

The Waltham Parks-Recreation Board held their January meeting on January 13, 2021 via a Zoom Meeting.

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

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

Chairperson Richard Scanlon called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. 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 December 9, 2020 Parks-Recreation Board meeting by Jerry Walker, seconded by John Graceffa. 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. The Veterans Rink Salary and Wages line has increased from last month. Funding was transferred from the Recreation budget to the Rink's to cover the full time Rink employees during the summer months, when they are working in the Parks. The offset is just over \$27,000. Director Abruzzi was just notified that the part time Rink employee's salaries, whose duties include sanitation and contract tracing, will be reimbursed back to the Rink accounts from the COVID/FEMA funding. Additional Capital accounts will be added to the financial report next month as funding was recently approved for the improvements to McDonald Playground and Thompson Playgrounds, Infield Improvements as well as improvements to Prospect Hill Park. 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. The Recreation Department requested that they be moved to the February Parks-Recreation Board meeting to allow them more time to get paperwork in order and they agreed to do so.

The next youth group presentation was the Waltham Legion Baseball, represented by Mike Peterson. The League's packet of information was provided to the Parks-Recreation Board prior to the meeting for review. Mr. Peterson explained the Legion League canceled their 2020 season due to COVID-19. Mr. Peterson was able to register a team in the Lou Tompkins Baseball League. Their season was held from mid-June through the end of August. Mr. Peterson stated he would like to continue in the Lou Tompkins League as the travel locations were geographically closer and the League offered a range of age groups allowing for the potential of a second team in the 2021 season. Director Abruzzi stated that he will amend the name of the league from Legion to Lou Tompkins for future reference. The Parks-Recreation Board thanked Mr. Peterson for his time and effort.

The next item on the agenda was the 2021 Field Permit Application and Fee. The first page of the document was six-years of statistics of field rentals. This past year, field rentals declined due to limited permits being issued due to COVID regulations.

The Parks-Recreation Board had previously sent the Law Department a definition for an "Organized Group" for review. Director Abruzzi has worked with Michelle from the Law Department to update areas of the permit, have consistent language, and make the field use policies defensible to protect the City of Waltham. Modifications to the permit application include consistent language referring to the Parks-Recreation Board, amending the definition of an "Organized Group", adding a list of specific facilities that require a permit, updated language on the Liability and Insurance section; specifying a dollar amount (\$1Million) required for insurance binders and an option for a policy waiver form. A list of rental fees for the two-hour block of time as well as potential additional fees, if applicable, were also listed in the document. There was also an updated section on the City's Ordinances for firearms, drug paraphernalia, registered sex offenders and alcohol on City property. Director Abruzzi thanked Michelle from the Law Department for her time and effort to improve the Field Permit Application.

In the Law Department opinion, it was requested that the Parks-Recreation Board provide a rationale for 12 people being used within the Organized Group definition. Director Abruzzi stated a specific number within the Permit application provided a defined number and parameters when needing to enforce the regulations.

Director Abruzzi further explained that updated sections of this Permit application will be applied to the Veterans Rink Request and Policy as well as incorporated into a Recreation Department Operation and Procedures Manual which is currently being created.

Director Abruzzi recommended the rates for the 2021 remain at \$150 per two-hour time block. This form will be available beginning on February 1, 2021 for spring permit requests.

A motion to approve the 2021 Field Permit Application and Fees was made by Tom Creonte and seconded by Gary Vallerand. All were in favor.

The 2021 Rink Request and Policy Agreement was next on the agenda. Director Abruzzi stated the 2021-2022 Veterans Memorial Skating Rink Request and Policy agreement form was updated to include an updated section on the City's Ordinances for firearms, drug paraphernalia, registered sex offenders and alcohol on City property, as updated by the Law Department in the Field Permit Application.

A motion to approve the 2021-2022 Rink Request and Policy Agreement was made by Gary Vallerand and seconded by Tricia Curtin. All were in favor.

The 2021-2022 Rink Rates were next on the agenda. Director Abruzzi recommended keeping the rates the same with \$200 for nonprofit groups and \$220 for private groups. The pandemic has affected many individuals and groups financially and Director Abruzzi did not feel this was a time for increase.

A motion to approve the 2021-2022 Rink Rates was made by Tom Creonte and seconded by Gary Vallerand. All were in favor.

Director's Report:

Veterans Memorial Skating Rink Update – Ed Kelley, Jr provided the Parks-Recreation Board with a status report of the Rink. The season has seen many challenges including new COVID policy requirements; additional sanitization and contact tracing by staff as well as reduced hours due to the State of Massachusetts curfew.

Board Member Jerry Walker inquired if the reduced hours have impacted revenue at the Rink. Director Abruzzi explained how he recently challenged staff to creatively find additional revenue options. As he elaborated, a reservation based public skating system was tested in December and was well received. Additional times will be added. Adam Dallaire, Recreation Supervisor will also be offering a skills-based clinic during February Vacation.

Veterans Memorial Rink Feedback – Director Abruzzi received a phone call from a patron of the Rink. This individual wanted to express how pleased they were with the clear and safe COVID protocols at this facility. They also went on to praise the level of customer service they continuously receive as well as how the facility is clean and well maintained.

Graverson/Mokema Project – The Parks-Recreation Board was provided with before and after photos of the land restoration project at the Mokema Conservation Land, located at the end of Seminole Ave. The excess fill that was removed from the Mokema Conservation land will make up for the extra fill at Graverson Playground. Mokema will be surveyed in the next few days and plantings will be added in the Spring.

Public Skating – A reservation based public skating program was tested in December and received positive feedback. A Monday opportunity has now become available. A schedule for reservation based Public Skating will also be added to the February Vacation week schedule. This will help with lost revenue due to the Waltham Youth Hockey's Tournament being cancelled.

Hockey Skills Program during February Vacation – Recreation Supervisor Adam Dallaire will be offering a skills-based ice hockey program during February Vacation Week. The flier was provided in the Parks-Recreation Board's information. Two age groups will be offered. This program will utilize some of the hours traditionally allocated for the Youth Hockey Vacation Week Tournament, cancelled for this year. We are excited to be offering this new opportunity.

Escape Box Rentals – New to the "At Home" box opportunities, Escape Boxes will now be offered this Winter. The Recreation Department has three themed boxes being offered: Harry Potter, Game Board Mystery, and International Spy. Families can reserve the box online, picking it up on a Friday and returning it on Monday for \$20.00. The Harry Potter Box is almost sold out for the next two months. We are very excited about this new offering.

McDonald and Thompson Playgrounds Improvement Project - The construction bid was opened on Tuesday, January 12, 2021. A total of ten bids were received for this project. Green Acres was the low qualified bidder. We are excited to be working again with Green Acres. This CPC funded project is expected to begin in February 2021.

Prospect Hill Park Project - Director Abruzzi attended City Council on December 21, 2021 seeking funds for this project. The project funding was approved. Green Acres was awarded the contract for this project. It is anticipated to begin construction at this location in March of 2021.

Infield Improvement Project - Funding was approved for infield renovations at Nipper Maher Park's Jake Dennis Field as well as Monsignor McCabe Playground Major League diamond. MJ Cataldo, contractor awarded this project, will begin work once the weather permits.

Waltham Youth Soccer President - It was recently announced that Mike Guzzi, long time Waltham Youth Soccer President has stepped down as President. Mr. Guzzi's dedication, effort and talents over the years have been paramount to the successful league we see today. The interim board's contact information has been sent to the Recreation Department. We have already reached out to the Interim President to assist with requirements and expectations going into the spring season. The Parks-Recreation Board all shared their congratulations and thanks for Mr. Guzzi's efforts and time.

Staff Appreciation - Director Abruzzi expressed his appreciation and wanted to draw attention to the Recreation Supervisors who have been offering 100% outdoor in person programming, this winter. The staff have shown up to work in layered winter clothes and have been offering a variety of interactive programs for preschool through teens. Director Abruzzi is impressed with the creativity and dedication of the Recreation Supervisors.

Other Business:

Board Member Tom Creonte noted he had recently spent time at Cornelia Warren Park and was impressed with all it had to offer. He mentioned that the Park was busy even on the cool winter days. He had an enjoyable experience.

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

The meeting adjourned at 6:24 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kimberly A. Scott
Assistant Director