

## Minutes for Recreation Commission Meeting 8/2/2023

**Attendees:** Julie Halloran, Ron Richter, Robin Steele, Josh Smith, Nikki Taylor, Heidi Trockman

Meeting called to order at 7:04pm

Josh made statement regarding open meeting law per governor's executive order

Heidi made a motion to start the meeting; Ron seconded. Approval passed 4-0

Robin opened the meeting and welcomed all visitors; she made a statement regarding the 10-year plan and invited the public to comment and engage in the discussion.

Robin acknowledged the issues with playground funding and requested ideas for accessibility.

### Public Comments Summary

- "We have tried a variety of programs offered through the rec department, such as soccer, tennis, T-ball, Gymnastics, and more. At every single location we have been met with unreliable accessibility or complete inaccessibility..."
- At the tennis courts at Bedford high school there's no accessible path or accessible platform for viewing the court, and no accessible way onto the court. There are bleachers on grass and accessible parking spots are few, and all the way over at the entrance of the high school.
- Same with soccer, which was held behind the basketball courts at the high school. There are no curb cuts at all on that side of the sidewalk, no accessible parking spaces, and a large hill that is completely grass; soccer is at the bottom of that hill.
- T-ball was held at Lane school. There is a large grassy hill with no accessible pathway down to the baseball diamond.
- Gymnastics, which was held at the first church, had spotty elevator service, and the class was in the basement. "On three occasions, the elevator was broken... so my husband had to sit at the platform where the door is while he waited for us to come back upstairs." (Husband is in a wheelchair)
- Decided to unenroll from this program as we found this extremely frustrating and unfair
- What if a child with mobility challenges wanted to participate in sports? What if a disabled sibling wanted to come and watch their brother or sister participate in sports? Would one parent have to stay home while the other takes the able-bodied child to sports? This is very disappointing, and I hope to see significant changes.
- As for our town playground, the new sidewalks are great aside from a steep section on the right side.
- Concerned that the 3d plans put forth by O'Brian and Sons show only ¼ of the playground has accessible surfacing.
- At Simonds Park in Burlington and Davis school, there is some accessible surfacing, but it is completely covered with mulch, deeming it inaccessible.
- For true accessibility, the entire playground needs to be an accessible surface, with no mulch. Also needed are accessible picnic tables with an accessible path to them.

- “I hope the town, supporters, and those who opposed the bike path can come together to make these much-needed accessibility changes in Bedford at not only the town complex, but also every one of the schools.”
- Burlington and Lexington have adaptive swim and karate lessons; their therapeutic recreation specialists work closely together. Bedford’s new hire should reach out and work with them.

#### **Recreation Commissioners Comments**

- Ron agreed that every recreation program needs to be fully accessible. We can do better!
- Robin suggested reviewing all our existing resources to see what else we can offer. For example: are there any programs that can be moved to Zoom?
- Josh clarified his meeting with the Disability Commission and that the capital projects were already in place prior to his appointment a year ago. These weren’t specifically about accessibility, but about refurbishing.
- There turned out to be a surplus of \$30,000 and those funds were used for accessibility.
- That surplus is the reason we have the accessibility that we have.
- Nikki explained that the original funds that were allocated were for safety fixes; the extra was meant as a gesture to do something good, but it was misinterpreted.

Julie motioned to approve June 28<sup>th</sup> minutes; Ron seconded. Approval passed 4-0

#### **Summer Program Update**

##### **SA**

- One more week
- Everything going well
- Lots of outdoor help
- Had a successful carnival day
- Big thanks to high school for use of auditorium during hot days
- Long waitlists; handful of kids came off each week
- Peter is still managing program
- Recreation paid for all staff to be trained

##### **SBP**

- Record number of CIT (73!)
- SPB’s last day is August 12<sup>th</sup>
- Lots of off-season work; big thanks to DPW
- Will share final numbers when season is over
- Snack shack was re-opened; we ran out of slush
- More was invested in staff and lifeguards

#### **Concerts**

- Last week was cancelled because of rain
- First two weeks were the best attendance ever
- Rescheduled rain date is 8/10

#### **Fall Programs**

- 8/14 brochure available for online viewing

- Registration opens on 8/28
- Class schedule is dynamic; adding classes even after brochure is distributed
- Nikki is partnering with Lane School to start a science club
- Numbers are getting back to pre-pandemic levels
- Expanding Kid's Club to offer enrichment programs
- Strong candidates with degrees in Therapeutic Recreation have come forward for open position

#### **POPS Proposal**

Heidi motioned to approve the letter Robin drafted; Ron seconded. 4-0 approved

#### **Next Meeting**

Ron motioned to return to the in-person meeting; Julie seconded. 4-0 approved

Heidi motioned to schedule next meeting September 13<sup>th</sup>; Ron seconded 4-0 approved

Ron motioned to adjourn; Heidi seconded 4-0 in favor