

LACONIA PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING
May 18, 2020
Zoom Platform
7:00 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER: Commissioner Mitch Hamel called the meeting to order at the above date and time and read the introduction about the electronic meeting.

RECORDING SECRETARY: Secretary Liza Kelleher recorded this meeting.

ROLL CALL: Director of Recreation and Facilities Amy Lovisek called the roll with the following Commissioners in attendance: Mitch Hamel (chairperson), Rodney Roy, Tony Pederzani, Deanna Guyer and Arthur Kirk.

PARKS AND RECREATION STAFF PRESENT: Director of Recreation and Facilities Amy Lovisek, asst. Director of Recreation and Facilities Matthew Mansur and Secretary Liza Kelleher.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS:

1. Regular meeting minutes of April 21, 2020

Commissioner Roy moved to adopt the minutes from February 18, 2020. Seconded by Commissioner Pederzani. The motion pass unanimously.

I. FACILITY USE REQUEST FORM:

- A. American Cancer Society Inc.- Opechee Parkhouse and Opechee Field- September 29 through October 4, 2020 Tuesday through Saturday from 5:00pm to 9:00pm and Sunday from 9:00am to 3:00pm for Making Strides Against Breast Cancer walk. Commissioner Roy motioned to accept the request for the event pending upon the approval of special event board, special event fee of \$100.00, submission of the certificate of insurance and City Council approval for fundraising on City parkland. Key deposit of \$25.00 is required if needed. Seconded by Commissioner Guyer. All were in favor.
- B. Yoga from the Heart/Sheryl Gauthier- WOW Trail- September 5, 2020 Saturday from 9:00am for Paul Gauthier Memorial Scholarship 5K. Commissioner Pederzani motioned to accept the request for the event pending upon the payment of \$100.00 special event fee, submission of the certificate of insurance and City Council approval for fundraising on City parkland. Seconded by Commissioner Roy. All were in favor.

II. OLD BUSINESS:

- A. Holbrook Insurance & JG Realty- Opechee Park Field – September 19, 2020, Saturday from 9:00am to 5:00pm for the first annual Boggin N Braggin Cornhole Championship. Commissioner Roy motioned to remove the request from the table. Seconded by Commissioner Guyer. All were in favor.
- B. Acton Academy NH/NH Children’s Business Fair- Opechee Park Smith Field- Saturday August 8, 2020 from 8:30am to 2:00pm for NH Children’s Business Fair. Commissioner Kirk motioned to accept the request pending upon the submission of the certificate of

insurance. Special event fee has been waived. Seconded by Commissioner Pederzani. All were in favor.

- C. Recoverydia- Weirs Community Park Amphitheater and Pavilion- Saturday, August 29, 2020 from 6:00pm to 9:00pm for 10,000 candles for New Hampshire. Commissioner Roy motion to table the request due to no representation. Seconded by Commissioner Guyer. All were in favor.
- D. Muskrats Contract- Muskrats are in the process of signing the contract. The 2020 season and the summer camp has been cancelled. The Seniors Muskrats are considering doing the adult baseball games and tournament event once the field are available to use.
- E. Expectations for clean up after events. Nothing available at this moment. To be discuss in our next Commission meeting.
- F. Election of Officials- To be discuss in our next Commission meeting.

III. ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVALS-ROTARY PARK, BEACHES, WEIRS AMPHITHEATER & PAVILION

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

1. Administrative Approvals with regards to Coronavirus- If there is a facility use request in place and the group cannot hold the event due to COVID-19 they can be rescheduled and approved administratively, any conflicts in scheduling will be handled administratively as well.
2. Request for no grills- Tony Felch sent an email from a constituent who reached out to him and suggested not to allow any grills specifically at Weirs Beach to limit the desire for people to gather there. The Parks and Recreation Rules and Regulations apply to all the City Parks and we can't accommodate this request.
3. Summer plans for parks due to COVID-19
 - Beaches- Commissioner Hamel said that at this moment it's hard to plan, and we are watching on a day to day basis. Weirs Beach is funded through WLCF and should be open to anybody and will be a big challenge for us on how to handle the influx of people coming to this beach. Opening the beach is under the guidance and compliance of the state. The other option is to shut it down for a while, it's impossible to social distance if the weather is good. If large groups will be showing up at the beach the Police will be called to assist us. We also may get to a point we want to limit the capacity. This will also see some difficulty, but not insurmountable.
 - Other Parks- Parks are open for walking, running and biking to practice social distancing. We are still following the decisions from the governor and waiting to see what the states allow and not allow at this time. Each facility will be handled on a case by case basis if restrictions are not abided.
 - Camp- The safety of our campers and staff is the priority given the uncertainty of Covid 19 pandemic. The social distancing guidelines will be hard to follow with the campers ready to enjoy in the camp and the staff as to what job function to deal with. Breaking camps into groups and the safety of the kids has more of a downside than the positive side. Commissioners Roy motioned to cancel the

Opechee Day Camp due to safety reasons. Seconded by Commissioner Pederzani. All were in favor.

- Ball Fields Opening- Commissioners suggested to look into the possibility of opening the fields at our next Commission meeting, which will take place on June 15th. They chose to close them through June 19th to give organizations time to get the information out to parents and coaches. Commissioner Roy motioned to re-examine opening the fields at our June 15th meeting. Seconded by Commission Guyer. All were in favor.

V. **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

VI. **NOMINATIONS, APPOINTMENTS & ELECTIONS:**

VII. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

VIII. **COMMUNICATIONS:**

IX. **OTHER REQUESTS REQUIRING COMMISSION ACTION:**

Director Lovisek received a phone call from the representative of NH State Parks through the LWCF and mentioned that someone from Laconia questioned about the Gale Avenue dock that was removed years ago. The dock was taken down due to safety issues. The dock was funded by federal money and require an action plan to remove the dock and will need to send a letter to LWCF for approval. Most of the Parks are funded through federal money and any changes in the plan should be reported to LWCF and will need an approval.

Mitch Hamel asked for an annual update on the dog park for next month's agenda.

X. **PARK ASSOCIATION REPORTS:**

- A. Leavitt Park Association- No report.
- B. Weirs Community Park Association- No report.
- C. Tardif Park Association- No report

XI. **DEPARTMENT REPORTS:**

A. **Directors Report submitted by Amy Lovisek**

As this month has had no change in regards to COVID-19 the world of recreation remains the same. Relatively non-existent. The Community Center, playgrounds, courts and fields remain closed at this time. Parks are open for socially distant recreation like walking, running and biking. New signs are currently being made to post throughout the park system. These signs are more appealing and will be made of a thin, but rugged plastic to withstand the weather.

After speaking with the City Manager, the Community Center is now going to follow the guidelines for health clubs/gyms. That sector is what our facility resembles the closest.

The week of May 18th we will be making firm decisions in regards to our reopening plans. It is my belief that this process should be slow. Some of the decisions that need to be made are for Weirs Beach, Opechee Day Camp, all other facilities and the 4th of July Celebration and fireworks. There may be a way to still do fireworks this year at a different location that wouldn't encourage people to gather at one facility. If they could be viewed from many different areas in the city we could potentially have the show. The task is to find such a location. The fireworks company we use doesn't have a barge to use, so Lake Opechee is out of the running. My next thought would be at Bobotas Field. This is relatively high and if we were to solely use class B, which are the higher and bigger pyrotechnics then they could potentially be seen from quite a few locations throughout the city. I will gladly accept any other ideas.

This spring is to the extreme as we really can't plan yet for summer and it is quickly approaching. We are doing what we can to plan for both scenarios (open and close) and will make decisions as needed. We are waiting to "see what happens" with the virus and what the state allows and doesn't allow. Things are constantly changing and we are going with the flow. As of next week we will know more and can make more solid plans. Thank you for your patience.

I have been working on the budget presentation that will take place this spring sometime. I haven't been given a date yet, but I will let you know when that is scheduled.

I have been attending many webinars recently to stay up to date on what is happening in other Parks & Rec's throughout the country. It seems the steps we have taken are the same as most others. No one has the answers and we are all just trying to do the right thing for the public.

I know the youth and adult sports leagues are anxious to get out on the fields, but we are closed at least through June 5th. Some leagues have called off their seasons completely and others are awaiting what happens next and if we open the 6th they will be on the fields that day.

The video that I had planned is finished, but the software is having some issues as my city computer isn't fast enough to finish the download. I am still working on this.

Bartlett Beach Erosion Renovation: The project has been awarded to J. Parker & Daughters. I will have the schedule of work by Friday of this week.

Bond Beach Erosion Renovation: This project will start back up on the week of May 18th and should be complete by June 1st according to the contractor.

Community Center's Roof: The roof is completed as of last week and looks great.

Tardif Park's ADA Door: The door has been replaced. We are now awaiting a locksmith to rekey the door to match the front door.

Weirs Beach Bath House Renovation: All aspects of the restroom have been set and colors have been chosen. The project will start next week and will be complete at the end of June.

B. Assistant Director's Report submitted by Matt Mansur

Beaches Update

Hiring – Hiring has grinded to a halt. We have extended an offer to a very promising Lifeguard from Belmont Parks & Rec, but after waiting a while for a response, I am losing confidence that we will be able to land her. We are also very female heavy. We have only had one male apply and he was hired.

Jennifer and Bob have both begun with our Seasonal Maintenance team and will jump in with us over the summer. I am concerned with what they, along with the rest of our team, will be facing on the Front Line of our beaches.

We are still currently looking for 5 more guards, and 4-5 Beach Parking Enforcement and Evening Enforcement positions.

Covid-19 Impacts – It is my understanding that most city beaches have remained closed during Stay-At-Home 2.0. I do get the sense that that is more because they don't open until later in the summer (as is the case with us). Gov Sununu has kept state beaches on the seacoast closed because, as he puts it in his "Tube of Toothpaste" analogy, a closed Massachusetts will push more and more tourists to them (we are particularly concerned about July 4th and weekends). Although he has opened "In-State" beaches, as long as they follow social distancing guidelines:

- Providing hand washing stations and alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Building Social Distancing into the operation of restrooms and changing facilities. Limit Occupancy.
- Premises be regularly and frequently cleaned and disinfected, especially high-touch surfaces
- Either remove picnic tables or develop a process for cleaning/disinfecting. Take reservations.
- Limit Occupancy to the Beach as a whole.
- Do not allow Group Activities.

Opechee Day Camp Update

Hiring - We are still at 4 of 5 Summer Day Camp Staff for the summer. We've had a few staff get their hiring paperwork in so that they can seek unemployment if the program is cancelled – I don't know too much about this process.

Registration - We have doubled our camper weeks from 78 to 160 out of a possible 360 camper weeks (50%) in the last month. There has been a rush on parents wanting to sign their children up assuming we will need to limit our capacity.

Covid-19 impacts – Many summer camps are closing its doors for the summer with the first in our area being Belmont Parks & Rec. Most people in the area are still in "sit and wait" mode but the time to decide is getting closer and closer. The summer camp professionals message boards & networking sites are getting feisty (... this feistiness has actually been a lot of fun to track). This is a difficult situation for so many around the country and guidelines have been hard to come by.

What does Camp Look like during Covid-19 - The safety of both our campers and staff is obviously the first and foremost priority here, but if we move past that to what our actual Day Camp operations will look like, I get a little more concerned. As of right now we have parents losing their minds because their

children are bouncing off of the walls, so putting 20-40 of those children in a room together without any fields to run in, courts to play on, or playgrounds to climb is a ticking timebomb unless Social Distancing guidelines are severely altered. Furthermore, our staff will be tasked with the enforcement of those guidelines, which will be nearly insurmountable as many of these children have not been staying six feet away from their parents, guardians, siblings, and family-members inside the home. I have yet to find an emergency childcare organization that has been able to successfully maintain social distance.

Staff Concerns

One of my number one concerns, for both the Day Camp and the Beaches, is staff safety. Given the uncertainty behind Covid-19, the line will be blurred as to what job functions are safe and which are not. How do we handle disagreements? Do we ever ask an employee to do something that they don't feel safe doing – and where is the line that we do? Will this make it difficult to retain staff throughout the summer – can we replace them if they were to walk?

C. Foreman's Report submitted by Tim Ford

Start installing IQ irrigation system
Summer equipment out of storage and ready for season
Start charging irrigation systems
Finish getting bathrooms ready for season
Plant Arbor Day tree at Tardif
Remove stumps at Opechee
Install spit guards at City Hall
Repair faucet at City Hall and Weirs Community Park
Weekly mow and trim of fields and parks
Finish spring leaf cleanup in parks and cemeteries
Secure chain link fence along WOW trail
Clean up walking paths at Leavitt, Wyatt, and Weirs Community Park
Bartlett Beach - beach clean up
Bed clean up at Library and Vet Sq. (edge, prune, remove leaves)
Prune yews at Weirs Boardwalk
Remove broken branches at Rotary Park
Plant annuals at Gateway Park pots

XII. PRESENTATIONS

XIII. ADJOURNMENT:

Commissioner Roy motioned to adjourned at 8:34pm. Seconded by Commissioner Guyer. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Liza Kelleher
Secretary

Mitch Hamel
Commissioner Chair

This meeting facility is ADA accessible. Any person with a disability who wishes to attend this public meeting and needs additional accommodations, please contact Cheryl Hebert, meeting ADA coordinator, at City Hall by calling (603) 527-1265 at least 72 hours in advance so that the City can make any necessary arrangements.

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