

City of Concord, NH
Recreation and Parks Advisory Committee
DRAFT Meeting Minutes from April 18, 2024 5:30pm

Committee Members: Chair Mary Miller (Ward 10), Robert Kleiner (Ward 2), Chiara Dolcino (Ward 3), Zoey Murphy (Ward 5), Althea Barton (Ward 1), Nick Kotkowski (Ward 7), Paula Bowers (Ward 8) and Barb Higgins (CSD)

Staff Members: David Gill, Parks & Recreation Director, Laura Bryant, Assistant Parks & Recreation Director and Anne Marie Skinner, Acting City Planner

Guests: Fisto Ndayishimiye from Change for Concord and at the end of the meeting Zandra Rice Hawkins and Jessica Livingston.

Meeting was called to order at 5:38pm by Chair Mary Miller

Mary introduced Ann Marie Skinner (Acting City Planner) and Barb Higgins who is on committee representing Concord School District. Mary started the meeting by having all RPAC members introduce themselves.

Minutes approved as written from the February 2024 meeting (no meeting in March).

New Business:

FY25 CIP Review:

David reviewed staffs recommended CIP's for FY25 consideration. When looking at CIP's David indicated staff consider three main categories: Safety/Life Safety, equipment and multiyear initiatives. He pasted out a handout with staffs recommended FY25 projects:

CIP51 White Park: \$400,000. Additional funds to supplement funds approved in FY22 for life safety and building improvements at the Maintenance Building at White Park.

CIP51 White Park: 150,000 for full reconstruction of basketball court and rock retaining wall.

CIP443 City Wide Community Center: \$20,000 to buy additional tables and chairs for center

CIP587 Cemetery Improvements: \$150,000 for repairs at vault and \$100,000 to continue multi year project to repair roads. Both projects are at Blossom Hill Cemetery

CIP569 Equipment: \$155,000 Replace 2009 John Deer tractor and 2015 mower at the cemetery and replace parks truck that was totaled in the Dec 2022 wind storm. City received just over \$14,000 from insurance for truck that can be used to help with cost of the truck.

Replacement of the "Jackson" large area 16 ft wide mower that has not worked well since city bought it (\$160,000). GSD handles this replacement as they maintain it.

Included in the handout was a review of multiyear initiatives: White Park Pond, Terrill Park, Kiwanis Riverfront Park, Memorial Field Master Planning, Winter Operations at the Golf Course, parking lot expansion at the City-Wide Community Center/Keach Park, new park land needed based on growth of community, need for updated city-wide Parks Master Plan.

Althea suggested the city contact a preservation specialist for the work at Blossom Hill and White Park as both locations are listed as National Register of Historic Places.

David also explained in FY25 staff will continue to explore testing electric mowers (and what infrastructure we will need to install to charge batteries) and even field robot paint machines. Also, replacement of the city playgrounds was discussed – most installed in early 2002 and its getting close to start planning for replacement.

FY25 Fees and charges review:

David reviewed staffs recommended non-ordinance-based fee and charges changes for FY25.

With the city’s electrical rates projected to increase by 70% and natural gas by 40% staff recommends increasing the fees charged. Committee members had robust conversation should they recommend Option 1 or Option 2 and the need to bring in new revenues to help offset the increased costs to tax payers. Barb Higgins mentioned these rates are very low compared to others in the community. Nick asked if they went with Option 1 what would the projected new revenue be, David indicated between \$15,000 and \$20,000. Mary recommended Option 1 and was seconded by Nick. Unanimously approved.

City Council Referral: Change for Concord request for free meeting room space on Friday evenings twice a month for this year. David introduced Fisto Ndayishimiye from Change for Concord. David reminded committee members for the past six or seven years Change for Concord has been approved to use a program room or the Audi at the City-Wide Community for 4 hours a month if space was available and during normal operating hours. In event they requested use outside of normal hours they would pay all regular rental fees and charges. Change for Concord’s new request is for Friday evenings from 6 – 8 pm which is outside our normal operating hours. Fisto explained his new request for Fridays was needed as he currently has meetings/training with his members Monday through Thursdays in the evenings from 6 – 8 pm at his office (on park street) and his space is small and needs larger space. He would like to offer Friday evening meetings when more of his members are available and in an area that will allow more members to take part. Fisto also mentioned he thinks all groups should be allowed to use spaces at the center for free.

Mary asked David how many hours Change for Concord used in 2023. David indicated out of the 48 hours available during the year (4 hours month, 12 months) they used around 10 hours. Nick asked Fisto if he could continue with the 4 hours a month for free during open hours and Fisto indicated that does not work for his organization. Zoey asked how their rental requests was handled in the past and any hurdles, no hurdles were mentioned. Chiara asked David to review process for rental request outside of regular open hours which he did and indicated the process and rules are also posted on the city’s web site. Chiara recommended tabling the vote until staff can come back with estimated cost to keep the center open Friday nights as requested and also include any potential new programs or other rentals that might be added if open later on Fridays. Seconded by Nick and approved.

City Council Referral: Rolfe Park and neighborhood concerns. David reviewed a new referral that was just received by City Council and indicated the committee will review at their next meeting. City Council also sent this to the Public Safety Board for review.

Staffing Update: David indicated 17 lifeguards are needed to open all pools, positions are also vacant for camp counselors and cemetery maintenance workers. Conversation about what happens if unable to hire all lifeguards this summer. David indicated if unable to hire additional lifeguards we might be unable to open a couple of pools. Over the past four years Kimball, White, Merrill and Garrison have all been closed at one point with Garrison the only pool not to open since 2020 (Covid).

David also mentioned the Concord YMCA recently offered free memberships for our lifeguards until our pools open in mid-June. Councilor Brown coordinated this offer from the Y as a way to help lifeguards get in shape for taking lifeguard class and for their jobs.

Updates: David gave status updates on various projects and public meetings.

- Garrison Pool Public Meeting that was held March 19
- Kiwanis Riverfront Park design and permitting
- Second Public Meeting on the new master plan for Memorial Field Complex
- New Riverfront Park in Penacook
- Phase 2 of the Merrimack River Greenway Trail
- Monkey Around Playground
- Eastman Clocktower restoration project

Five Minutes of public input:

Zandra Rice Hawkins introduced herself and voiced that she is in support of Change for Concord's request to have their meetings on Friday nights. She asked what were the concerns of the committee as she heard they were not in support. Mary Miller told Zandra she will be able to read the minutes as the committee is not going to review their questions again.

Motion was made to end the meeting by Mary at 7:35 and seconded by Nick and approved.

Submitted by Parks and Recreation Director David Gill