

Merrimack Parks and Recreation Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, October 18, 2023

Town Hall, Matthew Thornton Meeting Room

7:00 pm

Start Time: 7:05 pm

Open Meeting/Introductions

Attendees:

Matt Casparius- Director, Tracy McGraw- Chairperson, Mackenzie Murphy- Town Council, Naomi Halter- School Board, Maureen Hall- Senior Citizens Rep., Rick Greenier- MYA rep, Matthew Brown, Student Rep., Laura Jaynes-member, Phil Przybyszewski- member, Josh Toms- member, Heather Fairbanks-member, Julie Poole- member

Absent: none

Excused: Michelle Creswell, Christine Lavoie

Start time: 7:05

**Approval of minutes from September 20, 2023- Rick moved, Mackenzie 2nd: vote: 9-0-2
(with one correction change title from Agenda to Minutes)**

New Business:

Review & Discuss P & R budget:

Matt Casparius reports: For those of you who are new to the Committee, the P & R budget falls under 3 categories, here is some information:

- Capital Improvement Projects
- Tax Payer Funded Budget
- Recreation Revolving Fund

Capital Improvements: In July, we submitted 4 projects plus 1 carried over from last year. The Town Manager is only putting 1 on the list for the Town Council to consider this year.

The projects were:

- **Wasserman Park Road Renovations**
- **Wasserman Park Beach Improvements**
- **Funding for a new Skateboard Park**
- **Athletic Fields**
- **Irrigation for the Wasserman Park Football Field (which was unfunded last year)**
- **P & R pick-up truck**

The Town Manager told Matt that the Town is expecting a large jump in the tax rate, so they won't have a lot of funds available for Capital improvements.

Matt was told that the Town couldn't afford the estimated \$810,000 for new athletic fields at Greenfield Farms although he believes MYA is planning on submitting a separate Warrant Article to try to get this funded.

We've been given 2 years to find a new home for the Skateboard Park. Unless the Town Manager can convince the School District to let it stay. Otherwise, if this doesn't get funded this year, we're going to have a really tight time frame next year to build a new park before the old one closes.

Matt was told to pick 1 of these 3 projects: WP Beach renovation, WP road or Irrigation. At this time he is recommending that we do the Beach Renovation. We have less than 2 years under the permit from the State of NH to complete the work. It took more than a year, with several thousand dollars to get the permit in the first place and we'd have to start over if we don't complete it in time. Essentially the last phase of the beach renovation would be the left hand side of the beach. We would build a perched beach similar to what we did on the right hand side of the beach but it would include ADA accessible access to the water from that side. The expected cost is about \$100,000.

We can patch the road for another year.

Irrigation would be nice, but no need as football isn't practicing at Wasserman Park anymore.

Taxpayer Funded

- The taxpayer funded budget is largely items that P&R has not much control over such as natural gas, water, health insurance, office supplies, park maintenance, etc. However, it does include our big community special events such as Halloween, Holiday Parade, Winter Carnival, Easter Egg Hunt, Summer Concerts and 4th of July.
- For the most part, Matt is expecting only minor changes on the taxpayer funded side mostly related to wage increases for our Part Time Employees- Lifeguards, Park Maintainers, etc.
- The biggest change is in our special events and mostly isn't just reallocating funds to other things. For whatever reason, our Movies in the Park series seems to have lost its popularity. We used to get 100-150 people at each movie and this year we averaged only 45 people a movie so I think we're going to drop them from the line up. Matt is going to look for a new event. Not sure what it will be yet but in the meantime, our summer concerts have gone from an average of 125 people a week to over 200 a week and so at least some of that money is going to get redirected to increasing the concert budget. This budget has not been increased in several years.

Revolving Fund

Our 3rd budget comes from our Recreation Revolving Fund is where all of the programs that we run are funded from. All these programs are entirely self-supporting programs. So for the 300 classes that we offer in a given year, we do not receive any taxpayer dollars to support those programs.

Matt has not finished writing this portion of the budget year as he is trying to figure out what Camp, After school and some of our other big programs will cost next year.

Old Business

Update from Dog Park Committee: Tracy McGraw & Matt: The donation we were waiting for has come in, so the new balance is \$2,158.59.

Last meeting, we approved purchasing new surfactant materials and actually got a slightly better price than our last order because it was combined with an order. DPW will be using it at Twin Bridge Park so we're spending \$911.25 so the revised balance will be \$1,247.34 once that bill has been paid.

With that said, Matt stated that those new Playground chips will be coming on 10/24, which at this point will be spreading unless we can get volunteers. Tracy reiterated that the park should be cleaned up before the mulch is spread. Heather Fairbanks stated that she is lining up a clean-up date on Sat. Nov. 11. Tools are available in the shed.

Director's Report:

Naticook After School Program:

Matt stated that the after school program started off with lower than expected numbers but we're getting requests from families at the other schools in Town. He's been working with the school principals and the bus company. Last week we figured out that the driver we were using was coming from the High School and they are willing to allow us to expand to Masticola and not charge us extra for the bus. So, now our program is serving both MES and TFS. We picked up the first 2 registrations from MES. The bus will meet Hannah Cote at Masticola to pick up those kids and drive over to TFS by 3:10 to get those kids. This program is looking a little stronger as we slowly grow.

Past Special Events:

Matt: Our last movie night in the park was held on Sept. 30 and only had 45 pp in attendance as compared to the 150 pp we got last year.

Last weekend, 10/14 was our 4th Annual Naticook Challenge 5K Obstacle Course Race

A big thank you to James Golisano, P & R director and all the volunteers. Matt was out of town, but James handled things well despite some no show volunteers. The attendance for the race nearly doubled in size compared to last year's. Participants seemed to enjoy it. Each year is changed up. Please see P & R FB pictures!

Upcoming Special Events:

The 31st Annual Halloween Party: Saturday Oct. 28th from 12:00 - 3:00 pm.

We currently have 27 business & community organizations who are providing free games, crafts or other activities but we are accepting registrations until Friday am.

Matt is looking for volunteers to help out either staffing at the P&R table, serving as a costume judge or pumpkin race judge! Let Matt know if you are interested!

NEW ; PUMPKIN DERBY Race: Essentially put a 10 pound pumpkin on wheels, stand at start and release! The fastest pumpkin wins. At this time, we have 15 entries!

Kids Cove Playground Updates

Kids Cove Playground at Twin Bridge Park will be closed next week starting on Oct. 23 - Oct. 27 for the DPW to conduct some much needed maintenance on the playground: replacement of the 2 slides that were damaged last winter, replacing some of the damaged play elements and adding new safe surfacing material.

2 part-time positions available: Anyone interested can apply online through the Town website or contact me if they have questions. Positions are open until filled.

Part -Time Year round Maintenance Employee: This position is up to 25 hours per week and ideally would work 8:00 am - 1:00 pm Monday-Friday. We have some flexibility in the hours, but no nights or weekends. We are paying \$19 an hour. So far, no applicants.

On Call Park Attendant: To staff Function Hall rentals which typically occur on the weekends. Essentially it's opening the facility up, being on site in case of any issues and then cleaning up after the events. We get rentals 2-3 times a month but the schedule varies. Matt has been going in for this, but would rather not. This position pays \$16/hour.

Organization Reports:

MYA- Rick Greenier: Football, cheer, baseball & softball are wrapping up. Registration for wrestling and LAX begins Nov. 1. There was a short discussion re: Pickleball, which is set up on the tennis Courts at Wasserman Park. Matt is thinking of setting a court in the Function Hall.

Senior Citizens Club- Maureen Hall: Fall Fair 10/21/23, 9-3 at John O'Leary Center.

School Board- Naomi Halter: busy with budget work, building and planning. Administration likely to move to Brentwood Building. Maybe leave skateboard park where it is.?

Student Representative-Matt Brown reviewed sports team results. There are 100+"HS" clubs. Ie. Activism and Civic Engagement Club, Chop Shop Club. St. Jude Bake Sale and PSAT's on 10/14.

Town Council- Mackenzie Murphy- Barbara Healey will be retiring, Rob Price is Community Development director, Micheal Loverme Memorial to put a bench at Wild Cat Falls.

The Merrimack Police Department will be holding an Open House on Sat. 11/4, 10 am-1:00 pm.

Comments from the Public: None

Comments from Committee: None

Next Meeting

- **Wednesday, Nov. 15th**

Adjourn - 7:55 pm. Matt moved, Phil second: 11-0-0