

Recreation Advisory Board
Wednesday, June 26, 2024
Town Offices Nowak Room
7:00 PM
Draft Minutes

1. Call to Order

Members Present: Chair Stephanie Papakonstantis, Mike Wissler, Dan Provost, Jenn Harrington, Brinn Sullivan, Nick Nordin and Select Board Rep Nancy Belanger. Greg Bisson, David Tovey, and Caroline Neel of Parks and Rec were also present.

Members Absent: Bob Dudra, Danielle Capalbo

Ms. Papakonstantis called the meeting to order at 7 PM.

2. Public Comment

- a. There was no public comment at this time.

3. Minute Approval

- a. May 29, 2024

Corrections: Ms. Belanger asked that the minutes write out the abbreviation OPM. Mr. Wissler said it means Owner's Project Manager.

MOTION: Mr. Wissler moved to approve the minutes of May 29, 2024 as amended. Mr. Nordin seconded. The motion passed 6-0.

4. Discussion Items

- a. RFQ for 10 Hampton Rd

Mr. Bisson said we worked with Dave Sharples and Melissa Roy to put out an RFQ for 10 Hampton Road. We followed specific guidelines from the CDFA [Community Development Financial Authority]. Proposals should be submitted by July 10. We'll conduct interviews and Mike, Nick, and Steph will sit in on them. Then we'll go to the Select Board to get approval to sign a contract. We'll have an RFP put out for the renovation once we complete the design documents needed, with construction starting in September. It should only take 6 - 8 months to complete. Right now we only have schematic plans, so the CM [Construction Manager] will complete the documents and go out to bid.

- b. Summer Recap

Mr. Bisson said David and Caroline have done a fantastic job. Camp started last week. There were no lines on the first day for the first time in 20 years. We've been hitting our capacity of 225 every day at the pool with the summer camp there. We're already \$7,500 ahead of revenue at the concession stand from last year. Ms. Papakonstantis asked if that includes the pool admission. Mr. Bisson said yes, but not the season passes, which have been

very popular this year. Ms. Papakonstantis said she appreciates them pulling a staff together for the June 19th [Juneteenth] holiday to open the pool.

Ms. Papakonstantis said she's impressed by field trips, especially for teen camp. They're a little more pricey than she was expecting, \$80 or \$100. She heard from someone who was concerned because they couldn't afford it but also didn't trust their team at home. Can we offer a second option next year? Ms. Sullivan said she thought this should be a larger discussion under New Business. The Rec might have solutions for that. [The Board later agreed to put this on the agenda for July.]

Mr. Tovey said we had a successful Senior Summer BBQ, with 81 registrations. We're looking to have more senior luncheons.

At the pool we have two sponsors, Proulx Oil and Propane and Smiles by the Sea Family Dentistry; we're looking for two more. Neptune Radio is going well, it's informative and we can do on-demand messaging.

We had our first trip with Collette Travel return from South Dakota a few weeks ago, and had feedback that it was fantastic. We got a \$1,400 commission for that. For the European Christmas markets, we're at \$4,100, and could still take reservations for that. We have the Alaska trip in 2025.

We were able to add more private swim lessons with a 1:1 ratio.

We added three kayak outings on the Squamscott, July 1, 8, and 15. Our interns have been leading those and creating marketing for them. Ms. Neel said we rent out our kayaks and life jackets as well. Ms. Sullivan asked if the tour guides are lifeguard safety certified. Mr. Tovey said no, but we're going to teach them emergency steps and provide them with lifesaving equipment. We have safety pamphlets and messaging at the dock as well.

Mr. Wissler said he's had multiple people tell him how great camp is going.

c. Senior Programming-Grant

Mr. Tovey said there's a grant available through Exeter Hospital/Israel Lahey Health. It's not official that we got it, the application deadline is Monday, but it's for \$30,000 for senior programming. We want to use it to pay instructors and reduce costs so more people can join, as well as have monthly Senior Luncheons. People preferred the food from the BBQ which Greg cooked to the food at the Sweetheart Senior Luncheon which was catered. Brinn connected us with their Senior Program Coordinator who gave us some good leads on instructors. We've had suggestions on doing Coach Buses for longer trips; having a bathroom on board would make a big difference to who would join. Upcoming trips are New York in December and the Von Trapp Family Lodge in the spring. Our van seats 15 people, but with a Coach bus we could get 50 - 55. We could use the grant to subsidize the cost of trips more. The Parks Division desperately needs full-time staff, so we're putting two positions in our budget for 2025. We're also going to be putting a part-time Senior Coordinator in the budget and matching a portion of it through the grant, and our Senior Council is in favor

of that. Other departments have been successful in starting with part-time positions and later going full-time. Mr. Wissler asked if the grant requirement is just that it's used for senior programming. Mr. Tovey said yes, and it must be implemented between September of this year and September 2025. If we don't spend the money, we can apply for an extension, but we think we can spend it. It doesn't have to be for residents only.

Ms. Sullivan said another nice thing about a Coach bus is that there's a power charging station at every seat which can be a good safety feature.

Mr. Tovey said regarding wheelchair accessible vans, we've partnered with Meals on Wheels to use their blue van on our luncheons and trips. When COAST has vehicles that are ready for pasture, they put them out to auction, and they were talking about a wheelchair accessible van today. Some of these vehicles go for as low as \$1,500. It's possible we could get a few more years out of it with the town mechanic.

Mr. Provost asked if they can coordinate with SAU on their wheelchair accessible van, which is just parked all summer. Mr. Tovey said he will look into it.

d. Planet Playground Additional Fundraising

Mr. Bisson said after a successful warrant article for Planet Playground, there was a subcommittee formed including Mike, Brinn, and Stephanie as well as some members of the public. The current design meets the requirements of the grant, but we came up with some further enhancements, including benches, shade structures, and a mural wall. Not including the shade structure, we need to raise \$110,000 for these enhancements. We have a memorial bench and table program to cover those items, but we need to fundraise for the other elements. Our Rec software has a button to donate that we will add to the website. He asked the Board for ideas on how to present the fundraising.

Mr. Wissler asked why the shades are not in there, and Mr. Bisson said we're still waiting on the quotes for that.

Mr. Wissler suggested breaking out some costs as line items to make the items seem more attainable. Mr. Bisson said he doesn't know whether that would hurt us or help us; costs might seem expensive instead, and then we'd have to explain that. There are 17 elements available for around \$5,000. The mats for surfacing are \$48,000 just to purchase them.

Ms. Harrington asked Mr. Bisson to explain why we're going with mats and not a poured surface. Mr. Bisson said initially we wanted to do poured-in-place, but it would have cost an additional \$30,000. You also have to do maintenance down the line, which can be as costly as install. It's also easily damaged. The mats can be easily replaced if they get damaged. The mats don't qualify for LWCF grant funding because they are manufactured overseas. They're about \$79 per mat. Installing them could be an opportunity to get the community involved.

Ms. Sullivan asked about shade structures. Mr. Bisson said we're looking at shade sails and they are \$5-6,000 each. Ms. Papakonstantis said Susan Drinker suggested that dermatology offices may be willing to sponsor sun protection.

Ms. Harrington said maybe there should just be a thermometer for \$150,000 and it just goes up, since some of the items won't be easy to sell people on. Ms. Papakonstantis said some people like to be anonymous as donors but some people like their names or the business on things. Mr. Bisson said we can break out the levels, like "platinum sponsors," and have a custom sign at the park's entrance.

Mr. Tovey said having Neptune Radio in Planet Playground would require a second station, could that be added into fundraising?

Ms. Sullivan said there could be a fundraising kick-off with the camp families. Mr. Nordin said there used to be prizes for kids who fundraise, is that still an option? Mr. Bisson said we are in talks with an improv group called "Scriptless in Seattle" about a possible fundraising event. Ms. Papakonstantis said poker rooms in New Hampshire are required to make a donation every month. There's an application process. Her parents' group gets the donation every time. You have to be a 501c3 group. Mr. Provost said The Brook's waiting list is 7 years but the smaller ones are easy to get.

Ms. Harrington asked if our registration has an option to round up when you pay. Mr. Bisson said no, but there will be a donation option on the registration page.

Ms. Papakonstantis asked if we can connect with downtown businesses to implement a round-up program.

Ms. Harrington asked about the fundraising timeline, and Mr. Bisson said by October or November of this year, but we could push it to spring 2025. Only the shade sails and the mats would be required when the playground is going in. Mr. Nordin said we could position the fundraising as making the playground less generic and more specific to Exeter, to address concerns about a new playground. Mr. Bisson said he hasn't heard those concerns from residents, they are eager to have it replaced. Ms. Neel said she was asked if we could have a "funeral" for Planet Playground. Mr. Provost suggested allowing people to buy pieces of the old playground. Ms. Sullivan suggested using "blast off to fundraising" and other space puns in the marketing. Mr. Tovey said the Key Collective had a fundraiser at the Abenaki Country Club recently, they had some great items for a silent auction; maybe one of the businesses around us would allow us to use their venue for a similar event. Ms. Sullivan asked if the fundraising could be tied in with the fireworks this year, and Mr. Provost suggested collecting a donation at that event. Ms. Sullivan suggested creating a QR code to donate. Ms. Neel said in the Rec Desk program, you have to create an account to donate. We may want to create another method to donate. Ms. Harrington suggested creating a Venmo account. Ms. Sullivan suggested using the Friends' bank account. Mr. Bisson said they never finished the paperwork to

get the 501c3 status. The Board asked him to look into how that could be completed. Ms. Papakonstantis suggested an online auction rather than an event. Ms. Sullivan said a lot of people come to the holiday event and just stand in line waiting. We could have one more event for those people where they'd be giving money. Mr. Wissler suggested a cornhole event. Ms. Harrington asked if something could be put up at the pool and tennis courts, like a QR code that would show a video and ask for fundraising.

Mr. Bisson said he can talk with the Finance Director about the options. There is a parks-specific fundraising site, Patronicity, that he can look into. Mr. Nordin said having an elevator pitch or 10-second tagline will help. The trifold provides a lot of information.

Ms. Sullivan suggested getting something into place at the tennis courts before the pickleball tournament. Ms. Papakonstantis suggested having additional tournaments in August and September. She also suggested having a community yard sale where the funds go to Parks and Rec. Ms. Sullivan said Portsmouth has a similar program and had 750 people in 2.5 hours. Mr. Provost said you could ask them to pay to get in and pay to rent a table.

Ms. Papakonstantis suggested using "Snap Raise," which allows people to donate. For that you also have to be a 501c3. Mr. Tovey said you can make a charitable donation to the town.

Mr. Bisson said he thinks the Rec Board needs to meet in July and August. Ms. Sullivan suggested not voting on items if you don't have a quorum. Ms. Belanger said she thinks that you need a quorum to have a meeting.

Ms. Papakonstantis asked if having a Google Doc with fundraising ideas would be a violation of 91-A. Ms. Belanger said we tried to do that as a Select Board for our committee reports but we need to be very careful about it. People could send the Chair their thoughts and she could put it in an email.

Ms. Belanger said we could put a poster in the signboard in front of the Town Hall.

Mr. Bisson said July is Parks and Rec month, and we'll be launching a social media campaign. This year's theme is "Where You Belong."

Mr. Bisson said there was an answer from our lawyer, and there can be a stand-alone Planet Playground subcommittee with members appointed by the Town Manager. We have to take minutes at future meetings.

5. Old Business

- a. There was no old business discussed.

6. New Business

- a. There was no new business discussed.

7. Review Board Calendar

- a. The next meetings are July 24 and August 28. Ms. Papakonstantis said we'll try to put a subcommittee meeting at 6 PM on those days if we can.

8. Adjournment

MOTION: Ms. Sullivan moved to adjourn. Ms. Harrington seconded. The motion passed 6-0.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Bartell
Recording Secretary