

The Waltham Recreation Board held their March Board meeting on March 9, 2022 at the Waltham Recreation Department, 510 Moody St, Waltham, MA 02453.

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

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the February 9, 2022 Parks-Recreation Board Meeting by Tom Creonte and seconded by John Graceffa. All were in favor.

The monthly bills were circulated and signed by all Parks-Recreation Board Members.

Director Abruzzi reviewed the statement of accounts explaining that two pages in their folders detailed operational and capital budget balances. Director Abruzzi noted that on the operational budget page under the Support of Recreation Activities account athletic equipment has been purchased. Spending for summer programs has also begun. In addition, the Cornelia Warren Park capital improvement account has been closed out and the balance of \$60,000.00 has been transferred to pay for new amusements at Prospect Hill Park. All accounts are in good standing.

The next item on the agenda was the Youth Sports Group Presentations.

The first youth sports presentation of the evening was Waltham Youth Football represented by Francois Joseph, League President. Mr. Joseph noted that registration for the flag football program was good. This past season saw an increase in registration for the tackle program. The tackle program had teams in the grades 3-4 division through middle school. New Cheer Directors oversaw the cheer program this past season. It was noted that the concession stand revenue was lower than past years as food trucks were brought in on games days in lieu of opening the concession stand. The league would receive a percentage of total sales from the trucks. Commitments from volunteers to staff the concession stand was a challenge this past season. Director Abruzzi noted that the design of Lowell Field was just about complete. If it's foreseen that construction would impact the football and cheer season an alternative location would be provided. The Parks-Recreation Board thanked Mr. Joseph for his time and involvement.

The next youth sports group of the evening was Waltham Youth Hockey, represented by Paul Aborn, Treasurer. Mr. Aborn stated that the financials submitted were for the 2020-21 season. He was very pleased that only a small number of athletes opted out of playing due to the pandemic. He commended the parents and athletes for their resilience to the ever-changing health protocols. Mr. Aborn thanked the Veterans Memorial Rink staff for their safe and efficient protocols. Director Abruzzi noted that it was a team effort and everyone can be commended for assisting in following the protocols and keeping everyone safe. The Parks-Recreation Board thanked Mr. Aborn for his time and involvement.

The election of the 2022 Chairperson and Vice Chairperson was next on the agenda.

John Graceffa made a motion to nominate Richard Scanlon as the Chairperson and it was seconded by Tricia Curtin. All were in favor.

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

The next item on the agenda was the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Request for Year 48. The two-page document made available to the Parks-Recreation Board provided a request letter to the Planning Department as well as a breakdown of the requested projects. This year's requests included \$100,000.00 for tree plantings at Lazazzero Playground. Funding for plantings would assist in reducing erosion along the shore line of Hardy Pond. The second requested project of \$300,000.00 was for ADA Composite Restroom Facility for the Fernald Property. The final requested project of \$300,000.00 was for assistance in purchasing a universal playground for the Fernald Property.

A motion to approve the Community Development Block Grant Year 48 request was made by Tom Creonte and seconded by Stacey Tully. All were in favor.

The Summer 2022 Staff rates chart, outlining the last five years was available in the Parks-Recreation Board folder. Director Abruzzi proposed maintaining the same rates (\$15.00) as 2021. These competitive rates will continue to attract a high quality of prospective employees. The State of Massachusetts minimum wage for 2022 increased to \$14.25.

A motion to approve the 2022 proposed summer staff rates was made by Tom Creonte and seconded by John Graceffa. All were in favor.

The 2022-2023 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 and are traditionally held on the second Wednesday of each month.

A motion to approve the 2022-2023 Parks-Recreation Board Meeting Schedule was made by John Graceffa and seconded by Tom Creonte. All were in favor.

The Proposed FY 23 Budget Proposal was next on the agenda. Director Abruzzi explained that the operation budget was sent to departments last week. The Fernald Property is in design phase for improvements to the approximate 120 Recreation controlled acres. This year's proposed budget request includes items for the Fernald Property, with the expectation that it will be open for part of the year.

Increases to the FY 23 budget proposal include annual step raises for staff. Other major increases include four new employees for the Fernald Property at a pro-rated amount, understanding the property would open later in the fiscal year. These employees would include a full time Assistant Superintendent, two Facility Supervisors (union positions) well as a Recreation Supervisor. In addition to the Fernald Property, additional seasonal part time staff would be needed for supervision of the Amusements at Prospect Hill Park as well as the Fitch and Government Center Gymnasiums.

With the newly built spray park at Prospect Hill Park and the two updated spray parks this past year at McDonald and Thompson Playgrounds, an increase was requested to the water and

electrical accounts. Additional requests will include funding for water, electrical and maintenance/supplies to manage the new recreational amenities at the Fernald property

This budget is a great starting point for the developing Fernald Property with expectation to request full year salaries and full year utilities for the FY 2024 budget. Director Abruzzi also noted that he is requesting a grade increase to the Assistant Director position. As the Department continues to expand and take on new facilities it's important that the Recreation Department increase resources for employees with added responsibilities. Director Abruzzi noted that much thought has gone into this budget and he felt confident it was addressing the needs of the Department.

A motion to approve the FY 2023 Proposed Budget was made by Gary Vallerand and seconded by John Graceffa. All were in favor.

Director's Report:

Lowell Field – The public meeting for the Lowell Field renovations was held in the summer of 2022. Recently, renderings were made available to the public online to review and comment. Based on those comments, a final design has been established. This new design includes: pickleball courts, separate from the tennis courts, basketball court and hockey court with lights, a bocce court with a shade pavilion, adult fitness equipment and walking path; a playground for ages 2-5 and 5-12 as well as a spray park. A pavilion with picnic tables and gaming tables will also be included. The open space was preserved. The project should be ready to bid for construction by the spring of 2022.

Veterans Athletic Complex – The Recreation Department is working with NESRA Engineering to replace the turf at the Veterans Athletic Complex. A meeting was held with NESRA Engineering this past week to review final plans. This project should be out to bid for construction in the next few weeks. A sample of the turf was provided for Parks-Recreation Board members to view. Assistant Director Scott recently went to Jordan Field at Harvard University to view the preferred turf installed.

Fitness Equipment at Prospect Hill Park – Director Abruzzi attended City Council a few weeks ago to have the donation approved from Chris Quincy of Fifth Avenue at City Point for the fitness equipment and installation on the sunset trail within Prospect Hill Park. The installation will occur this spring.

Prospect Hill Park Amenities – New amenities are being installed at the base area of Prospect Hill Park. A train and frogger ride were recently purchased as well as installation of a volleyball court, gaga pit and archery range. These amenities will be open later this spring.

July 4th – The return of the Free Family July 4th event will be held on Monday, July 4, 2022. This event, held at Prospect Hill Park will occur during the day and then the fireworks will be held at a different location later in the day.

Mask Mandate Update – The mask mandate was lifted on Monday, March 7, 2022 for all recreational programs.

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

The meeting adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kimberly A. Scott
Assistant Director