

LACONIA PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING
July 20, 2020
Laconia Community Center- Parks & Recreation Office
7:00 P.M.

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

RECORDING SECRETARY: Secretary Liza Kelleher recorded this meeting.

ROLL CALL: Commissioner Mitch Hamel called the roll with the following Commissioners in attendance: Tony Pederzani, Deanna Guyer and Rodney Roy. Absent- 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 June 20, 2020

Commissioner Rodney Roy moved to adopt the minutes from June 20, 2020. Seconded by Commissioner Tony Pederzani. The motion passed unanimously.

I. FACILITY USE REQUEST FORM:

- A.** Men's Granite State Baseball League- Robbie Mills- Sundays, July 26 from 10am-1pm and August 9th & 16th 10am to 4:30pm for Baseball game. Amy explained that the July 26th has a conflict with other groups using the facility. Commissioner Roy motioned to accept the request pending upon the payment of non-resident users fee and coordinate scheduling with Muskrats and Parks & Recreation office. Seconded by Commissioner Guyer. All were in favor.
- B.** Laconia Middle and High School- Bobotas, Robbie Mills, Smith Field, Cross Country Track, Opechee Park, Memorial Baseball field- August 14th Fall of 2020 and March 22nd Spring of 2021 for Football, Soccer, Field Hockey, Cross Country, Softball and Baseball. Commissioner Roy motioned to table the request due to no representation. Seconded by Commissioner Pederzani. All were in favor.
- C.** Real Life Church- Rotary Park and Kayak Launch to River- Sunday, July 26, 2020 from 9am to 11am for water baptism. Commissioner Pederzani motioned to accept the request pending upon the submission of the certificate of insurance. Seconded by Commissioner Guyer. 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 Roy motioned to take out the request in the table. Seconded by Commissioner Guyer. All were in favor.

- B. 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, Wednesdays and Thursday's form for Slow Pitch Softball. Commissioner Guyer motioned to table the request due to no representation. Seconded by Commissioner Roy. All were in favor.
- C. Muskrats Contract
- D. Expectations for clean up after events.
- E. Election of Officials- to be discuss in our next Commission meeting.
- F. Administrative Approvals with regards to Coronavirus
- G. Coronavirus updates

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

- 1. Lakes Region Tennis Assoc.- Memorial Tennis court- June 30 through August 6, 2020 Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6:00pm to 8:00pm for Tennis plus.
- 2. Cathy Maguire- Weirs Community Park Pavilion- Saturday, June 27, 2020 from 12:00pm to 3:00pm for a Baby Shower.
- 3. Laconia High School- Robbie Mills and Opechee Track- June 23 through July 31, 2020 for Laconia Athletics.

IV. **NEW BUSINESS:**

- 1. Memorial Baseball Field- Residents of Kentfield Court, which abuts Memorial Park baseball field talked to the Commission regarding the ongoing issue of the foul balls damaging their property. Irene sent some pictures of damages to her house and car. The baseball field is closed for games due to the damages. Last year they came to the Commission with the same issue and according to the neighbors is getting worst and was expecting the City to fix this situation. The department does have the netting that was not put up yet as this was a temporary fix. The plan is to get the permanent fix to the field itself as soon as possible so baseball can resume at the park. Commissioner Hamel mentioned that we will continue to follow up and mentioned that the coaches are aware of their responsibility in using our field.

- 2. Beach Capacity update-

Weirs Beach- The limit for the Weirs Beach was change from 400 capacity to 1000 to avoid people over crowding other beaches in Laconia. Out of state residents have found out that we do have other beaches with free parking and are flocking to Opechee and Bartlett Beaches. Laconia residents are complaining that the beachgoers are trashing our beaches leaving charcoal grills and broken glass bottles, smoking, drinking and no respect at all. Laconia resident Karen Kuyensky sent us pictures where the charcoal was dumped in the grassy area (we do have 2 charcoal bins at Weirs) and a very serious hazard for beach goers, she is worried that barefoot individual can get hurt and can sue the City for lack of safety and control. There was in fact an accident where a child stepped on the coals and burned their feet. Cooking was discussed heavily, and the topic will be on the agenda for next month under new business.

Opechee Point Beach- Residents that live close to Opechee Point are concerned and bothered by the amount of garbage being left in our beach. Steve Holmes representing the neighborhood who lives close to the beach area was concern on the amount of people that are in the beach. He said we have around 300 people in the beach and 80% of the cars are from out of state. He also mentioned that Laconia resident that live close to Opechee cannot even enjoy the Opechee beach anymore. He was asking for consideration if we can limit the amount of people that we can accept in the beach. He also mentioned that the police are just in the parking lot sitting not even checking the beach area and any signs are not being followed at all.

Bartlett Beach- Residents of Winnisquam Ave. attended our Commission meeting and talked to the Commissioners of the concern they have regarding overflowing of people at Bartlett Beach. Neighbors said that out of state beach goers think they own the beach and ask the Commissioners to find a solution. The residents must patrol their own property because the police don't respond, or it take them awhile before showing up. The parking is the big issue at Bartlett, the beachgoers block some residential driveway without any consideration. Reports of boats and jet ski are in the beach next to the swimming line. Social distancing is not observed at all. Residents had to call the Marine patrol because some of the people in their jet ski are trying to steal the raft and felt threatened because some people are in their property. One resident suggested to put staff to monitor the parking lot and mentioned that the bathrooms are not sufficient enough to cater to almost 1000 beachgoers last weekend. The gate is not close nightly and the sign says open from 9am until 10pm. Inconsistency and not a responsible response is also the resident complain of the City.

Commissioner Hamel mentioned that because we accepted funding from the federal government, we can't choose who uses the beach. Only Bond beach is designated as Laconia resident beach only with the sticker required. Commissioner Mitch Hamel, Director Amy Lovisek and the Chief of Police are going to have a meeting and will discuss all the issue that are arising in our City Beaches.

3. Weirs Community Parking lot- Resident of Lucerne Avenue (9 unit-Condo Assoc.) are asking to use the Weirs Community Park to allow their guest and family to park overnight for a fee. There could be a limit of 1 permit per unit and would be good for May to October. The Commission tabled this discussion in order to give the members the opportunity to see the location themselves.

V. **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

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

VII. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

VIII. **COMMUNICATIONS:**

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

1. Laconia Rotary Club Invoice for Rotary Park Landscaping. Commissioners denied the request to pay for the landscaping of Rotary Park. They asked for a representative to come to discuss this at the next meeting.

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**

This past month has seen some extremely unique situations at all parks and beaches. Covid 19 has changed the way we do business in such a way that every year before this doesn't count. We are learning new ways of doing things constantly and keeping things as liquid as possible.

The 4th of July was interesting this year. Weirs Beach was at a capacity level of 400 and we met that number at 7:06am after opening at 7:00am. This limited capacity has caused the masses to move to other beaches however. Ahern was a beach people were going to, but at this point the state, who owns the beach, has shut the gates. This pushes the masses elsewhere. The crowds are flocking to Opechee and Bartlett Beach. Bartlett's impact is the parking. Once the parking lot is full people are parking along the streets in the neighbor's property to a point where they are blocking in driveways. Both Winnisquam Ave and Kessor Ct. have been posted by the police as no parking. This has helped. However, the crowd is just going somewhere else to park.

Another concern at Bartlett Beach is the fact that we received a report that people are using our brand new grass berms to launch their boats and jet skis. We are working on getting boulders for this area to keep this from happening. We are looking into hiring a beach attendant for Bartlett Beach to keep order as well as a police detail to do the same. Weirs Beach will receive a police detail over the weekends as well.

Good news for our maintenance department is that the IQ system for our computerized irrigation system is now operational! This has been a work in progress for some time and is now complete with some minor adjustments. We had decided to do this work in-house as this would give us more money to get more systems into the IQ. This did delay the job, but we are now almost completely computer operated for irrigation. Well done crew!!

This summer during baseball season, we did have some issues with balls flying into the neighbor's yards at Memorial Park. We have since removed all baseball from Memorial and moved it to Robbie Mills. This has put a strain on our department and caused us to pay overtime, but we made the right move. We are currently looking for a permanent solution to the balls leaving the field of play now.

The Laconia Community Center is getting a new sign out front of the building. We will look at lighting in the fall. The Leavitt Park sign is in the works as well.

I had my budget presentation on June 29th. I explained to the Council our issues with getting everything done with the Grounds-Maintenance line item. They wanted me to get them a quote from a private company to do the actual fertilizing and such. I have reached out to Belknap Landscaping for that quote. I believe we can do that job if we had some other items removed from our list in the spring. Such as irrigation startups and building plumbing startups. I have also requested quotes to have that done for the department. Once I get all of those I will get it to the City Manager and see what the Council would like us to do. We will be getting more money for that line though. Good news. The renovation of Bond and Bartlett Beaches for erosion have been completed. The areas look nice and the grass is working really hard to come in.

The Police stations carpet is finally complete. That was a long project due to covid and some other issues.

The statue at Opechee Park is in the works now. There are actual pictures of it on Facebook, which is nice to see the progress. They have a lot to do still so this will not be complete for a while.

The Weirs Beach Bath House renovation is mostly complete. There are a few punch list items that need to be handled, but we were officially open as of July 4th. Just in time.

B. Assistant Director's Report submitted by Matt Mansur

Beaches Update

We'll jump right in. The start to this beach season went a lot better than expected, but it has gone downhill from there. One of our biggest issues is that with all of the "family fun attractions" in the Northeast limited or closed, more people are discovering Laconia, NH. I can't help but wonder how many people are coming up here vs years past – I would theorize that we are seeing more this year. So we could possibly be seeing more people come to Laconia for one of the only open beaches, get turned away from the Weirs, and then discover beaches like Ahern, Bartlett, and Opechee. Ahern has closed its gates.

Weirs

Social distancing was followed pretty well initially, but recently we've had more patrons just setting up on the grassy area in between the beach and the parking lot. This hurts two-fold because 1) social distancing no longer happens when everyone is on that grassy area and 2) the beach is wide open, yet our capacity is "full," this makes it difficult for people waiting in line.

The line itself is something that we did not anticipate. People are waiting in line to go to the beach, sometimes for as long as 6+ hours. Since the Boardwalk is not a park, we have no legal permission to require anything of people choosing to wait in line.

We do have one staff Caretaker that experienced a high fever over the weekend. They believe it may be because of a bad meal that they had had the night before, but the doctor's decided to test them for Covid, in part, because of their exposure to many out-of-staters at the Weirs. The results will not be back for almost a week so that Caretaker will not be in to work our beaches until we have received the results.

We will also lose our first staff member to returning to college in the beginning of August. So we need to hire more staff just to replace some of what we have, on top of any additional staffing we are hoping to do.

With each weekend that passes we are finding patrons are becoming increasingly bold as to how they can get onto the beach. It began with passing wristbands to one another secretly. On the fourth there was one incident where a family blasted through the gate while our employees were handling a medical emergency on the beach. Yesterday I heard reports of people swimming over from the public docks and “hopping” the fence while our staff were occupied.

Furthermore, our patrons are becoming bolder in terms of breaking rules regarding alcohol and tobacco smoking devices. We keep asking them to put it away, they say they will, then they pull it back out when we leave. When the police come, they play the same game.

Finally, I have had numerous staff tell me at this point that they have had multiple instances of patrons “yelling” at them for long periods of time on weekends.

Bartlett

Many people are discovering Bartlett Beach. They have filled the parking lot and are parking along the nearby side streets. The parking lot is getting trampled as well as the stake & twine barrier has broken down in a number of areas. People are clearly running through the grassy areas to get to their cars faster and I’ve heard of people carrying their boats over the berms. DPW says they have some “more robust” barriers that we can use.

Today (Monday) we received notice that Bartlett beach has high levels of bacteria from samples taken on Thursday. We have posted this advisory on Facebook, our website, and hammered signs into the beach itself. Bartlett was the only beach whose bacteria levels reached “advisory” levels.

It is difficult to tell if the Bartlett Beach patrons are practicing social distancing guidelines. I drove through on Saturday and it was chaotic.

Finally, I heard one report of a woman finding “eight needles” at Bartlett on Saturday morning.

Opechee

This past weekend was the biggest weekend that Opechee saw. Most people went up to the point vs going into the cove. The fact that Ahern was closed probably displaced many beach visitors.

One of our Maintenance guys came in this afternoon asking if there was a way to limit the amount of people that are going to Opechee. He said he was approached by seven separate individuals asking that we limit the amount of people that are going to Opechee. He also said that he collected and trashed charcoal grills that had been left, numerous broken glass bottles, and “half a hookah”.

Capacity Limitations / First Come, First Serve

What we’ve seen at the Weirs is that more and more people are driving hours to be AT the Weirs AT 7am when it opens. We have been meeting our capacity quicker and quicker. Furthermore, we have people getting more brazen and creative as to how to get around our system, while people have been more and more vocal about their displeasure with the capacity. We should keep this in mind if we choose to create a capacity at Bartlett and/or Opechee – it will most likely be met very early morning by out-of-staters who are driving early hours to be here for 7am.

Community Center

We have had one group come in to use the indoor pickleball courts. Most of our Community Center program participants are at-risk and prefer to not come and expose themselves to the possible risks. Given where we are with the beaches, I am not complaining about our lack of programs in the community center at the moment.

C. Foreman's Report submitted by Tim Ford

Adjust irrigation clocks as needed
Test field lights at Memorial
Field Prep – daily at Memorial, Robbie Mills, Opechee, Woodland Heights
Install netting at Memorial baseball
Monitor wells at Robbie Mills
Bathroom cleaning Daily
Move chairs at Gale Library
Mow fields, parks, cemeteries, city buildings as needed
Install air conditioner at Tardiff
Aerate fields
Apply 1st round of fertilizer
Clean up from fireworks
Set up for fireworks
Install field D fencing
Install dispensers at Endicott Rock Park bath house
Assemble desks at City Hall
Beach cleaning as able
Replace perennials in beds at Millstone, Gateway, Busy Corner, City Hall, and Weirs Community Park
Weed beds and tree rings
Paint bathrooms at Memorial baseball
Repair and paint picnic tables and benches at various parks.

XII. PRESENTATIONS

XIII. ADJOURNMENT:

Commissioner Roy motioned to adjourn at 9:57pm. 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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