

City of Concord Recreation and Parks Advisory Committee
DRAFT Meeting Minutes from July 20, 2023 5:30pm

Committee Members: Chair Mary Miller, City Councilor Candace Bouchard, Robert Kleiner, Chiara Dolcino, Jennifer Roff, Nick Kotkowski, Marilyn Fraser and Althea Barton.

Staff Members: David Gill, Parks & Recreation Director and Laura Bryant, Assistant Parks & Recreation Director

Guests: Meredith Cooley, Mayor Jim Bouley and Tara Reardon.

Meeting was called to order at 5:34pm by Chair Mary Miller

Minutes approved as written from the May 2023 meeting (no meeting in June 2023).

New Business:

Youth Scholarships: David reviewed the city's youth scholarship process and explained that we have been receiving more requests and feels it is time to review how we handle youth scholarship requests. Laura and David indicated they had a meeting with state as we are now qualified to participate in the State Scholarship program Rekindling Curiosity. This is an income verification-based program that grants children up to \$650.00 to spend at summer camp. If we participant in the program we will be required be set up to take electronic payments through Class Wallet. To be more consistent with granting youth scholarships David would like to review if we should move to an income verification process when dispersing city scholarships as well. Mary suggested working with the schools to get the word out and also to assist parents with the paperwork process. Candace didn't think income verification would be to difficult for the families as many are already required to provide this information for services. Althea asked about the source of the income for the state scholarship, David and Laura said they will continue to review and bring a recommendation forward at a future meeting.

The Mayor asked about how we plan to extend our reach so we can meet the needs of more children in the community. Marilyn asked about what techniques we use now to get information to kids and families. David let them know the current means are through printed brochure, web site, social media, word of mouth (Mr. Bob has been great with New Americans), connecting through the schools and the Family Center. The Mayor added he has heard nothing but great things about our camps and ask how can we work to get kids off the waitlist as camps are often full. There was a conversation about adding more staff/space in camps while making sure the programs don't become so large they lose the integrity we have worked hard to achieve. Meredith Cooley added she has been working closely with Charm (Project Story) and her group and she is very excited to hear about scholarship opportunities.

Second Start Pilot Program: David let the group know beginning in September Second Start will be using space in the City-Wide Community Center up to 12 hours per week for their adult English as a Second Language and Adult Tutoring Classes. This year long agreement was approved by City Council and Second Start. In addition, Second Start has found other locations to hold the classes when the community center is full (camps, events etc.). Mary asked about transportation, David replied Second Start will continue to be responsible but hosting the classes at CWCC should help with their transportation needs. David let RPAC know that the City of Concord NH has been working with Second Start for a long time and the headquarters they work out of is actually a city building leased to them.

July is National Parks & Rec Month: Throughout the month of July we will be sharing interesting facts about Parks & Recreation as well as featuring staff, events and programming.

Summer Update: Laura let RPAC know that summer camps are going great with most weeks full! Our staff has been outstanding and we have had lots of positive feedback from campers and parents. Pools have been going relatively smoothly as well. We had a few hiccups early in the season with schedules and having to close a pool or two but overall it has been a great summer. Due to the opening of the Splash Pad Laura reported over 120 non-resident pool passes have been sold (average in past around 50 nonresident family passes).

The Mayor asked what he missed and why we were checking ID's at the splash pad as he thought would be open all the time similar to a playground. Meredith expressed she thought it should be open longer hours and open to anyone not just residents. Althea spoke to the importance of it being a benefit for Concord residents and that it makes sense for non-residents to be charged a minimal fee. David mentioned he was not aware of the any conversations at the council level about making it free for everyone. Unlike the pools we only have one employee working (compared to three or four at the pools), they check resident requirements, enforce rules/first aid as needed and keep bathrooms open and cleaned. He mentioned the Splash Pad cost the taxpayers around \$750,000. David indicated he would have concerns not having bathrooms open when splash pad is open however since this is the first year of the city having a splash pad we can review operations going forward.

Meredith questioned what we considered a group as she works with Charm (Project Story) to bring kids to Keach Park, staff explained any ratio of 1 adult to 8 or more children is considered a group. A longer conversation about pool, park and splash pad access was had.

Candance asked about how Parks & Rec will be affected by the new housing developments. David responded that the city is about 100 acres short of park space when looking at the Cities Master Plan. David talked about need to look at land for new parks – even if just areas for pocket parks like West Street or Thompson as many private developers are not providing these amenities. The Mayor cautioned David about adding too much as the current recreation impact fees have a huge negative effect on developers and Concord needs housing. David indicated he has been working with the City Planner to look at locations of proposed housing that are not near an existing park and will bring information to a future meeting.

Laura added there is a new drop in Futsal program on Wednesday evenings for youth 10 and over and adults. It is free and takes place on the mini pitch at Keach Park.

Upcoming athletic field work: The soccer goals at Keach Park will be coming down next week to allow for mid-summer aeration of the field before the busy fall season. Memorial Field will also have several fields aerated. Several playgrounds may be closed (short time) for routine maintenance and new safety surface over the next couple weeks.

Upcoming CIPs: David reviewed the following CIP's; all CIP information will be online on departments web site shortly.

- CIP #51 White Park: Pond Restoration and new playground
- CIP #52 Keach Park: Community meetings per approved CIP, design for athletic field lights on one soccer field
- CIP #60 Kiwanis Park: Final design and permitting of new master plan
- CIP #528 Pocket Parks: Thompson Park
- CIP #543 Merrimack River Greenway Trail: Phase 2
- CIP #557 Memorial Field: Conditions study and master plan process (community meetings)
- CIP #558 Cemetery Improvements: Paving, building condition report and wall repairs

The Mayor gave update on Memorial Field saying this is the first time the City and the School District have come together equally to make improvements at Memorial Field.

Old Business:

Bike Park: the bike park group met with David at Martin Park to review location, they are also looking at Rollins Park as possible location. David indicated they will be coming back to RPAC with another presentation and proposal about where they would like to construct the park.

Disc Golf Course: David hasn't heard back from this group since they came to RPAC a year and a half ago.

Year in Review of lower rental rates at CWCC: September will be 1 year since the lower rates went into effect. We have seen a significant increase in user groups and overall rentals and David will provide update at a future meeting.

Jennifer asked about the table tennis group and their offer of a donated table. Laura indicated she has been in contact with them and they have not secured a table yet. She will reach out to them again.

Public Input: Meredith Cooley shared with RPAC that she is working with others to form a Friends of Keach Park. She plans to reach out to the Friends of White Park for guidance. She also asked for more picnic tables at the Keach Park picnic area. David indicated there was four there last week but will see what is possible.

Mary made a motion to adjourn meeting at 7:22pm, seconded by Chiara, passed.

Summited by Parks and Recreation Assistant Director Laura S. Bryant