



**PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION  
Minutes  
September 1, 2020**

**Commission Present:** Barlow, Todd, Traverse, Hurley, Johnson, Farrell and Lantieri

**Staff Present:** Wight, Allen and Putzier

The meeting was convened at 5:32 p.m. by Wight

**Approval of Agenda**

Motion to approve the agenda by Todd, second by Farrell, motion carried.

**Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair to the Commission**

Wight opened the floor to nominations for one year terms for both the Chair and Vice Chair of the commission.

Todd nominated Traverse to serve as Chair of the Commission, Traverse accepted the nomination, Barlow second, motion carried.

Barlow nominated Todd to serve as Vice Chair of the Commission, Todd accepted the nomination, Hurley second, motion carried.

**Approval of Consent Agenda**

Wright handed over the gavel to Traverse who read the consent agenda and motions into the record and the items were moved for approval by Farrell, second by Barlow, motion carried.

Wight added an informational point on the waiver for sound, stating that pending receiving all of the information to the department from the applicant the approval would move forward with the commission approval.

**Volunteer of the Year Award**

Allen, Events Planner, BPRW introduced herself to the Commission and stated that Mae Leclair and Kathy Knauer formerly worked for BPRW and have done several events for the department, are amazing, scavenge all kinds of amazing props, all hand painted and done without pay or recognition, do because they love to do and Allen is very grateful and could not do without them, Hopes to continue to do with them into the future. Came up with a new plan for this year. They have designed and created all props. Allen also showed a photo of the recipients with award plaques and really appreciated all that they have done for the department.

Cindi added nice words of adding relationships and how they disappear after the event is all set and done very gracious and Putzier also stated what a positive impact the two have had on the events presented by the department.

Traverse asked how the department solicited for Volunteer of the Year award and Allen explained it was an internal award that Wight solicits from the staff and then all vote on to choose an individual or



organization, depending on who was nominated. Nominations are chosen from staff aspect to the department.

Traverse suggested putting the pictures out more and letting others see more and felt putting in the North Ave News or some other resource would be a good place to promote. Allen will send information to Wood, the department marketing person.

### **Geocache Policy**

Wight explained had a request in the past to do this in the parks and brought back as it had not received approval. Department reached out to other parks and spoke with State Parks and created document based on others, created a form that would allow us to know what is out in the parks and asked if any had questions.

Todd felt the permit was very clear and concise and would like ammo boxes to be recognizable and Barlow asked if any had registered as of yet and Wight said not currently, said not opposed to it but just did not have a system in place to address at that time.

Johnson asked if a plan to market information out for other groups now, and options to register with the department. Wight said she would be working on that with the Geocache world and would get more information. Wight is going to follow-up with members that do this and see the best way to get the word out.

Motion to approve the policy by Farrell, second by Johnson, motion carried.

### **Public Forum (Time Certain 6:00PM)**

Public forum opened at 6:00 p.m. by Traverse.

Frank Romary spoke on the Geocaching and said that he was approved for 5 years at Leddy Park and he has one grandfathered from 2009, was told 3 year grandfathering and likes looking for ones that have not been found for 3 or 5 years. Does not like the policy that you would have to remove in 3 years.

Traverse wanted to know if you can renew the cache and Wight said you can extend if the City knows who is placing, would not have an issue, would evaluate. Todd clarified that it would be on the person who has the geocache to extend and not on the department to reach out to the individual.

Evan Litwin, lives in Ward 4, and is the Administrator of a Facebook group of 840 people and monitors, saw a lot of uptake in conflict with neighbors and dog walking, people afraid or uncomfortable on trails and spaces where not supposed to be off-leash. Saw opportunity for increased ability to like and support the effort to expand beach access, feels need a space to cool off dogs, need to be aware of, only a few appropriate for dog activity, would not support North Beach as area, feels reasonable request of the department. Also ask for more areas that are better for mobility, not speaking of just for dogs. Stated that Northshore was not very accessible, but others are. Would like to expand to something that is not in enclosed traditional crowded areas.

Chris Muzzy, felt the proposal for beach fires and Off Leash Dog Ordinance was a solution to a problem, spoke about fires and does not feel should be promoted.



Sarah Carpenter, Councilor spoke regarding policy and thanked and was supportive of proposal and feels important to be open as broadly as possible. Only a few families have private access, supportive of provisions. Particularly of the changing of hours at Leddy Park.

Public forum closed at 6:15 p.m.

### **Park Closing Hours**

Wight stated that the change in time would put Leddy at the same time as other parks with exception of skating times adding in Waterfront Park to stay open later, same as Pease lot and downtown for dinner and other activities. The other change was the name of South Park to Callahan Park, which it is referred to currently. Wight said the next steps after approval from the commission would be approval from the City Council.

Barlow asked about enforcement and if the Police were committed to enforcing the close time and Wight said Police were looking to be able to crack down at the later times but would not likely have someone on site every night, it rather gives the authority. Also stated looking into gates to see what options are. Barlow also added it would be helpful if it were closed to keep out a lot of camping in the southeast corner.

Wight wanted to make clear, with the exception of City Hall Park, no limit as to time you can be in a park, you are allowed in a park to just sit in at a late hour.

Todd liked the plan, suggested having an outreach campaign with signs etc. to explain the changes particularly to Leddy Park.

Johnson asked about the timeframe for changes, Wight said need to do resolution to City Council and then after that would go into effect after approval.

Traverse asked if ice was taken up every summer and was told no by Wight only for a few weeks in May and Putzier confirmed, only for a short time. Traverse felt during busy times etc. that it would be difficult to figure out who is there for skating late at night versus for other activities and Wight said did not feel it would be much of an issue in colder months as the issues of big concern are mainly in the summer months.

Motion to approve the policy as presented by Todd, second by Barlow, motion carried.

### **Revision and Update of the Off Leash Dog Ordinance, Rules and History**

Wight stated this came up to the Commission and that Justin St. James had reviewed as well as Kim and she had done more research and some changes happened, if changes to appendix D is a resolution to City Council not an ordinance change, might be on consent agenda. Wight said she goes into appendix D often and asked if would/could be policy and helpful for everyone to know what those rules are, this can go through City Council resolution rather than Ordinance Committee, change, this one is keeping the detail in the appendix as to where the areas and rules are. Wight explained that previously when trying to change it was moving to the Ordinance Committee, this time it would go to City Council for a resolution. It is in the appendix but technically not valid, old resolutions state was a pilot and unless further action it went away and in 2002 asked for extension, while listed not really no action or record, needs to get wrapped up.



Barlow asked if currently non fenced areas are not actually available for off leash dogs, Wight said what was in red is to be added but technicality it was not really valid anymore because it never got approved by Council. Wight looked at original pilot, did research, and added, while Leddy Park was there in beginning, separated out Oakledge as 1 and 2, added summer/winter time to Schmanska and added Roosevelt Park, based on 2011-13 work group and work originally done in 2000.

Barlow would like to do more outreach before moving forward as he believes that many do not understand Appendix D and feel that the only area dogs are currently allowed off leash is in fenced in areas.

Todd explained there was extensive engagement and years from all different community elements, interested in what other commissioners think, feels not new and would feel comfortable approving today. Felt on the agenda a few times in the last year, likes the idea of more accessible areas for dogs to play, also asked where commission falls in future revisions or changes.

Wight said once in appendix D would have to go through process again and do resolution to City Council to change, Wight stated this is to clarify where we don't want to have dogs also and to be more specific.

Farrell felt working off a fair amount of input already and hesitant to ask for more at this point particularly as input can be given at the City Council level.

Johnson said being able to have options in a more timely manner may be better at this time as well as being clear as to where is appropriate, does not feel going back to the beginning is beneficial.

Hurley could see both sides and did not have a strong opinion.

Barlow said he is more about having a process and not opposed to the change but more about the public process, suggested a lighter conversation just to make aware. Not comfortable moving as this is.

Todd asked what would be some of the ways to take the temperature of the community and how that would look and how it could happen.

Wight said that the one challenge is that the only people that come to NPA meetings are the people against it, seems like if you are against a particular item you will take the time to make the meeting, Farrell agreed, and said the one value is that you can try and head it off and was not sure what new would come out from what has already been heard.

Barlow suggested announce after approved at commission level and tell it would be going to the City Council in a resolution. Wight said yes as it would also go to PACC for approval and that would be another opportunity for input.

Harley suggested using the Front Porch Forum as a platform as well instead of NPA and Wight suggested using Front Porch Forum to do a survey and not back and forth conversation.

Traverse asked to frame the questions for public comment that would generate more of a mix , agrees something needs to happen, agrees working group put in a lot of time on this also, sensitive issue for a



lot of people, in favor of concept. Explained a point raised last year and recognized the value in incorporating in appendix rather than internal policy, one in reading the language not sure what it means, multiple ways to read it, likes the idea of keeping a policy and the specifics, would prefer to have the department make rules and have something done on policy. Thanked Wight for moving forward. Wight said learned over summer the ability around enforcement chapter 22 and appendix D, whatever is done will need to include in appendix D what you want to have enforced otherwise it does not have as much strength, need to make sure still have the ability to enforce.

Traverse suggested having the City Attorney come to explain better to the commission.

Putzier read an email into the record from Noelle Cleveland who was in favor or more off-leash areas.

### **Beach Fires and Off-Leash Areas**

Wight said she had given a memo to all ahead of time and the first piece of the memo was around the dogs and the second were all issues regarding beaches. Currently dogs are not allowed at Leddy and Northshore and it is known that dogs are at both locations all the time. Wight asked if at some point do we accept people are going to the beach with dogs and having no success, but do have success at North Beach and Texaco, recognizing the lifeguards at North Beach and more people.

Wight stated beach fires were a big challenge and not a new issue, Fire department sent list and the spike for calls was off the charts. Beach Manager said in a place he formerly worked they issued permits for fires in specific locations.

Farrell and Todd in favor of approaching in this way, likes designated areas and also liked the idea of revenue potential and broadening if appropriate for each beach, also liked the dog piece.

Barlow asked about cleaning up after a fire and asked if designated areas would have some type of structure and would there be any responsibility to permitted to clean up and how/where would they get the wood from. Wight said you would not be able to permit them to a certain point, others have built structures and part of the cleanup is associated with the permit and the fee that would be paid.

Johnson would like the infrastructure to be in a way that would contain and have in different areas of town. Help make the process easy as possible.

Lantieri said if happening already, would we be guaranteed people would get a permit and how would we manage the enforcement and monitoring piece of the permitting.

Traverse said could be part of discussion in December, fires favor some concern if other people see a fire at night they may not necessarily know it is a permitted activity and may encourage others to do and would like to know what efforts are taken to put the word out about the permit and process and don't make one place the only place.

Wight will bring back to staff, will flush out more and speak more with Fire department about enforcement level and will come back at a later date.

### **Oakledge Park 50 Years, June 2021**



Wight explained that Oakledge would be turning 50 and had not made any internal plans yet, invited to keep if interested in doing some type of celebration, hope to be under construction for phase II playground, asked if anyone wanted to get involved to contact her. Traverse volunteered to work with Wight.

Barlow stated that the park used to be called Cliffside Park.

Todd suggested maybe what happened in each decade or how many marriages, marathons had occurred in the park.

Johnson suggested reaching out to some of the community members for some stories, Traverse said he would commit his NPA to researching some ideas. Lantieri and Traverse will work on Ward 5 NPA group to come up with something.

Traverse suggested picking a date for the retreat and moving Item XI. Increasing Community Engagement for Commission Meetings to discuss at the retreat, several were in favor and Todd suggested doing a doodle pool to set the retreat date, listing some morning times and afternoon/evening dates.

#### **Increasing Community Engagement for Commission Meetings**

Traverse explained this item had been moved from August to September meeting.

Todd asked to have the following specifically addressed at the retreat; Identify areas, such as ethnicity, groups, who to reach out to.

Wight explained that Emma will be doing retreat again and will be able to help with this request.

#### **Date for Commission Retreat**

Wight will come back at the next meeting with some choices for a final date and will send out the doodle pool to all commissioners.

#### **Report from Commission on Volunteer Hours**

Traverse asked the Commission if they had any additional hours for the month of August, Lantieri had an additional 1 hour, Todd had 1 hour, Hurley had 2 hours and Johnson had 1 hour.

#### **Director's Items**

Wight said reports are getting longer, staff are adding to it, highlight September 1, Senior Day, the neighborhood is embracing the park, very nice on asking to get Schmanska barn open, power washed, stained, put new boards on, received a \$500 grant, put up little library, hope to have open for public access soon, bikepath out for contract, tomorrow first closure downtown, beginning of realignment process, from college to King and the rail is working on their side, working with VTRANS and bikepath as one contract, staff doing amazing work, asked to have them read the report to get a full sense of what is happening.

Todd asked if the update or blast could go out and Wight said notice does go out but would send to Bikable Burlington and would also post about the bike racks and where they are.



Traverse said that BPRW team continues to do tremendous work under tough times and can't say enough and gave huge kudos to the whole team.

### **Commissioner's Items**

Farrell introduced himself to the new commissioners.

Other commissioners introduced themselves to Nate Lantieri, newest commissioner.

Traverse stated that Burlington has a beach named Texaco beach and would like to find a way to engage the community in finding a new name and Wight agreed also need to find a name for the Blodgett area that has an embankment, natural area, and has no name and would like to also find a name for.

Barlow suggested having a community contest and Wight agreed and they could come to the commission meeting and when get top three then send out to vote on from the community.

### **Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn at 7:48 p.m. by Barlow, second by Farrell, motion carried.

DR