

**PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING**

January 24, 2017

3:00 p.m.

Unity Park Fieldhouse

56 First Street

Turners Falls, MA 01376

**Present:** Dennis Grader, Chairperson, Barbara Kuklewicz, Vice Chairperson, Albert Cummings, Secretary, Jon Dobosz, Director of Parks & Recreation, Jennifer Peterson, Clerk/Bookkeeper

**Meeting Being Taped**

**Agenda:**

**1. 3:15 p.m. Meeting Called to Order**

**2. 3:15 p.m. Approval of December 14, 2016 Minutes:** Barbara Kuklewicz makes the motion of approving minutes; seconded by Albert Cummings.

**3. 3:16 p.m. Review of Massachusetts Open Meeting and New Public Records Laws**

Jon made sure all commission members had copies of the Open Meeting and New Public Records Laws. There are some procedures that need implementation; as Chairperson of the Commission, Dennis will manage the agenda during meetings and noting the times these discussions take place. Also, the Town Hall is considering starting an email pilot program where all commission members have their own town email to have transparency in all communications. There was discussion on how the town would handle commission members that sit on multiple boards; Jon advised them that the town is considering this issue.

**4. 3:22 p.m. Lake Pleasant Parks**

●**Rutter's Park Project Update:** On January 9 there was a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) meeting where Rutter's Park project was presented to be included in the FY 17 CDBG application. The application is due March 10. We requested bid ready plans and specifications for a total of \$57,400. There will be an additional hearing, Monday, February 13 for all CDBG projects. Barbara Kuklewicz wanted it to be noted in the minutes how well Jon did presenting this project to the board. Jon showed the commission the original colored master copy of the project to view as he was unable to get copies for the commission because of its 11" x 17" size. He will make copies available to them soon. The application process will be moving forward with this plan.

●**Norma's Park Update:** There were no updates.

**5. 3:27 p.m. FY 18 Operating & Capital Budget**

At last week's Finance Committee meeting Jon, Albert, and Barb were in attendance to discuss the minimum wage increase with the committee; desiring their opinion on the wage increase and how the town should be addressing this issue now and in the future. At some point the wage is looking to increase to \$15 an hour. Park and Recreation departments will have to apply for a waiver to not pay the state's minimum wage. This is somewhat different from what was being done in the past, when departments were simply exempt from the wage. The Finance Committee's opinion was in support of paying minimum wage, whereas if you want quality

employees, then minimum wage increases should be paid. There was discussion about how this could increase registration fees. Participation rates at this point are strong, but it may be an issue we need to address in the future. Jon agrees with the Finance Committee as long as the Part Time Wages Temp line item in our operating budget continues to be funded appropriately.

**6. 3:31 p.m. Sawmill River 10K Evaluation**

This year 158 runners participated, down 20 runners from last year. In recent years, the event averaged 168 runners. This decrease could be attributed to the snow storm that occurred a few days before the race, or the fact that it wasn't held on New Years Day but the day before. The lower numbers does not alarm Jon. He is considering not applying for official USATF sanctioning, stating the reason is that the amount of safety and security standards that the USATF requires for sanctioning are becoming very difficult for us to meet. Medical personnel must be on site, and at the very last minute this year we lost our coverage and could not find another person to stand in. Jon is currently looking into other 5K and 10K races to see if they are sanctioned. He has also communicated with runners to see how they felt about no longer being USATF sanctioned and he received "mixed bag" of results. He will continue to look into this issue.

**7. 3:45 p.m. Fieldhouse Sustainability Efforts**

Included in the commission packets was the assessment from Berkshire Gas with regards to heating and insulation improvement costs. This element of the sustainability program was priced out in terms of high priority/needs; with the highest priority areas being the ceilings/insulating the main portion of the building's attic. We are not at a point financially to move forward, so Jon recommends that commission revisit this opportunity next fiscal year. Eversource has not yet contacted us about the electrical upgrades. These updates could be done as soon as this year, as the building is under the management of the DPW.

**8. 3:50 p.m. Summer Playground Planning**

According to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health we are considered a Summer Day Camp and no longer a Playground Program. Playground Programs are defined by programs with children from the same neighborhoods. We have children in our programs from different communities. As a Day Camp, a multitude of different standards are required for appropriate operation. To our benefit, over the years we have built many of these standards into our program. Jon does not see this incurring any significant costs to our program. We will need a nurse or health care consultant to review our health records, medical laws, policies, and emergency medical plans. Gina McNeelly, Montague's Health Director, has been contacted to go over the standards. Administratively, this will be a big task but ultimately this will be good for the program.

**9. 3:55 p.m. Directors Report**

There were no questions

**10. 3:57 p.m. Director's Annual Appraisal**

The Commission discussed Jon's appraisal and gave their personal views on his job performance. Barbara spoke and said Jon conducts himself in a very professional manner, he's someone that is always looking towards the department's future and it's needs. He's very involved in the community and respected by other town's officials. Dennis added that we ex-

pect a lot from Jon, and he always exceeds our expectations. He also does well in open forums and the unexpected does not seem to upset him. Dennis did question if the Commission could meet independently of a meeting to discuss this appraisal; Jon said he would look into the Open Meeting laws.

**11. 4:07 p.m. Other Business**

- Playful City application for 2017 will be available February 1; Jon will be applying once again.
- Open Swim has not started, as we were understaffed with lifeguards. We hope to start Friday, January 17 as we have hired one lifeguard and following up on the references of a second.
- March 2 & 3, Jon will be recertifying his Pool Operator license.
- Massachusetts Recreation Parks Association Conference will be held in Worcester, March 13-15. Jon will just be attending one of those days. He informed the commission he has three things to recertify for this year and financially our budget cannot accommodate for extra days at the conference.
- For part of the day on January 26 and all of February 7, Jon will be out of the office for personal reasons.

**Adjournment: 4:11 p.m.**

**Vote: 3-0**

X \_\_\_\_\_  
Albert Cummings, Secretary Date

or

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Name & Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
Print

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

