

Recreation Advisory Board  
Wednesday, May 29, 2024  
Town Offices Nowak Room  
7:00 PM  
Final Minutes

1. Call to Order

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

Members Absent: Brinn Sullivan, Dan Provost, 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 1, 2024

**MOTION:** Ms. Harrington moved to approve the Rec Advisory Board minutes of May 1, 2024 as presented. Mr. Nordin seconded. The motion passed 6-0.

4. Recaps:

- a. Court Repairs

Mr. Bisson said the court repairs are complete for now. We are going to get volunteers to systematically repaint the lower courts. This won't solve the underlying issues, but will make it look nicer.

- b. Senior Recap

Mr. Tovey said our Exeter Senior Resource Guide has been updated. We added four or five new organizations. We had survey data from our Senior Sweetheart Luncheon and from residents of 277 Water Street. We also added a binder at 277 that we're updating periodically. The guide is up to 40 pages and there are copies downstairs at Town Hall as well. The Senior Barbeque is this Friday at Town Hall. Indoor walking has been going strong and is now year-round; we're using the indoor walking track at PEA and added an outdoor walking group as well. Water aerobics filled quickly. The pool schedule doesn't work for our aqua zumba instructor, so we're looking for a new instructor for the summer. Mr. Tovey joined the COAST Board of Directors and attended a meeting, which was helpful and interesting. Although Exeter is walkable, a lot of people struggle with transportation. Mr. Bisson said that COAST is not for seniors only, everyone can take advantage of it. Mr. Tovey said we are potentially getting

a large grant for senior programming, but he can't say from where until it's official. Mr. Bisson said it would be a game-changer for our seniors.

c. Pickleball and Tennis

Ms. Neel said the tennis and pickleball programs started May 13. It's been a great start with great weather. Wristband pickup has been going well, with good feedback. Tennis has 47 people registered, with 30 for evenings only. It's 25% residents and 75% non-residents; 45% female, 55% male; and participants are 29 - 85 years old, with average of 53, although not everyone reports their age. We're working with USTA on Tennis in the Park. We have 5 adults and 7 youths registered. Pavel will come back for tennis lessons; he will be offering a free clinic on June 9. Pickleball has 331 people registered, 49 evening only and 58 for morning only. The registrants are 37% resident, 63% non-resident; 54% female, 46% male; and 19 - 93 years old, with an average age of 59. We had 43 registered in the intro class. 7 have signed up for private lessons. We've tried to program only on the lower courts so the upper courts are always available for public play, but sometimes the lower courts overflow. She presented a draft policy on the use of the upper courts. Mr. Wissler said he thinks it's fantastic.

MOTION [later withdrawn]: Mr. Wissler made a motion to adopt the upper court use policy as written. Ms. Harrington seconded. Mr. Dudra voted nay. The motion passed 5-1.

Mr. Dudra said as a volunteer, he can't control if four individuals get together and play on the upper courts. Ms. Papakonstantis said it's the volunteers' job to make them aware of the policy. Mr. Bisson said staff will also go down and monitor. Ms. Neel said we set some levels this season and are trying to collect data to see when people are playing and how long they're waiting, to see where we need to allocate more courts. We have a "paddle rack" system where you put your paddle on the rack for the appropriate level. There's a max of 3 games, and you have to win three games to stay. We play doubles and the winning partners split and stay on. That's so the best player doesn't hog the court the whole time. The wristbands are for tennis and pickleball, it's a visual identification that you've paid and understand the program rules. Mr. Dudra said this year has been much smoother. In the future the town might consider extending the hours. Ms. Ladeau said this wouldn't prohibit someone from going up to the upper courts, it seems like it's referring to official programming from Parks and Rec. Ms. Papakonstantis suggested adding "program participants" to the policy. She said the motion should be withdrawn. Ms. Harrington said she's concerned about excluding program participants from playing by adding that language. Ms. Papakonstantis said this only applies during program time. Mr. Nordin asked about the programming times. Ms. Neel said it's from 7 - 10 in the morning and also in the evening, during peak times, which is why we want to leave the upper courts free.

Ms. Papakonstantis said we will recall the original vote and re-vote post-discussion.

**MOTION:** Mr. Wissler made a motion to adopt the upper court use policy as written. Ms. Harrington seconded. The motion passed 6-0.

Mr. Nordin asked about the divide between tennis and pickleball. Mr. Bisson said it's not ideal but they seem to be coexisting this year.

d. Camp/Pool Update

Mr. Bisson said we're going into summer camp mode. Caroline started counselor training and David started lifeguard training. The pool building has new paint; we're going to start improving the interior of the pool building this fall. The pool water is on today, and we'll be chlorinating and balancing it this week. We're repairing some leaks in the spray pad. Mr. Dudra said as you drive into the Rec parking lot, there's a sharp drop-off where someone could lose a wheel. Mr. Bisson said he would mention it to DPW.

Ms. Neel said we have 275 kids and 34 staff members for summer camp. 27 kids are on scholarship, up from 14 last year. Mr. Bisson thanked the sponsors who made that possible. Ms. Papakonstantis asked if there could be "thank you" banners at the Rec Park. Mr. Bisson said they do get plaques, but they might not want to be thanked so publicly.

Mr. Nordin asked where the lifeguard applicants came from. Ms. Neel said there were a lot of returners and former campers.

5. Discussion Items

a. Sponsorship Packet

Mr. Bisson presented the sponsorship packet created by the spring intern. We are still looking for sponsors. This is a way to get involved in the community. Most special events are free to the public so we lose money. Sponsorship also keeps the cost of the programs down. We will re-evaluate some of these costs, since there is more value in there as numbers increase. We've already sold one or two ads for Neptune Radio. Ms. Papakonstantis suggested adding the number of spots available for each opportunity to the packet.

b. Waitlist Policy

Ms. Neel said we added some language about when to make the payment, "payment must be made immediately to complete registration." Ms. Papakonstantis asked how long someone on the waitlist has to respond back before their spot is given up. Ms. Neel said we might find out at 8 for an 8:30 departure, so we may move on right away to fill that spot. Ms. Papakonstantis said we may want to add something about an immediate response. Mr. Tovey suggested 24 hours. Ms. Harrington said 24 hours is reasonable for most programming. The payment must be immediate, but people might need a few days to come up with a payment for summer camp. Mr. Tovey suggested for trips

leaving within 24 hours, immediate response is required, otherwise people on the waitlist have 24 hours to respond. Ms. Harrington suggested giving people an hour to respond. Mr. Bisson said if it's leaving that morning, we're moving on to the next person. Ms. Harrington asked how often they're calling people with less than 24 hours' notice. Ms. Neel said more often than you'd think. People on the waitlist are excited to get that phone call. Ms. Harrington suggested "response and payment must be made within 24 hours to secure your registration." Mr. Wissler suggested "within 24 hours of notification."

Ms. Neel read the updated policy:

*When a program, activity or event becomes full, a waitlist will be started. Payment will not be taken when being added to the waitlist. Residents and non-residents can join the waitlist online, over the phone, or in person. If a spot becomes available, priority will be given to Exeter residents in the order they joined the waitlist followed by non-residents in the order they joined the waitlist. The Exeter Parks & Recreation Department will call those listed on the waitlist to notify if a space opens. Response and payment must be made within 24 hours of notification to secure your registration. Please note, each individual interested in joining the waitlist for the program, activity, or event must be listed on the waitlist in order to be eligible to register should space become available.*

**MOTION:** Ms. Harrington moved to accept the Exeter Parks and Recreation waitlist policy as amended. Mr. Wissler seconded. The motion passed 6-0.

c. CIP/Budget

Mr. Bisson said we're starting CIP and budget talks to discuss potential projects for 2025. We've come up with two: The Park Improvement Fund and the court repair. We need to come up with a drainage solution and cost estimate to repair the courts. We would put in a request in 2026 to replace it, with a grant application to LWCF to offset \$500,000. The renovation would happen in 2027. We would want to go with the post-tension concrete which is more expensive but won't crack in winter or can be filled in quickly with sealer. That could be \$700,000 or more. The engineering could be \$56,000 - \$75,000. The SCORP or State Comprehensive Outdoor Education plan grant came out this year with a goal to increase usage and get people outside, and we meet all the criteria. Our basketball court is not ADA Accessible. Ms. Papakonstantis asked if the town engineer will help select the firm used, and Mr. Bisson said yes.

Mr. Bisson said in the Keegan report, it was recommended to hire two parks maintenance guys. We're going to advocate for that in the budget. We could cut back on some contracted services.

Ms. Belanger said once Parks and Rec gets through the process and the CIP is put together, the CIP goes to the Planning Board and there are two public hearings. That would be the time for this Board to support it. It would be better to be able to talk about it with numbers. Ms. Harrington said if Greg thinks it's important to get the engineering and the additional staff, the Rec Board should

support that. Ms. Belanger said the town will vet the projects and come up with numbers. The Board could support the concept without any of the numbers.

**MOTION** [not voted]: Mr. Wissler moved that the Rec Advisory Board support the Park Improvement Fund, Capital Improvements to the Tennis Courts, and hiring two additional maintenance people for the Rec Department.

**MOTION:** Mr. Wissler moved that the Rec Advisory Board support the Park Improvement Fund, tennis courts engineering, and hiring two additional maintenance people for the Rec Department. Ms. Harrington seconded. The motion passed 6-0.

#### 6. New Business

- a. Ms. Belanger said we scheduled an All-Boards meeting for Tuesday June 25 6:30 - 8 at the Library. We will talk about 91A guidelines and get feedback on how to make the Boards and Committees better.
- b. Mr. Bisson mentioned the summer Board schedule. Meetings are scheduled for June, July, and August, but staff members won't be available in August. Ms. Papakonstantis asked about the time frame for Planet Playground. Mr. Bisson said meet in June with a plan for fundraising for different amenities. Taking July and August won't be a step back for the project. Ms. Papakonstantis said let's meet June 26 and take July and August off. If an urgent vote is needed we can have a meeting.
- c. Mr. Bisson said Caroline got her certified parks and recreation credentials. All of us are now certified. He and the park staff are attending the New England Turf Show at Exeter High School. About 250 Parks and Rec professionals attend.
- d. Mr. Dudra asked for an update on 10 Hampton Road. Mr. Bisson said hoping to put out an RFP for construction with a fall start date. We're waiting on the Public Safety building to hire an OPM [Owner's Project Manager].

#### 7. Old Business

- a. There was no old business discussed at this meeting.

#### 8. Adjournment

**MOTION:** Ms. Harrington moved to adjourn. Mr. Wissler seconded. The motion passed 6-0. The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Joanna Bartell  
Recording Secretary