

LACONIA PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING
June 15, 2020
Zoom Platform
7:00 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER: Commissioner Rodney Roy 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 Recreational and Facilities Amy Lovisek called the roll with the following Commissioners in attendance: Tony Pederzani, Rodney Roy, Arthur Kirk, Deanna Guyer and Mitch Hamel (chairperson).

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 May 18, 2020

Commissioner Pederzani moved to adopt the minutes from May 18, 2020. Seconded by Commissioner Kirk. All were in favor.

I. FACILITY USE REQUEST FORM:

- A.** Dancing Feet Studios- Weirs amphitheater and Restroom- August 4 through 6, 2020 from 3:00pm to 8:00pm for rehearsal and August 18th (Aug. 19th rain date) from 9:00am to 6:00pm for recital-individual showcases. Commissioner Kirk motioned to accept the request pending upon the submission of the certificate of insurance. Key deposit of \$25.00 per key is required if needed. The special event fee has been waived. Cleaning of the area and the restroom during and after the event is the responsibility of the facility user. Commissioners require the group to follow the state guidelines. Seconded by Commissioner Guyer. All were in favor.
- B.** Lakes Region Tennis Assoc.- Memorial Tennis courts- June 30 through August 6, 2020 Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6:00pm to 8:00pm for Tennis plus. Commissioner Roy motioned to table the request due to no representation. Seconded by Commissioner Kirk. All were in favor.
- C.** Boys and Girls Club of the Lakes Region- Opechee Parkhouse and Leavitt Park Field- June 22 through September 4, 2020 Monday through Friday from 7:00am to 5:00pm for Summer Camp 2020. Commissioner Pederzani motioned to accept the request pending upon submission of Camp fee of \$50.00 per day, key deposit of \$25.00 per key, submission of the certificate of insurance and final approval from the City Council for making money at a City facility. Commissioners require the group to follow the state guidelines. Clean up of the park house and the restroom is the responsibility of the facility user. Seconded by Commissioner Roy. All were in favor.

- D. Lakes Region Cal Ripken- Robbie Mills and Memorial Baseball Field- June 22 thru August 2, 2020 Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday from 6:00pm to 8:00pm and Saturday from 11:00pm to 2:00pm. Commissioner Roy motioned to accept the request conditioned upon the submission of the rosters, payment of a \$10.00 non-residents fee, game schedule and payment for field lighting, security deposit of \$25.00 per key and submission of the certificate of insurance. Practice and game scheduling should be coordinated with Aaron Jones of Babe Ruth baseball group and final scheduling in Parks Department. Commissioners require the group to follow the state guidelines. Clean up of the area and the restroom between games and after the event is the responsibility of the facility user. Seconded by Commissioner Pederzani. All were in favor.
- E. Laconia Adult Co-Ed Slow Pitch Softball- Memorial Softball Field- June 16 thru December 30, 2020 Monday through Friday from 6:00pm to 11:00pm, Saturday and Sunday from 8:00am to 11:00pm for Slow Pitch Softball. Commissioner Pederzani motioned to table the request due to no representation. Seconded by Commissioner Kirk. All were in favor.
- F. Babe Ruth Aged Baseball, Skills and Drills- June 22 through July 31, 2020 Monday through Friday (flexible time) 8:00am to 10:00am or 4:00pm to 7:00pm for aged baseball, skills and drills. Aaron Jones agreed to combine Babe Ruth Aged Baseball to Lakes Region Carl Ripken group. Commissioner Roy motioned to withdraw the request. Seconded by Commissioner Kirk. All were in favor.
- G. Lakes Region Baseball- Robbie Mills Baseball Field and Memorial Baseball Field- June 15 through August 15, 2020 Monday through Friday from 6:00pm to 11:00pm and Sundays from 8:00am to 11:00pm for Summer Baseball Season. Commissioner Pederzani motioned to accept the request pending upon submission of the rosters, payment for non-resident fee, storage fee, payment for the lights and submission of the certificate of insurance. This approval is pending upon the scheduling from the Parks Department. Commissioners require the group to follow the state guidelines. Clean up of the area and the restroom after the event is the responsibility of the facility user. Seconded by Commissioner Guyer. All were in favor.
- H. Laconia Youth Lacrosse- Bobotas Field- June 22 through August 21, 2020 Monday through Friday from 8:30-9:30 am and 5:00 to 8:00pm for Lacrosse practices. Commissioner Roy motioned to accept the request pending upon payment of non-resident fee and submission of the certificate of insurance. Commissioners require the group to follow the state guidelines. Seconded by Commissioner Kirk. All were in favor.

II. OLD BUSINESS:

- A. 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 Kirk motioned to table the request due to no representation. Seconded by Commissioner Roy. All were in favor.
- B. Muskrats Contract- Director Lovisek and Mike Smith will work out the new contract due to the previously agreed upon date change for the building of the Monster Deck. Director Lovisek will go back to the attorney for the changes and resubmit the contract.
- C. Expectations for clean up after events. Clean up of the area and the restroom after the event is the responsibility of the Facility user.
- D. Election of Officials- to be discuss in our next Commission meeting.

- E. Administrative Approvals with regards to Coronavirus- Evangelical soccer camp for request for June was moved to August.
- F. Coronavirus update
- Weirs Beach- The limit for the Weirs Beach is set to 400 capacity only and the guideline of 6-foot social distancing is still in place. The department will hire beach caretakers to ensure the beach is clean and will keep count of the people when they enter and leave the facility. Commissioner Roy motioned to accept the guidelines. Seconded by Commissioner Guyer. All were in favor.
 - Playgrounds -Commissioner Roy motioned to open the playgrounds with the proper signage posted. This should be completed within 2 weeks. Seconded by Commissioner Kirk. All were in favor.
 - Basketball courts- Commissioner Kirk motioned to open the basketball courts with the proper signage, including the use of 6ft proper distancing and use of the court at your own risk posted. This should be completed within 2 weeks. Seconded by Commissioner Guyer. All were in favor.
 - Park Houses- Commissioner motioned to allow the events in our three Parkhouse with the restriction of not more than 50 people attending and must adhere to the current state guidelines. Seconded by Commissioner Kirk. All were in favor.

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

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

1. Dog Park Update

Summary

The Lezama Family Happy Tails Dog Park opened on September 1, 2018, and is managed according to a contract between the City of Laconia and the non-profit Happy Tails Dog Park of the Lakes Region, who promoted the cause of the dog park originally. The park has been popular and very well received by the public, is used every day that weather permits, and we have been told it is greatly appreciated.

Frequency of use

The park is open dawn to dusk and has been open year-round since its opening, with the caveat that the non-profit will not fund maintaining the park during the winter months or other periods of bad weather. Whoever uses the park during the winter months have taken it upon themselves to see that the road and parking area is cleared and sanded as needed. We often have not even been aware of who maintains it, but over the past two winters, volunteers have gotten it done.

From the first day, the park has seen a lot of traffic of users. Sometimes there is only one or two at time, and sometimes both of the larger pens may have 10 – 12 users, not often more. The puppy pen is used much less frequently as young dogs are rapidly advanced to one of the other pens. There are people who bring their dogs almost daily, and others who come weekly or less frequently. Many friendships between both dogs and people have been made.

There are benches and large boulders placed in each of the pens that allow for sitting space for both dogs and people. Since these are spaced at least 6 feet apart, the park has remained open during the COVID-19 crisis, and users have been encouraged to practice social distancing and wear masks.

Management

There is a Board of Directors for the non-profit that usually meets monthly to review finances and activities of the dog park. The Board usually consists of 5-6 people and has been consistent since the park opened, however, one person has just resigned (this weekend) due to conflicts, so currently there are only 4 people. There are 3 people who have expressed interest in joining the Board and are currently being vetted.

Finances

The park runs on volunteers and donations to the non-profit that are tax-deductible. Some initial donors included those recognized on plaques on each waste station in the park (two stations per large pen and one for the puppy pen). These were purchased by *Laconia Pet Center*, *Trustworthy Hardware*, *The Four Paws Inn*, *Homeward Bound*, and *Barks N Bubbles*. *Sanborn Auto* also donated 4 custom granite memorial benches for the park opening. *The Laconia Pet Center* has also sponsored the dog park as recipients of their “Round Up For Charity”, usually twice a year. This is currently running at Laconia Pet Center for the month of June. *Barks N Bubbles* has also been reimbursing us for the waste station trash bags.

On our website we offer a “membership” for a donation of at least \$20 per year that would allow the donor show support for the dog park and allow them to vote for the Board of Directors of the non-profit, but while well-intentioned, this has not actually been activated.

We periodically will post on Facebook and our website that we are requesting donations for the operation of the dog park, at which time we get numerous small donations. We also have three people who have arranged to make recurring donations each month, which total \$ 85 each month.

We are a low-budget operation, with few monthly expenses. Below is a summary of our typical recurring expenses:

Regular Expense	Frequency paid	Amount (all amounts approximate)
Trash Pickup – picked up weekly	Monthly	\$ 45.00
Contractor Trash Bags	~Quarterly	\$ 30.00
Small waste station bags	~every other month	\$ 54.00
Large waste station bags	~every three months	\$ 92.00
Insurance (Liability, Property, and D&B)	Annually	\$ 2,600.00
Portable toilet (1) (Seasonal, May-Sept)	Monthly	\$ 55.45
Approximate total yearly expenses		\$ 4,200.00

The most expensive item, as seen above, is the insurance required for the park, with the majority of money raised so far being used for this purpose. We have been trying to find someone to be in charge of fundraising so we can raise funds to use for improvements, such as a shed for storage, possibly providing water to the site, and other equipment for the dogs. However, the person originally responsible for fundraising resigned when the park opened and we have yet to find someone else.

Donations are also used to purchase items for the park as needed, such as dog bowls, some durable toys, and locks for the gates, but these are not regular expenses. The users have been very good at donating toys, water (since we have no water to the park), and other items as needed.

Communication

The non-profit maintains a regular website, <https://htdpnh.org/>, with general information about park, including rules of use, request for donations, directions and a map.

There is a Facebook page for the dog park at <https://www.facebook.com/HappyTailsDogParkNH/>, where the non-profit provides park updates and other items of interest about the park. There is also an active Facebook group, created by a park user, which users can join, which is used for communication between the users, often to make plans to meet at the park, and where pictures are posted frequently. It can be accessed at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2016043155114943/> or by searching in Facebook for "Lezama Family Happy Tails group".

The Laconia Daily Sun and other local newspapers are used for publicizing special events.

Incidents

While most park users diligently abide by the posted rules, there are always a few that won't. We have had a few, however infrequent, incidents at the park.

In 2018, shortly after opening, the dirt bikers who had used that area for recreation prior to the dog park being built harassed the park users. This lasted only a short while and hasn't been a continuing issue.

There have been two people who were involved in separate physical altercations at the park, also in 2018, when park users reminded them of park rules that were being violated. Both incidents were reported to the Laconia Police Department by the park users involved, and they were fined. These users continued to ignore the rules, and after notice being given to the offenders, we took out No Trespassing orders for them both, which is our only way of attempting to keep them from the park. These people have not continued to use the park.

There have been several other instances in 2019 where dogs were attacked by other dogs that caused injury to the dog being attacked. We are often notified when this happens, but have made the park users aware that there is little we can do and if it's a serious issue, call the police, whose number is posted at the park. The owners contact police and animal control deal with the offenders.

After having few of these dog attacks over the past year, one just happened over this past weekend. The police were contacted and the offenders will likely be fined, their dog added as a dangerous dog,

and they'll be asked to pay veterinary expenses for the dog attacked. I always post my regrets of this happening to the Facebook group, and make some recommendations on how they can try to prevent this from happening. My policy is to explain that if a strange dog is in the park, that an owner can take their dog in the other pen, or walk their dog around the outside perimeter of the park, and observe the interaction between the dogs as a way of trying to prevent issues with new dogs. It is expected, and listed as a rule, that owners monitor their dog's behavior in the park but this is sometimes an issue.

I haven't heard of any dog park that has not had these kinds of incidents so I guess it is to be expected to some extent. We do try to make the park as safe as possible, but events are likely to happen anyway, without such things as memberships where the park is locked to non-members, or having a park monitor during open park hours. I do believe the majority of people who use the park are conscientious and abide by the rules for the most part. We have a very good group of steady users who help keep the park maintained (trash emptied, etc.) and contribute to help keep the park as safe as possible.

Homeless Encampment

We have become aware that there is a homeless encampment that frequently appears in the woods behind the park. I've heard that this was true before we built the park, also. We have had some items taken, like trash bags and one trash container that some park users have said they've seen at that encampment. At one point, one of the homeless made degrading remarks to the people at the park, but that has not continued. I have attempted to make light of the situation after having discussed it with both the police and welfare office. I was told the people are fairly harmless and, that while the police make them move the encampment, they end up returning as they do to many other sites in town. Since we have water, trash pickup and a portable toilet, it likely makes it an appealing location to make camp. As long as nothing serious happens, we try to ignore the situation.

Respectively submitted,
Ginny Martin
President, Happy Tails Dog Park of the Lakes Region

V. **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

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

VII. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

VIII. **COMMUNICATIONS:**

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

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

Recreation is starting to see some light at the end of the COVID-19 tunnel. Our tennis courts have been open for a couple of weeks and that is going well. The basketball courts remain closed though as do the playgrounds. The fields at the Commission's approval have been opened with the restrictions set forth by the Governor and some additional restrictions given by Commissioner Pederzani. Our next step is to find a solution to the Weirs Beach capacity level.

The Opechee Day Camp is officially not happening this summer. The Commission approved this at the last meeting and since then the Governor has stated that day camps can happen. However, he has similar guidelines as the CDC and we just can't say yes to what needs to happen for a safe camp. We are unable to provide this. However, we are working with the Boys and Girls Club to host camps at 2 of our parks this summer. One is at Opechee and they have submitted a Facility Use Request for this. The second is Leavitt Park. They will use this park house to host camp as well. The Leavitt Park Association has approved this use. This is a way the city can help provide camp to those in need of child care.

The 4th of July Celebration is cancelled this year as well. There will be no parade, band or vendors. However, there will be fireworks. We will be blocking off the entire park to keep spectators from crowding and causing an issue for our police department to have to enforce. The show will be completely Class B fireworks which are the high rockets and can be seen from a great distance away. The show will be shot from the middle of the soccer fields at the park.

I still haven't heard about budget presentations at this time. The Council may not want the departments to present this year.

I have been asked to sit on the City of Laconia Return to Play Task Force. This is headed up by the school department. They are looking to add phases into reopening all co-curriculum including athletics. They have recommended the schools AD's train the youth sport coaches in the phases. That way all of the youth will be using the same guidelines throughout the city.

The school has offered to staff some specialty camps this summer as well (when we can). For instance sports camps, drama, band and such. I look at this as a win/win as this would help the kids when they are in high school and gives the high school kids the opportunity to teach what they have learned. I will keep you posted on this.

ADA is still on the front burner to both DPW and our department. We are currently working on a policy that states anyone interested in participating in a program and needs a reasonable accommodation one will be provided and this is who you would contact to accomplish this task.

We have gone out to RFP's for the Janitorial Contract for 6 city buildings and they are due by June 16th.

B. Assistant Director's Report submitted by Matt Mansur

Greetings!

I am sorry for the shorter report. With the governor's announcement yesterday, there are a lot of things in flux that we should have a better idea of by the meeting.

Beaches Update

We proposed to the city manager the game plan of only allowing those who have driven and parked to be allowed into the beach area. There are certainly some holes in this plan, so the city manager isn't entirely on board with it, but we have yet to come up with an alternative. I have started to recruit people for this position and created a job description, but we haven't had too many bites yet.

Bond is looking good. Close to officially signing on two young men to be the attendants there.

It's looking like we will be able to use the Laconia Water Lab to test our water this summer, which will be cheaper than using the lab in Concord. The NHDES seems to have their hands full this summer, so they will not be testing our water or updating our status on their website. They were a little back-and-forth as to whether or not we should have their signs posted at the Weirs. I am optimistic that we can create a system this summer that might be our system moving forward.

Opechee Day Camp Update

There is not much to update here. We haven't had too much push back about camp. I think we had 3 families reach out after the governor said that "day camps could open" but I told them the same thing I told you guys in an update and it seemed like that made sense.

As things rapidly begin to open up, the decision of the status of courts, fields, and playgrounds will be upon us soon. At that point we may be able to reevaluate the Opechee Day Camp.

Community Center

Next week gyms open up at half capacity. So, our Community Center will be able to be re-opened. Which means we've got a lot of work to do to prepare for it.

C. Foreman's Report submitted by Tim Ford

Weekly mow and trim of parks and athletic fields

Cemetery mowing every other week

Start cleaning beaches with Sand Dollar

Prune low hanging branches at Vet Square

Irrigation start-ups for the season

Repair water line breaks at Bond and Point

Weed plant beds in parks

Pick up, install replacement perennials at Millstone, City Hall parking lot, Weirs Community Park

Install annuals in Gateway pots and Vet Square

Repair picnic tables and benches

Daily sanitize Porta-Potties

Lower / raise flags

Water meter readings
Install air conditioners at LCC
Clean up life guard room at Weirs Beach
Install banners on poles at Weirs Community Park
Install benches at Millstone
Install sneeze guards at City Hall, set up for re-opening of building
Get fountain running at Millstone
Repair and paint gazebo at Rotary Park

XII. PRESENTATIONS

XIII. ADJOURNMENT:

Commissioner Kirk motioned to adjourned at 8:59pm. 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.