



PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Minutes
January 5, 2020

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

Staff Present: Wight, Morris, Rogers, Allen and Bushnell

The meeting was convened at 5:34p.m. by Traverse

Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda by Barlow, second by Harte, motion carried.

Approval of Consent Agenda

Traverse waived the reading of the consent agenda and motions into the record for approval.

Approval of consent agenda by Traverse, second by Farrell, motion carried.

Update on Parks Foundation

As John Bosange was not able to attend the meeting, this item was tabled for a future meeting.

Clean Parks Initiative

Paul Morris provided the commission with background on the project and its goals – identifying areas or parks that need frequent cleaning and organizing staff to work with volunteers to clean up said areas on Green Up Day. Following Green Up Day, Morris worked with Kate Alberghini of Green Up Vermont to develop year round green up events. Also assisting in the development and running of these events were Kent Spencer from Planet People and Marina McCoy from Waste-free Earth. This project put dedicated groups of volunteers into specific parks and provided them with necessary cleaning supplies. The events began in July and ran through the autumn totaling 15 cleaning days. There was one work stoppage due to state lockdown orders. With the Diana Woods promoting the event on social media, 132 individuals volunteered for a total of 255 Volunteer hours and 157 bags of trash picked up. Moving forward, the goal is to build the program by developing leaders and volunteers into stewards for specific parks.

Todd commended Morris on the program and asked if there was a title for the lead volunteer. She also mentioned that commissioners would be willing to put out information on their local FPFs to reach out to more volunteers. She asked the Morris reach out to them in the future.

Barlow commented that a small group of core volunteers might be better than one single leader as work could be divided between all volunteers and done according to availability over the course of the week. Morris agreed, stating that he and his team were able to leave a lockbox with supplies for the weekend volunteers when staff couldn't be on site.

Traverse asked if the project was on hold until spring and Morris confirmed that it was. He did also mention that people are still reaching out. Morris is still the contact person for this project.



Public Forum (Time Certain 6:00PM)

Public Forum was opened at 5:54pm

Dylan Kunkel is the leader of the Burlington Burn Club. His group of about 48 fire performers/enthusiasts and circus artists meet in Battery Park to practice their skills and perform to amplified music until around 10pm. They are family friendly and often draw large crowds. Over the summer there were some complaints about the volume of the music they use during their performances. The group discovered that they were not permitted to have amplified music and ended up having to end their performances at 9. Kunkel asked if there might be some middle ground. His hope was to get a permit extension, allowing the group to begin performing in April and end in November (both are months when the sun sets earlier), allow amplified music at full volume until 9pm, or extend the time the group can use the park with limitations on the sound. He and his group are willing to be flexible, but performing over this summer was a struggle.

Wight commented that the amplified music restriction is part of the city ordinances and would need commission approval to for an exemption. She recommended that Kunkel put the request in writing and send it to Meghan O'Daniel. O'Daniel will put the item on the next agenda for consideration. Kunkel thanked the commission for their time and assured them he would do so.

Public forum was closed at 6:07pm

Memorandum of Understanding Development

Over the summer, a fence was installed at the Leddy baseball field without a permit or contact with BPRW. This led to the discovery that the little league organization in the city do not have MOUs. Morris met with the presidents of each little league organization to get an idea of the issues (what works, what doesn't). All little leagues have now been informed that they will have MOUs before next season. Currently, there is a draft ready of a general MOU that will work for every little league. Morris will sit down with the little league presidents before finalizing the draft.

In addition to the MOUs, Morris has also been working on developing standard operating procedures. He has developed an excel spreadsheet to catalog fields, usage, equipment, and other needs. The goal is that this information will help make clear who is responsible for what. When he sits down with the little league presidents he will seek their input on ownership and needs. The fields will ultimately be entered into Civic Rec so that they can be used with not occupied by little leagues. The MOU will also include things like coach background checks and guaranteeing things are up to code.

Harte asked what jurisdictions the little leagues have and if there are or will be any consequences for disregarding the MOU. Morris used the unapproved fence as an example – BPRW assisted them in getting the fence permitted as it was beneficial to the field. Moving forward the MOUs will require BPRW approval for any changes. There will not be any punishments.

Recreations Update

Gary Rogers and Emma Allen provided the commission with an update on the Recreations department. Allen detailed the second annual Holiday Lights contest. In total there were 21 entries (double from last year). There were three categories – Classic, Colorful, and Creative, and bonus points were awarded for energy efficient displays (every entry this year was energy efficient). Pictures were posted on Social Media.



Todd commented that Essex did a neighborhood competition with a map of places to visit. Todd appreciated the idea of setting up the competition to be neighborhood vs neighborhood. Hurley commented that effort should be a category and Allen agreed, calling it technical difficulty.

Rogers reported that, while BPRW was unable to host the yearly Pomerleau Christmas Party, they were able to provide the families that normally attend with 350 \$30 gift cards to Price Chopper (in partnership with Price Chopper).

Rogers continued by detailing the changes made to various sports programming. The rec team provided 1 on 1 basketball clinics and "family" (single household) basketball clinics. They held 80 clinics to over 100 participants, and all offered clinics were filled. Starting 1/9 they will be offering age specific group clinics (15 people max). The Boys and Girls Club has been an extremely helpful partner, allowing usage of their gymnasium space for these clinics.

The Bolton Ski Program, which has always been extremely popular, will offer 3 4-week sessions for 20 kids, allowing for 60 total participants. They were unable to hold the December session due to covid-10 spikes in our area, but are hopeful that they will be able to hold the January session.

Several programs are on hold such as Itty Bitty Soccer and Basketball (due to required parental assistance) and Adult indoor soccer and volleyball. In an effort to get people outside, a temporary 9-hole disc golf course has been set up at Leddy Park.

Traverse asked if Hockey will be happening this year. Rogers confirmed that as of 12/26 teams can practice but are not allowed to have physical contact. So, yes, hockey is happening but it's different than previous years. Wight added that the ice is still rentable but the discount is no longer being offered. Hurley asked about the success of offering discounted ice rentals and Rogers confirmed the response was generally positive, but financially it was nowhere near what they usually do.

Rogers briefly detailed Licensed Child Care Camps that were offered over the winter holidays. BPRW was about to provide care to 50 families.

Online programs for adults and seniors such as ASL have had positive responses. The Senior Fitness program hopes to move online in January. In addition to online bingo and online and phone trivia programs, rec staff has partnered with Eventbrite to provide virtual tours of museums, parks and historic places to folks online. Most of these offerings are free. With Chittenden Senior Center currently closed, staff are making wellness calls again and provided gift bags to seniors over the holiday as well.

Rec staff has continued to assist in the meal delivery programs around the city. The program has shifted from providing individual meals to delivering bulk boxes of food equivalent to 7 days of meals. They are committed to working through January, but may continue depending on school statuses.

Finally, they have been working with Dan Cahill and the planning team to come up with an online interactive map outlining parks and trails available over the winter. The map will also show pop up activities as well as youth ski and snowshoeing in different parks.

Todd asked that Rogers reach out to commissioners if any of these events need publicity.



Cost Recovery

Wight reports that the city will be moving forward with the Cost Recovery program. We had an opportunity to take part in the program at a discounted rate and will be joined by other cities like Essex Junction and Brookline, MA. The program will help us to analyze the cost and benefits of various programs and make sure those two things are in balance moving forward. The goal is to make better decisions and strengthen the community by providing the best possible options.

Report from Commission on Volunteer Hours

Todd had 4 hours working on messaging for multi-users. Farrell had 1 hour at the Parks Foundation. Traverse had 1 hour and confirmed that he would contact Bosange to ensure his presence at the next meeting.

Director's Items

Due to Covid-19, the department is no longer able to fill the rec specialist and trees positions that were originally considered emergent.

The South End portion of the bike path is open. Wight did confirm that there is different equipment used to plow the north and south ends of the path and the timing of the plowing team is not always perfect. That said, they are working to improve.

The city is working towards purchasing an asset management system. Previously every department had its own system. This program will centralize the information and allow everyone to see exactly what is on hand.

The Shamanska Park Barn had some parts issues and struggled to reach completion during Covid-19 restrictions, but is finally almost complete. The Old East Enders already have 4 weeks work of programming for the space. Wight suggested that the commission have one of their spring meetings there.

Todd thanked Wight for helping connect her to Dan Cahill for his assistance on the Arthur Park/Sea Caves project.

Commissioner's Items

There were no commissioner items at this time.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 7:32 p.m. by Traverse.