

ARLINGTON PARK & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING MINTUES

May 25th, 2021

Approved 3-0-2 on 10/26/2021

The Town of Arlington Park and Recreation Commission came to order for its online virtual meeting via Zoom on Tuesday May 25th, 2021 at 7:00pm.

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

Anticipated Speakers: Victoria Wright, Joseph Barr

Members of the Public: Ellen Cohen, Alan Jones, Elisabeth Carr-Jones, Beth Melofchik, Julia McLaughlin, Joy Ahern

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

Beth Melofchik was present on the call. During the section for Public Comment, Ms. Melofchik requested for picnic tables to be placed at Buzzell Field. It was noted that picnic tables have been at this location in the past. Ms. Melofchik also inquired if the raised trail bridge at Cooke's Hollow was done by Nishaad Vinayak. Ms. Mayer confirmed that this was not done by Mr. Vinayak, but rather by DPW or Conservation. Mr. Connelly will be contacting the DPW to inquire about the potential placement of picnic tables at Buzzell Field. Ms. Melofchik stated again that she would love to see them added back as it will make the area even more enjoyable.

Correspondence Received: Accessible Parks/Playgrounds (Grace Carpenter), Invasive (Elaine Crowder), SHC (Felicity Beal)

Accessible Parks and Playgrounds

Mr. Connelly reported on the Accessible Parks and Playgrounds Assessment to be completed. It was noted that the department will be doing a basic assessment of playgrounds in Arlington to see which are accessible. This comes following the IHCD report. Mr. Connelly will be working with the Playground Subcommittee to have individuals assess each playground location and report back. Ms. Rothenberg inquired about the format that will be used to assess features and materials. Mr. Connelly responded stating that this would be a basic assessment to identify which features are accessible. This will include accessible routes, ramps, swings, picnic tables, low movement features, etc. This will be a basic list and not go into specific guidelines or details highlighted in the previous playground study completed in 2019.

Invasive Species

Mr. Connelly reported that he is currently discussing with Emily Sullivan (Conservation) about the potential for a Town wide policy on invasive species. This comes following correspondence from Elaine Crowder. A Town wide policy in regards to the effort to remove invasive species in Town would be beneficial for mutual departments moving forward in terms of managing requests & volunteer efforts. This potential plan would include details for specific species and properties in Town. Information on the request process and training could also be included in this policy/guide. Mr. Connelly will provide the Commission with more details on this as the process moves forward.

SHC

Mr. Connelly reported that Felicity Beal reached out on behalf of Somerville Homeless Coalition to thank the Commission for allowing their overnight event to occur at Thorndike Field. The event was very successful.

Eagle Scout Project Follow-up Discussion – Menotomy Rocks Park – Nishaad Vinayak

Ms. Mayer reported that this will be discussed at a future meeting. Local Boy Scout, Nishaad Vinayak, is currently finishing his school year. He plans to report back on his proposed Eagle Scout Project at Menotomy Rocks Park in the coming months.

Special Event Requests

General Town Policy Moving Forward

Mr. Connelly reported on the Town's overall stance on special event requests moving forward. Beginning on June 1st, special event permitting will be allowed. The request process will look similar to the previous process prior to COVID-19.

Special event requests on park property will come through Recreation. Any large scale events will need to be approved by the Commission as it was done previously. Mr. Connelly noted that all small scale event requests will be processed/approved internally. Event requests will not need to be approved by the Town's BOH as all are required to follow the most up to date guidelines.

Arlington Soap Box Derby (Joseph Barr) – 6/12/2021 – Edge of Robbins Farm Park

Mr. Connelly reported on the Arlington Soap Box Derby Request. Joseph Barr was present to speak on behalf of this request. Prior to COVID-19, this event was held annually on Eastern Ave next to Robbins Farm Park. The group is looking to use the edge of the park as they have done in past years. Mr. Barr stated that he has already met with representatives from the Arlington DPW and Police regarding this year's planned event. He is hopeful that Select Board will approve the street closure of Eastern Ave for the event. They will be discussing this matter tomorrow. Mr. Barr said publicity for event will be limited. The organizers do not want to make this a large scale event and plan to do minimal advertising. The impact on the park will be limited and the group will clean up all materials. Commissioners shared positive feedback on the request and no questions were asked.

A motion to approve the use of Robbins Farm Park on 6/12/21 for the Arlington Soap Box Derby event as discussed was made by Scott Walker. Ms. Rothenberg seconded this motion. This motion was approved, 3-0, at 7:23pm. This approval is conditional on the Select Board's approval of the use and closure of Eastern Ave.

Boston Church of Christ (Victoria Wright) – 5/30/2021 – Menotomy Rocks Park

Mr. Connelly discussed the request received from Victoria Wright. Ms. Wright's event request is on the behalf of the Boston Church of Christ. The group is looking to use Menotomy Rocks Park for an event on 5/30/21. Mr. Connelly noted that due to current guidelines, the event would need to be under (150) people and no food would be allowed. Ms. Wright was present on the call to speak on this request. She stated that this event is for young professionals. They anticipate 60-80 attendants. With many individuals planning to carpool, Ms. Wright does not anticipate a major impact on parking in the area. Attendees will be instructed where to park (using both Jason and Spring Street), so all members do not park in the same location. Ms. Wright noted that the group is looking to have musical instruments and use of a portable speaker. The request is to use the space southwest of the pond, as this will provide a sound buffer. Ms. Mayer stated that no electricity is located in the backfield near the requested area. Ms. Wright stated that they will take this in to consideration and can move forward with acoustic instruments. Ms. Rothenberg wanted clarification on amplification, stating that there could be no amplification unless approved by the Commission. This was in regards to the potential use of a portable speaker. Mr. Connelly confirmed that all amplification must be approved by the Commission. Ms. Rothenberg asked if tables would be set up and if materials would be handed out to attendees. Ms. Wright stated that individuals will be instructed to bring their own blanket or portable chair. Mr. Walker made a note about the time of the event request and potential concerns for off-leash dogs at this time. He shared this information so Ms. Wright and the group is aware of this potential. Mr. Lever asked about parking and asked if APD would be notified. Mr. Connelly responded yes and that he will contact them. Ms. Mayer stated that parking is only allowed on one side of the street.

Mr. Walker made the motion to approve the Boston Church of Christ event for 5/30/21 at Menotomy Rocks Park as previously discussed. This motion was seconded by Ms. Rothenberg. The motion to approve this event was passed, 3-0, at 7:31pm. Ms. Mayer reminded Ms. Wright to bring the event permit in case any issues or questions occur the day of the event.

Carry In, Carry Out Trash Policy Discussion

Mr. Connelly briefly touched base on the requested discussion on a carry in carry out trash policy in Arlington. Ms. Rothenberg requested for the Commission to discuss this matter, which is a matter that has been brought to them in years prior. Ms. Rothenberg spoke on the strategic placement of trash receptacles at Robbins Farm Park. She believes that are more suitable locations on the property than the current location for the existing trash receptacles. Current placement requires the DPW to drive over playing field spaces, which can lead to turf damage. Ms. Rothenberg recognized that the Commission has made an effort over the years to place trash bins at park entrances. However, with the current lack of signage at entrances, it can be difficult to determine proper placement. Ms. Rothenberg would not like to see another year go by. She discussed the impact that rental users have in terms of trash. Changes made to rental groups in regards to implementing a full carry in carry out policy or making changes to pick up schedules could help improve growing trash problems at parks like Robbins Farm. Mr. Connelly agreed and stated that he believes Teresa DeBenedictis of DPW needs to

be involved in any major discussions or decisions. In her role, Ms. DeBenidicitis has helped oversee the coordination of trash pickup in parks for over (10) years. Mr. Connelly believes there may be reasons why the receptacles are placed where they are placed. Ms. Mayer agreed with this statement, stating that she thinks a carry in carry out policy could possibly implement for only special event users/rental groups. An example of this would be numerous pizza boxes left over at a park following a school end of the year party. Sports user groups and trash were also discussed. Mr. Walker stated that he believes changes need to be made to the language on the request forms, but also shared without a mechanism to enforce it or encourage it onsite, he is not sure if would effective. Mr. Walker suggested the possibility of making users pay a refundable deposit in the event a location is left a mess. He also agreed with Mr. Connelly's previous statement regarding identifying the best possible locations for trash receptacles to serve parks better. Ms. Mayer confirmed that this topic will be discussed at a future Commission meeting. In the meantime, Ms. Rothenberg will do research and look into the policies that exist in surrounding Towns. Mr. Connelly also stated that he would reach out MRPAs members for wording on existing policies.

Capital Project Updates

Reservoir Phase II Building Project

Mr. Connelly provided updates on current capital projects. It was noted that some building materials for the current Reservoir Beach building project are on back order, including materials to light the building. In the event that these materials are not received by the opening of beach season, Mr. Connelly believes that there is enough natural light from skylights to open the facility at this time. Ms. Mayer asked if the occupancy permit would be granted in the event that the lighting work is not complete. Mr. Connelly confirmed that the contractor can install temporary lighting if needed. Mr. Connelly also noted that Weston & Sampson are working on the pump issue. They are currently on track with the proposed timeline and receiving quotes for the designated solution.

Reservoir Phase II Site Work Project –Review Schedule

Mr. Connelly reported that SumCo has been great to work with. He noted that at each site meeting they review entire perimeter. Bank stabilization work has been completed at (2) locations so far, with (2) remaining. Pathway work and boat ramp work will begin once this stage has been complete. Mr. Connelly noted on the lines of site that have opened up and that the installed pump has been able to keep water levels inside the beach area at the desired level.

Mr. Connelly discussed the issues they have encountered with the new filtration system. The system is currently working manually but not to the level/manner where desired. This has been a very frustrating process and they continue to look for answers with beach season less than a month away. Mr. Connelly noted that they will continue to work with Independent Mechanical and Weston & Sampson to come up with a solution in the next few weeks. This will result in change orders and additional costs. Following information on an incident regarding an off leash dog and a child almost running into the street to go after him, Mr. Walker asked if the fence/gate to the parking lot would be reinstalled. Mr. Connelly noted that the contractor has been able to reduce the opening by 3 feet.

ADA Path Summer Street Complex

No update.

Other Projects

Mr. Connelly noted that the Department is waiting to hear back on a CDBG Application for \$250,000 which would be used for improvements at Parmenter Park in Arlington. It was noted that if awarded, funding would be available beginning in FY22 and that the project could begin next year. Recreation's FY22 CPA Requests have yet to be voted on at Town Meeting. Mr. Connelly also noted that following this year's Town Meeting, he plans to schedule a meeting with Capital Planning to discuss future funding for projects.

Hills Hill Unauthorized Trail Building Discussion

The previous discussed matter of unauthorized trail building for mountain biking at Hill's Hill was discussed. During a previous meeting, it was requested that all Commissioners visit the property on their own time to view the trail work first hand.

Mr. Connelly has also reached out to Town Counsel on this matter regarding the Town's liability in the event a user is injured on this unapproved trail work. Mr. Connelly noted that he was informed the liability is limited since there is no user

fee to use the facility and that warning signs are not posted. It was noted though if Recreation and/or the Commission identify something that presents a great danger to the user, then they would have the responsibility to take action. Sledding at Robbins Farm Park was also mentioned during this conversation. Mr. Connelly stated that the Commission has not yet identified that the unauthorized trail building at Hill's Hill presents an extreme danger to users. With not all Commissioners present and to allow more time for everyone to visit and access the site, this item will be tabled and discussed at a future Commission Meeting.

Parks Commission 2021 Meeting Schedule & Format for Remainder of 2021

Park and Recreation Commissioners discussed the format and schedule for the remaining meetings in 2021. It was noted that the State is looking to extend the virtual open meeting date to September 1st, but this has not yet been voted on.

The Commission determined that (1) virtual meeting, following the current meeting process, will occur in the months of July and August. This will occur on the 2nd Tuesday in both months. The Commission will determine their meeting dates and format for September and beyond when more information from the State is available.

Approval of Minutes – 4/13/2021, 4/27/2021, 5/11/2021

The approval of (3) set of Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes was discussed. This was for the 4/13, 4/27, & 5/11 meetings. It was determined that the approval of the meeting minutes for 5/11 will be tabled until the next Commission Meeting to allow for more review and edit time.

At this time, Commissioners shared their edits for the 4/13 and 4/27 meeting minutes. The motion to approve the Meeting Minutes from both the 4/13/21 & 4/27/21 Park and Recreation Commission Meetings was made by Mr. Walker. This motion was seconded by Ms. Rothenberg. The Commission voted to approve both sets of Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes, as amended, with a vote of 3-0, at 8:03pm.

Comments and Items for Future Meetings:

- *AYBSA Batting Cage Request*
- *Trash In Trash Out Policy*
- *Hills Hill Unauthorized Trail Building*

Ms. Rothenberg made the motion to adjourn the meeting. This motion was seconded by Mr. Walker. Motion to adjourn the meeting was approved by Commissioners, 3-0, at 8:03pm. The Arlington Park & Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes were respectfully submitted by Program Supervisor, Zachary Vaillette.