English as a second language, or individuals that are from low-income families. The current access to inclusion in these programs will be accessed thoroughly. Aim 1 of the overall project by Ms. Swayne is a Focused Needs Assessment. From this, aim 2 will be a Recommendations Report for inclusion accessibility/practices in future programs.

Ms. Rutta then presented to the Commission aspects of the capstone project that she would be focusing on. Mr. Rutta stated that she would be focusing on the current and future status of inclusion training for staff. She went on to discuss the importance of staff training and why inclusion training should be incorporated. With staff having inclusion specific training, individuals are more likely to have better attitudes towards inclusion and better response approaches. Without inclusion training, staff is more likely to lack of confidence when dealing with individuals with specific needs. Ms. Rutta will collect and analysis the data in a variety of methods including viewing staff trainings and documents, interviewing department staff and parents, as well as day-to-day data collection. Both Ms. Swayne and Ms. Rutta are both excited for this opportunity, as the project will help improve accessibility and inclusion in Arlington Recreation programs for years to come.

At this time, Commission Members were able to share feedback. Ms. Caniff noted that she is very excited about this potential capstone project. Ms. Rothenberg stated that the information from this study has the potential to benefit multiple departments in Town. Mr. Walker asked how the capstone project will be communicated to registrants. It was stated that information will be sent to all those who are registered. This will outline the project and its goals. This letter will also state

that they are looking for volunteers to interview/collect data from. A question regarding privacy (those interviewed and individuals in the program) came up. Ms. Whitney stated that this project will be submitted & approved by Tufts University. With this, there will be required privacy and consent procedures which will need to be followed to ensure everyone is protected. Individuals will have the ability to opt out at this time. Mr. Walker had questions regarding the staff training aspect. He also stated that through this project, improvements can be made which can ultimately help increase enrollment and who the program is offered to. Mr. Lasker noted that this is a great opportunity to make improvements going forward, as well information /data to have if the department is applying for grants. Mr. Connelly is very excited about the research project that will occur this summer. He will continue to work with Ms. Whitney, Ms. Rutta, and Ms. Swayne and thanked them each for their time.

Fitness and Art in Parks State of Emergency Program Extension

Mr. Connelly provided an outline on the Business in the Parks Program that the Park and Recreation Commission approved in the fall of 2020. With the impacts of COVID-19, this temporary program allowed Town of Arlington Businesses (Fitness Studios, Art Centers, Music Studios, Etc.) to use Recreation spaces free of charge to hold sessions/classes. Mr. Connelly stated that this program was successful and that the businesses which took advantage of this program were very respectful. The fall program came to an end on the agreed upon, first snowfall. There have been questions since then regarding if a similar program/opportunity would be offered to Town of Arlington Businesses this spring. Capacity limitations are still in place for businesses. This includes a restriction of 50% capacity in local gyms. With that and the interest of extending the program this spring, Ali Carter (Town of Arlington Economic Development Coordinator) was present as an anticipated speaker to discuss this request.

Ms. Carter stated that she has been approached by numerous businesses in Town regarding this. Prior to this meeting, Ms. Carter has been working with Mr. Connelly on a draft of what the spring regulations could be. It was noted that the proposed continuation of the Business in the Parks Program would be on April 15th with permit applications being accepted through April 1st. Some slight proposed changes were discussed. This spring, the program will not be free to businesses looking to participate as it was in the fall. There will be a \$30.00 application for businesses this spring. This fee will cover the costs to purchase lawn signs, which will be given to businesses to place out while using the park space.

Ms. Mayer liked the proposed changes, stating that the signs will address questions regarding who has been approved to use the space. Other than the rogue businesses not going through the permitting process/getting approval which these signs will address, Ms. Mayer stated that she had no other complaints. It was noted that Reservoir Beach will also not be used as a location this spring and moving forward. Ms. Carter confirmed with Ms. Mayer that many of the businesses interested in taking part this spring participated in the fall. Mr. Walker asked about the timeframe of usage and if daylight savings had been taken into account. Mr. Walker is looking for consistency across the board and also brought up group sizes increase from 10-25. It was also questioned if businesses would be required to take temperatures of participants. Ms. Carter responded by saying that all businesses would be required to follow the official state guidelines for their specific industry. Ms. Rothenberg asked about the workload impact this would have on the Recreation Department. Mr. Connelly responded that with interest being from mostly the same businesses as the fall, the permitting process this time around should only take a few hours. Ms. Rothenberg also asked about COVID-19 Guidelines and specific wording as the process goes forward. Ms. Carter stated that one example is capacity changes. They will evaluate and update COVID-19 protocols on an ongoing process. Ms. Rothenberg also questioned regulations on food and trash. Mr. Connelly stated that information and rules on these are included on the permit application, as the language is consistent with others like general park permits. Ms. Rothenberg requested that Ms. Carter check in with the Commission regarding the Business in the Parks Program. Mr. Connelly stated that he will be doing regular check ins on the program with Ms. Carter and will report back to the Commission with updates. It was also noted the program is written in a manner to be reviewed by the Commission at any time.

At this time, Ms. Rothenberg made the motion to vote on the renewal and continuation the Business in the Parks Program, as amended. This motion was seconded by Mr. Walker. The motion to continue the Business in the Parks Program, as amended and outlined above, was approved by the Commission 5-0 at 7:48pm.

Spy Pond Bench Gift – Soroj Kharagharia/Friends of Spy Pond

Mr. Connelly reported that a donation request has been received to replace a bench at Spy Pond. There is a wooden bench located near the playground at Spy Pond. This bench is over (8) years old. This bench is broken and the wood is rotting. The

department has received requests from the public to fix it, but it must be completely replaced. A donation request has been received from Soroj Kharagharia to replace the bench. The Friends of Spy Pond have offered to split the cost and provide the funding for the upkeep of the new bench for 8 years (total donation approximately \$3,000.00). Mr. Connelly noted that the replacement of the bench will be a big improvement for the area, as there are plans to replace the existing playground in the near future. The Commission discussed this matter briefly. Items noted were changes to the plaques design and wording. These changes will be written out. Mr. Walker asked about the agreement with the Friends of Spy Pond Group to provide the funding for upkeep over the next 8 years. With this, it was noted that the updated language and agreement must be put and writing and be agreed to/signed by the Friends Group. At this time, Ms. Caniff made the motion to approve the Spy Pond Bench Gift donation (subject to the updated language and written statement regarding the commitment from the Friends of Spy Pond Group). This motion was seconded by Mr. Lasker. The motion to approve the Spy Pond Bench Gift, as amended and outlined above, was approved by the Commission 5-0 at 7:54pm.

Capital Project Updates

Reservoir Phase II Building Project

Mr. Connelly reported that a meeting took place today regarding the building project at Reservoir Beach. The contractor is currently in mobilization placing the construction trailer and fencing on site. They are ready to begin work on this project. Mr. Connelly and Mr. Walker have been and will continue to meet with the contractor weekly onsite. Mr. Connelly noted some slight changes to the materials being used for the project (types of shingles, fans, etc.). The bids for the overall Phase II work are due on March 10th. Mr. Connelly noted that Orders of Condition from both the Arlington and Lexington Conservation Commissions have been added as Addendums.

Hill Hill Playground ADA project

Mr. Connelly reported that he would be meeting with KZLA next week for their first construction meeting on this project. The goal is for this project to be complete by early spring 2021.

CPA Requests & Capital Plan Discussion

No Updates to Provide.

Rink ADA Spectator Seating

No Updates to Provide.

Task Group Updates: Field Policy, Town Wide Playground

Mr. Connelly reported that the Field Policy Task Group and the updated Field Policy will be included on the Agenda for the Commission's next meeting on March 23rd, 2021.

Recreation and Rink Updates

Recreation continues to plan and prepare for all spring and summer programming. Mr. Connelly noted that the Department is not accepting/approving Picnic or Special Event Requests at this time.

Approval of Minutes – 2/23/21

The approval of Meeting Minutes from the Commissions Meeting on February 23rd, 2021 has been tabled until next meeting to allow for more review time.

Comments and Items for Future Meetings: Next Meeting March 23rd, 2021

- North Union Tree Planting Proposal – Tree Committee & Tree Warden 3/23/21
- Bike Rack Placement Recommendation Review - 3/23/21
- Field Policy Working Group Recommendations – 3/23/21

Other

Ms. Rothenberg made the motion to adjourn the meeting. This motion was seconded by Ms. Caniff. Motion to adjourn the meeting was approved by Commissioners, 5-0, at 8:24pm. The Arlington Park & Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes were respectfully submitted by Program Supervisor, Zachary Vaillette.