

The Waltham Parks-Recreation Board held their February meeting on February 10, 2021 via a Zoom Meeting.

Present were: John Graceffa, Jennie Scafidi, Richard Scanlon, Stacey Tully, Gary Vallerand and Jerry Walker. Absent were: Wayne Cook, Tom Creonte and Patricia Curtin.

Also present were Director, Nick Abruzzi and Assistant Director, Kim Scott.

Chairperson Richard Scanlon called the meeting to order at 12:00 noon. He announced that the meeting was being recorded through the Zoom app and would be shared to WCAC, Waltham's cable channel and would be shown on the local channel at a later date.

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the January 13, 2021 Parks-Recreation Board meeting by Jerry Walker, seconded by Gary Vallerand. All were in favor.

The monthly bills report for the last month will remain in the Recreation Department Office. Director Abruzzi requested that the Parks-Recreation Board stop by the office in the next week to review and sign the bills report.

Director Abruzzi reviewed the Statement of Accounts explaining that the two pages detailed operational and capital budget accounts. Accounts are similar to last month having seen routine expenses and spending. On the Operational Accounts page, Director Abruzzi noted that the 2020 water bills for the spray parks and park irrigation were just paid out of the Kaleidoscope and Spray Parks account. The summer of 2021 will see an additional spray park and park irrigations systems installed, increasing the expected water bills. Director Abruzzi will request additional funds for this account during the budget preparation time. Director Abruzzi drew attention to the Capital Accounts page stating that the final payment for the Cornelia Warren Park improvement project was made, closing the finances for the project. He also noted that the Bobby Connors Planning Department account was used for fence repair after a storm and the account will be closed out in the near future. Director Abruzzi thanked the Planning Department for use of this account. New accounts have been added to the Capital Improvement page to include two accounts for Prospect Hill Park and one account for Monsignor McCabe and Nipper Maher Park's Infield Improvements projects. All accounts are in good standing.

Annual Youth Sports Presentations was next on the agenda. The first group on the agenda was the Prospect Hill Ski Team, represented by Dennis Keohane, President as well as Sean Couture, Treasurer. The Ski Team's packet of information was provided to the Parks-Recreation Board prior to the meeting for review. Mr. Keohane shared that the Prospect Hill Ski Team originated at Prospect Hill Park and moved to Nashoba Valley Ski Area and then Blue Hills Ski Area, their current home location for the last decade. With current COVID regulations, their team will compete among their own team members. Regulations also limited the number of athletes each team had registered. Prospect Hill Ski Team did not accept new athletes, this season. The philosophy of the Buddy Werner League is to promote fun and safe skill development, the Ski Team focused on personal improvements. Mr. Keohane noted that the team had some change of leadership this year, with Brian and Ronnie Sue Bower stepping down from their positions on the Board as well as coaching. Mike Davis was the first new coach for the Ski team in over 25 years.

The Parks-Recreation Board thanked Mr. Keohane and Mr. Couture for their time and efforts.

The next youth group presentation was the Waltham Youth Football and Cheer, represented by Francois Joseph, President. The Waltham Youth Football and Cheer's packet of information was provided to the Parks-Recreation Board prior to the meeting for review. Mr. Joseph shared with the Parks-Recreation Board that the League modified their season this past fall after merging with the Eastern Mass Youth Football and Cheer League. With the current regulations, Waltham Football Program did not feel they could accommodate the youngest age groups, safely. A flag football program was offered in lieu of their traditional tackle program, for those in grades five through grade eight. The grade five and grade eight teams excelled in their divisions. Waltham Football is looking to follow the High School protocols and hope to offer a tackle program this spring and return to a flag, cheer and tackle program in the Fall of 2021. Director Abruzzi asked if the League's insurance changed with less athletes and different level of play. Mr. Joseph went on to explain that the age of the athletes and the size of the league impacted the total cost of the insurance. Mr. Joseph stated that the plans for next season look to improve as a new Flag Director will be in place and an in-town program option will be provided as well as a travel program option. He has seen area school department's offering a middle school level football team, which has decreasing the number of teams found in that age bracket throughout their League. A clinic for parents was held to educate them on the types of drills and plays that the athletes will be exposed to during practices from youth to the NFL. Coaches for each team are First Aid/CPR certified. All coaches complete a Coaching Certificate program as well as a Heads-Up program through American Youth Football (AYF). Mr. Joseph further explained that fundraising has been challenging with COVID restrictions and the Program is doing ok, financially, even though they are currently showing a negative balance. Their primary goal has been to have the kids on the field and playing. The Parks-Recreation Board thanked Mr. Joseph for his time and effort.

The next youth group presentation was the Waltham Youth Soccer Organization, represented by Paul Bucelwicz, Interim-President and Duncan Remage-Healey, Interim-Treasurer. The Waltham Youth Soccer's packet of information was provided to the Parks-Recreation Board prior to the meeting for review. Director Abruzzi shared with the Parks-Recreation Board that long standing President Mike Guzzi has recently stepped down and an interim Board has been put in place. The Interim Board has been in communication with the Recreation Department as the spring season is planned. Mr. Bucelwicz stated an election is scheduled for the end of the Spring 2021 season, where he believes the Interim Board will continue. Mr. Bucelwicz stated this past fall the Waltham Youth Soccer program ran an in-town program and approximately 430 athletes were enrolled. COVID regulations included that all athletes, coaches and spectators were required to wear masks. Each athlete was allowed to have one spectator that sat in a designated area, with proper social distancing. A one-way flow of traffic in and out of the facility was established. The pre-k and Kindergarten program was not offered during the fall season. The upcoming spring 2021 season is anticipated to look to be comparable to the fall season and will include the return of the travel component and the younger age brackets. At this time, the Spring 2021 registration has enrolled approximately 650 athletes. Waltham Youth Soccer had a rainy-day fund that has helped keep the Program in good financial health. One of their expenses was the contract for their Coaching Clinic Director who provides clinics and trainings for coaches. The individual contracted for this position was employed through

Global Premier Soccer (GPS), a company that closed in 2020. The individual will continue on in this position as Coaching Clinic Director. The other major expense, explained by Mr. Remage-Healey was for Professional Fees, as the Program was audited by the IRS this past year. The Parks-Recreation Board thanked Mr. Bucelwicz and Mr. Remage-Healey for their time and effort.

The next item on the agenda was Prospect Hill Park – Vehicle Access during Construction. Director Abruzzi explained that the funding has been secured and the contract for construction will be signed in the near future. Construction will begin when the weather permits. The Base area of Prospect Hill Park including the vehicle access road into the Park will be closed for the duration of the project. The remainder of the Park will be open for pedestrian use. Temporary signs have now been placed at the Totten Pond Road entrance notifying park users of the future closure. Additional signage and social media posts will encourage park users to enter Prospect Hill Park through the South Gate entrance on Prospect Hill Road and/or to park in the designated lot at 200 5th Ave. Director Abruzzi had asked a neighboring business, if access to their parking lot would be available during construction. They have allocated between 75 – 80 parking spots to be reserved for Park.

A motion to approve the closure of vehicle access into Prospect Hill Park, during construction, with signage providing alternate pedestrian access was made by Gary Vallerand and seconded by Stacey Tully. All were in favor.

The next item on the agenda was the 2021 Proposed Summer Fees. Director Abruzzi explained the one-page document to include programs offered by Waltham Recreation Department Staff as well as third party program offerings. The proposed fees would be for best case program offerings and fees and program hours would be modified based on State Regulations and Protocols for the summer of 2021. A fee increase occurred in 2020.

A motion to approve the 2021 Proposed Summer Fees was made by Jerry Walker and seconded by John Graceffa. All were in favor.

The election of the 2021 Chairperson and Vice Chairperson was next on the agenda. Jerry Walker made a motion to nominate Richard Scanlon as the Chairperson and it was seconded by John Graceffa. All were in favor.

Gary Vallerand made a motion to nominate Jerry Walker as Vice Chairperson and it was seconded by John Graceffa. All were in favor.

Director's Report:

Bench Dedication – The Recreation Department recently received an application for a bench dedication at Hillcroft Playground. Director Abruzzi will be reaching out to the Bench Dedication Sub Committee in the next week to schedule a zoom meeting to review the request.

Veterans Memorial Skating Rink Update – The curfew has recently been lifted allowing for late night private hockey groups to resume. This has been a pleasant financial boost to

the Rink. The pre-registration Public Skating continues to be successful and registration for a Skills Clinic offered by Recreation Supervisor Adam Dallaire is close to being filled. These two programs have assisted to reducing the lost revenue from the curfew.

McDonald and Thompson Playgrounds Improvement Project – The funding has been secured for this project. The contract will be signed in the near future. Construction will begin when the weather permits.

Prospect Hill Park Project - The funding has been secured for this project. The contract will be signed in the near future. Construction will begin when the weather permits.

Infield Improvement Project – The infield improvements to Monsignor McCabe Playground and Jake Dennis Field at Nipper Maher Park will be scheduled in the fall of 2021. This will allow for the baseball season, at each location, to occur without interruption. The fence work will commence once weather allows. The Recreation Department staff have asked the field users to complete their seasons by September to allow for the improvements to occur.

Project Requests for Lazazzero Playground and surrounding area: The Parks-Recreation Board was sent two separate requests for improvements that would impact Lazazzero Playground and Shore Road. The proposed projects will be on the agenda for March 2021 meeting for discussion.

Spring 2021 Registration - Registration for spring programs will begin on March 3, 2021 online. All in person programming will continue to be held outdoors.

Winter Programs – Programming this winter has been successful. This success is in part to the effort from CPW Department. Director Abruzzi wanted to thank the CPW Department for helping maintain the program locations during the snow storms. Their efforts have been appreciated.

Conflict of Interest Certificates – Director Abruzzi requested that any Parks-Recreation Board Member that has not turned in their Conflict-of-Interest Certificate to do so in the near future.

Other Business:

Board Member Gary Vallerand inquired where Park Ranger Adam Green as well as the Rink Staff, would be during the summer months because of the Prospect Hill Park Construction. Director Abruzzi stated that he has already met with all those impacted and equipment will be relocated to the Veterans Memorial Skating Rink, locker rooms. This will allow staff access to tools and equipment that would normally be stored at Prospect Hill Park. Park Ranger Adam Green will continue to monitor Prospect Hill, during construction, and throughout the entirety of Prospect Hill Park.

A motion to adjourn was made by Gary Vallerand and seconded by John Graceffa. All were in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 12:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kimberly A. Scott
Assistant Director