



**PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING
Minutes
March 11, 2021**

Commission Present: Barlow, Traverse, Johnson, Farrell, Todd

Staff Present: Wight, Rogers, Roach, Sauve and Putzier

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

Approval of Agenda

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

Public Forum (Time Certain 5:35PM)

Public Forum was opened at 5:35pm

Nobody came forward to speak from public.

Public forum was closed at 5:35 pm

Beneficiary of Service Workshop

Wight introduced Sabbach and explained how she is also representing a few other New England communities and thanked her for participating in the process and then turned over to Sabbach.

Sabbach thanked the commission for participating and was facilitating group of communities and facilities, explained the cohorts through result of pandemic in January. Help organizations continue to be financially disciplined, or a new way to learn and because of pandemic needed to adjust how to do and created cohort system and signed on with 11 states and around the country. She also introduced the other team members she works with for a total of 5. Gave a background on herself with experience in the park and rec field as well as consulting in Canada and Europe, commitment to being responsible stewards. Agenda is 1. Strategy and why, 2. The how process, 3. Review thoughts and questions, 4. Beneficiary of service exercise and 5. Thoughts and questions.

Sabbach explained she would ask to go through exercise tonight but will also give time tonight to go over and make adjustments, 24 hours to get back any changes and additions to Wight.

First discuss how parks and recreation manages finite resources, challenge professionals to think about this relative to how managing. Today thinking in terms of finite and how to use best to have the greatest impact on our communities, how to do better with what we have. First asked, are you smart about managing money, spending tax and others money?

Cost recovery is about recovering or offsetting a cost or service portion.

Subsidy a benefit given by the government; typically to remove some type of burden, and often considered to be in the overall interest of the public; give to promote a social good or an economic policy.

Asking orgs if they are investing tax payer dollars in the best way possible to effect the common good.



Gave context intended to have public spaces for the good of all to access and while birthplace not the everything for everyone, but creating a place to enhance quality of life. Then Central Park came to life and saw more services to parks and government began to subsidize, then 80's saw number of today's community centers come to life, about construction but not taking care of facility, 1990's time when talked about doing more with less, less interest in paying more. Present time, have all spaces and need to know how to best use what we have.

Shared studies; 2017 study around self-importance to see if an essential service truly, where is parks and rec in that list of services, 95% personally use and 99% communities benefit from local park areas but are less likely to view parks and rec as a contribution to their #1 concern attracting and retaining business. 6 in 7 agree that parks and Rec is worth the tax dollars spent on it but usually hit with largest cut in funding when budgetary pressure.

Second study was on great recession's profound impact on parks and rec. Nicholas Pitas, focused on 1989 to present 2017, incredible decrease in resources while more use and more toward operations at the expense of capital, infrastructure is now in crisis. Study called out recessions over years 81, 90, 01, 07 and 2020, not sure.

66% of agencies are facing operation budget reductions, nearly 20% of agencies are reducing operations spending by a least 30%, 57% of agencies are facing capital budget reduction, 20% of agencies report that their capital budget had been zeroed out.

Menino survey 12/2020;

Mayors foresee dramatic cuts to school budgets while 38% expect, states and local governments need assistance or subsidy due to COVID.

Explained economic uncertainty, increasing disparities/need, lack of revenue diversification, uninformed constituencies, unreasonable expectations, sufficiency of reserves, Maintenance backlog, Struggling competitors, and History.....these are all realities, series of symptoms that support the need for cost recovery.

Intentional effort to deal with the reality and policy, about connective tissue between the two. Most have gotten into the business because of the service piece and also need to cover the cost.

Cost recovery of yesterday, philosophy, were Parks 0-10 % Cost recovery, Youth Sports 50%, Adult Sports 75%, Aquatics 50%, Seniors 25% and so on, realized can't be same old formula. Methodology using instead is 3 legged stool, three pillars; service categories is the first, showed 3 examples Social values tend to drive assumptions, need to look at differently as a similar purpose. Had all look at a handout that was sent to represent the entire service menu of the department.

Beneficiary of Service; create alignment of the service and who benefits, need to look at the level of the skill and individuality and might fall into different categories, greater access and more specialized.

Had staff go through the agency service categories from common good to individualize.



Cost of Service; the profession has accounted for cost very differently, need to include all expenses, have seen a shift and being more committed to covering all and need to articulate and cover all administrative and let public be more informed.

Shared a model of a continuum showing categories from common good to individualize of a few other institutions and how to strategize.

Sabbach asked if anyone had any questions. Todd was very excited and said it really explained the complexity and what has been missing. Asked where in the plan do the ideas or values of community members either in public sphere or process what efforts are being done to incorporate, where are the other voices coming from? Sabbach said without having hours with everyone approached process from comprehensive and last 12 months typically includes more community outreach and policy development, one result is social and racial equity, the process you are part of is cohort, can take a step further, not static, then can do policy, then reach staff, boards, commissions, get strategy and cost of service done first. Very concentrated now but can be added after. Alternatively many marginalized and disenfranchised that don't want to participate, need to advocate and staff contribute and represent those individuals as do the boards and commissions. Todd liked that it was not a static process and that could be added later.

Barlow asked that Burlington does value parks system very much and have a lot of capability throughout the system, asked if Burlington is average or how doing budgetary, was told to early at this point but deferred to Wight. Anticipated something else and are surprised, never really know until go through the process. Too early to respond but can as get closer to the end of the analysis. Wight said \$2 mil was spent to support the budget to help department the Mayor did not cut, did lose seasonal staff but fortunate community and staff stepped up.

Farrell stated that it was very important for the commission to be present and a participant in the process.

Group exercise was then discussed by Sabbach, she explained each of the Service categories; went through all 12

Todd asked about signage for special services but was told those are not attributed to inclusion, would go to maintenance, operations, etc. within appropriate service.

Using the categories the group will list beneficiary of services based on who benefits and who should pay, by determining the beneficiary of service can make informed tax payer decision, each category needs to be ranked from common good to individualized. Also listed are some relevant definitions to help assist in the exercise. She then gave all 10 minutes to do independently and then came back.

Todd did not feel comfortable ranking at this point and wanted a little more information, Sabbach said it was ok to do later and spend more time on and explained more clearly. Stated ranking the category/type not the actual programs etc. Every organization creates their own category types.

Traverse asked about renting pavilions, asked if assuming if ranked lower is it the ability to rent, when ranking importance, is it the structure or as a revenue. Is it the space that is the common good or the



building, was told it is the service not the rental, told to focus on common good versus more individualized.

Todd suggested having a meeting with public forum at another time to spend more time to flush out in terms of process.

Sabbach asked what position they placed each category, after the process several were amazed at how many had a consensus and Traverse asked how in line with other communities there answers were with others and Sabbach said in years open access is always at the bottom, tend to see toward the bottom, enterprise, rental usually at the top, varies a bit but fairly clear and if don't have it leaves too much up for interpretation, by defining it helps people make decisions. Not surprised by how ranked.

Todd asked how to put people that don't feel that they fit in a space, what category would that fall in, how could they put inclusion in and Farrell agreed as to how to add values in, Sabbach said that would be more in the ways that you offer.

Johnson said initially had put events low but after conversations, remembered having past conversations as a member of the community that knows very little of fire dancers and is enriching would not normally see but something that others can join in and helped to recalculate and appreciated the process.

Sabbach explained next steps and that it is not a static exercise, sure ongoing exercise but part of daily operations with more intention and will see evolution of strategy.

Beneficiary of service staff work session on 3/17, two sessions and then design of the department beneficiary of service model presented and as build upon work can transfer into cost recovery strategy at week 8, typically 12 to 13. Asked if anyone wanted to change rankings to please pass on to Wight.

Traverse suggested on inclusion the way framed under ADA federally mandated to do differently, there are other types of activities that are optional, and did not feel answer would necessarily have changed but interested to know with others if that would change the ranking of others that are optional if it changes things. Sabbach shared that most signage is cost of doing business, inclusion is heavy word in broader sense thinking of it in terms of ADA. Did not understand value to call out as separate item, wondered if more value to call out as framing in a different context. Farrell felt the same way.

Todd asked what the staff involvement up to this moment had been and what it would be after, Sabbach said been involved all along, will continue to until at end of this process delivering core continuum, then provide robust report, then help select. Wight stated that larger number of staff next week, but members of staff have been involved all along from all different levels.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 7:19 p.m. by Traverse.