

PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

October 26, 2015

3:30 p.m.

Unity Park Field House

56 1st Street

Turners Falls, MA 01376

Present: Dennis Grader, Chairperson, Linda Ackerman, Vice Chairperson, Jon Dobosz, Director of Parks & Recreation, Barbara Kuklewicz, Secretary

Guests: Barry Scott, Bryan Dolan, Anne Jemas and Eileen Dowd from Skate Park Committee as well as Zach Holmes, and Seamus Roche.

Meeting Being Taped

Agenda:

1. Meeting Called to Order 3:30 p.m.

2. Approval of September 16, 2015 Meeting Minutes: Barbara Kuklewicz makes the motion of accepting minutes; Dennis Grader seconded the motion.

3. Skate Park Project Update

There were a few items to be addressed before getting into the BMX Bike Policy; the first being the issue of supervision at the park. Jon checked with the town's insurance company M.I.I.A. on this issue, and M.I.I.A. states "in terms of protecting against liability it is better to not provide supervision at skate parks because it implies that a municipal representative could be enforcing safety rules, thus nullifying the "skate at your own risk" warning that should be posted." Rules should be posted and action should be taken if these rules are violated. There will be one large sign with the rules posted, and this sign will have to be approved by the insurance company. There was a question in regard to if we had a trial period for the BMX bikes, could the sign be modified if the language changed. Jon believed that this would be possible.

●BMX Bike Policy issue began with discussion around concerns over the pegs and the damage they may cause to the surface of the park. Bryan Dolan spoke about his experience on the subject and finds that most bikes tend to have bar end caps and plastic peddles may also be used. His research shows that the potential damage cause does not increase to such a level that the bikes should be band. He felt having some kids take on leadership roles would increase the success of the rules being followed. There was agreement that there should be a trial period at which the use of BMX bikes be revisited. Conversation continued regarding peg covers, costs of covers and possibly selling them from the park and recreation office. Eileen Dowd, Skate Park Committee and Town Meeting member, expressed her concerns in regard to allowing BMX riders into the park. She feels that the inclusion of BMX bikes was never communicated to Town Meeting members, and that they could cause damage to the facility. Questions were also asked about the signage and wording of the rules and regulations for the skate park. Jon said that he could look up the rules that were developed for the original park. It is Jon's recommendation that we allow the BMX bikes with provisions of plastic covers be used on the pegs, and if we see considerable damage at the end of this trial period we would reassess the use of bikes.

Motion: Barbara Kuklewicz makes a motion to agree with Jon to allow BMX bikes in the park with plastic pegs for one year trial period after which we revisit as needed. Linda Ackerman seconded the motion.

Vote: 3-0

Commission agreed to change the trial period to 6 months instead of one year. Also added to the motion was that both the Park and Recreation Commission and the Skate Park Committee would work together to develop the wording of the rules and regulations before submitting them to the insurance company.

●Construction Update: at this point the skate park is 50% completed. Work on the northern portion of the park was finishing up this week.

●Other business: Eddie Lawrence, project foreman, at a previous meeting brought the subject up of if the project goes under budget, how would that money be spent? Would this money be return to the town? Jon reminded the commission and skate park committee that fencing and signage still need to be taken care of. Bryan Dolan suggested the use of tile in the park; it was something the committee had discussed originally this but felt it wasn't a necessity. Linda Ackerman did not feel a motion should be made on this subject until we talked to our town accountant, Carolyn Olsen. This will be discussed in a future meeting.

4. Norma's/Rutter's Park Project Update

Jon is still communicating with the Franklin County Regional Housing Authority to schedule a meeting in Lake Pleasant, but as of this date none has been scheduled.

5. Summer Programs P/L Statements

Jon reported the Summer Playground had a busy summer with the number of campers up from previous years. Financially this program did take a hit; we hoped the increase in our operating budget would balance out the increase to minimum wage. The cost of transportation and counselor wages is the biggest expenses for the program. There were no unusual expenses otherwise. Jon just received the budget request for FY 17'and recommends the same type of request as last year in regard to the minimum wage increase and how we manage that increase. He feels that we will need to increase our fees by \$5. We are still one of the least expensive programs in the area. Linda Ackerman questions the decrease in campers for week 5, and Jon said that it is very common for this decrease as families begin taking vacations and sports camp begin. The Snack Shack losses were high, but having this building open later in the evening and for the adult softball league is an important community service. The Adult Softball league also suffered losses and an increase in of \$25-\$50 per team maybe necessary next year. Jon would like to see concessions sold during their tournament weekend; this could possibly offset some of the snack shack losses. It was explained to the commission that the Administration Fee for each program was to cover expenses such as printing and our Sportsman computer program. There were no further questions.

6. Whale Spray Feature Usage

Tabled until we receive a bill from the Turners Falls Water Department.

7. Open Swim Rates

The rates have not had an increase in years, but it seems the time has come to do so. Jon provided three options for an increase in fee with the fourth option being no increase in fees. This program will never be profitable for the department but the deficit still needs to be reduced. Jon did write a letter to the school/facility manager to possibility increase the pool water temperature to 78^o, and they seemed receptive to this idea as cold water seems to be a common complaint from the community.

Motion: Barbara Kuklewicz makes the motion of accepting Option 1 with an increase of .50 cent per individual. Linda Ackerman seconded the motion.

Vote: 3-0

8. Directors Report

There were no questions.

9. Other Business

Jon requested the week of Thanksgiving off for vacation.

10. Adjournment: 4:30 p.m.

Please note the recorder was unable to clearly pick up comments made by some meeting guests.

