

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

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

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

Vice Chairperson Jerry Walker 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 February 10, 2021 Parks-Recreation Board meeting by John Graceffa, 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. The operational accounts reflected routine spending. Approximately \$70,000.00 of water bills for spray parks and park irrigation was recently paid out of the Kaleidoscope and Spray Parks account. The Veterans Rink - Salaries & Wages has also seen an increase, as the COVID-19 FEMA reimbursement for part time staff have been received. These part time staff were responsible for contract tracing and additional sanitation at the Veterans Memorial Skating Rink. All accounts are in good standing.

The Summer 2021 Staff Rates were next on the agenda. Director Abruzzi noted that a two-page document was provided. The first page provided a historical perspective of staff rates over the last five years with proposed rates for 2021. The second page is the State of Massachusetts Minimum Fair Wages chart, indicating increases from 2021 through 2023. Director Abruzzi recommended increasing the program instructors and spray park attendants from \$13.00 to \$15.00 per hour. It's important to have a competitive rate that will attract qualified applicants. The supervisor's rate of pay would stay consistent to last year. The lifeguard positions will be eliminated, as the pool at Prospect Hill will be removed during the Capital Improvement project.

A motion to approve the 2021 Summer Staff rates was made by Gary Vallerand and seconded by Stacey Tully. All were in favor.

The 2021-2022 Parks-Recreation Board Meeting Schedule was next on the agenda. Director Abruzzi explained that the schedule is comparable to past years. Meetings are scheduled September through June.

A motion to approve the 2021-2022 Parks-Recreation Board Meeting Schedule was made by John Graceffa and seconded by Stacey Tully. All were in favor.

A dedication request was the next item on the agenda. Director Abruzzi shared that the Dedication Subcommittee recently met to review a completed application. The Subcommittee voted to approve this request and bring it forward to the Parks-Recreation Board. The application and letter of intent were provided to the Parks-Recreation Board prior to the meeting. Once approved, this dedication request would be forwarded to the Mayor and City Council for final approval.

A motion to approve the dedication request was made by Stacey Tully and seconded by Wayne Cook. All were in favor.

The Waltham Recreation Project request was the next item on the agenda. Director Abruzzi previously emailed two proposed projects and designs at or near Lazazzero Playground, Lake Street. One project was sent from the Conservation Commission recommending a project along the shore of Hardy Pond and into the Park abutting the baseball field. The other proposed project, sent from the Hardy Pond Association, was for improvements to Shore Road, creating a pocket park. Director Abruzzi noted that neither project was currently listed on the Capital Improvement five-year schedule. The Conservation Commission's proposal indicated that grant funding may be an option for this project. Director Abruzzi was seeking the Parks-Recreation Board feedback on these proposals. He recommended a site visit to Lazazzero Playground to look at the areas in discussion. He also offered to have a representative from each proposed project on site. After discussion, it was decided to have a site visit for only the Parks-Recreation Board Members. Director Abruzzi will email options for meeting times. He will also communicate with both parties informing them the Parks-Recreation Board was made aware of the proposals and an update will be shared with them soon.

Director's Report:

Veterans Rink Update- The rink season has just about a month remaining. The season went incredibly well and the staff have been great, after this challenging and unprecedented year. Director Abruzzi has met with rink staff to begin preparation to remove the ice and prepare shut down of the facility as well as painting and cleaning in preparation for next season.

Revenue Generating Programs Rink - With the cancelation of Waltham Youth Hockey's February Vacation Tournament, the Rink was expected to lose close to \$10,000.00 in revenue. Creative revenue generating program ideas included two Hockey Skills programs with Recreation Supervisor Adam Dallaire and registration based public skating. The combined revenue received to date is more than \$11,000.00. Director Abruzzi provided flyers for each of the programs as well as breakdowns of the registration based public skating. Director Abruzzi commended the staff on their ingenuity.

McDonald and Thompson Playground - Pre construction meetings were held at the McDonald and Thompson Playground on Monday, March 8, 2021. Construction is scheduled to begin at these locations in the next three to four weeks. Green Acres Landscaping and Construction is the contractor for this project.

Prospect Hill Park - A pre-construction meeting was held on Monday, March 8, 2021 at Prospect Hill Park. Construction is scheduled to begin within one to two weeks. Green Acres Landscape and Construction is the contractor for this project.

Prospect Hill Park Website - Director Abruzzi sent the Parks-Recreation Board a link yesterday to show the new website established for everything Prospect Hill Park. This live website features historical information, project information, the Master Plan, Forestry Management Plan, expected future maintenance projects as well as great photos from throughout the property. The website will be announced on social media and will be updated throughout the construction project. Director Abruzzi further detailed that Adam Green, Park Ranger has a link to a Ranger Newsletter. This will be updated regularly. Director Abruzzi thanked all those who made this website a success.

Prospect Hill Park Vehicle Access - As mentioned at last month's meeting, vehicle access will not be available off of Totten Pond Road, during construction. We have partnered with Chris Quincy from Fifth Avenue at City Point to allow residents to park at 200 5th Avenue. A special thanks to Mr. Quincy for providing this opportunity. A letter providing permission of use to the parking area, during construction, was provided in the Parks-Recreation Board information.

Spring Registration - Registration for spring programs began on March 3, 2021. Registration numbers for outdoor in-person programming continues to be strong. In conjunction to in-person programming, virtual programs, take home boxes, and escape boxes are available. This season, a new escape is available, providing Waltham residents with four escape box options.

Summer Programs - The Recreation Department staff are in the process of planning summer activities. It's anticipated to have updated guidelines from the State of Massachusetts that will help provide clarity in safe summer programming.

Basketball Hoops - Basketball hoops were reinstalled at parks throughout the City, this past week.

Warrendale Baseball - Warrendale Little League's enrollment numbers for this upcoming season are declining in the 9 - 12-year-old age groups. Director Abruzzi and Assistant Director Scott have met with Chris Jensen, Warrendale Little League President and discussed some options to allow for baseball for all ages. For this season, those athletes ages 9 - 12 will be merged with Waltham Baseball. All of the younger age groups have strong enrollment numbers. Warrendale Little League will focus their attention on developing and retaining those athletes. It was also confirmed that Warrendale Little League will operate the concession stand at Monsignor McCabe Playground.

Senior Prom - Director Abruzzi was contacted about using the Waltham Community and Cultural Center for a location for the Waltham High School Seniors to utilize for their prom photos. Director Abruzzi will provide updates as details become available.

Other Business:

Board Member, Tricia Curtin inquired on the construction vehicles being staged at Prospect Hill Park. Director Abruzzi explained permission was given for the trucks to be staged at the Park, in the early morning hours. This arrangement will continue until the Veterans Rink closes, for the season, and then the trucks will relocate across the street. Director Abruzzi and several staff have been in communication with a representative of the High School construction project.

Additional conversation was also had regarding improving communication between the Waltham School Department and the Waltham Recreation Department on these types of issues.

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

The meeting adjourned at 6:02 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kimberly A. Scott
Assistant Director