

The Waltham Recreation Board held their October meeting on October 14, 2020 via a Zoom Meeting.

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

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 September 16, 2020 Board meeting by Jerry Walker, seconded by Wayne Cook. All were in favor.

The monthly bills report for the last month will remain in the Recreation Department Office. Director Abruzzi requested that the 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 have been updated by the Auditor's Department and reflect up to date balances. The annual carry forwards have been completed. On the Capital Improvement page, Director Abruzzi drew attention to an encumbered amount of \$3,116.00 for Hillcroft Playground. Additional trees will be planted in the near future. All accounts are in good standing.

Director Abruzzi took a moment to acknowledge the Full Time Recreation Staff; Kathy Gross, Kara Greeley, Adam Dallaire, Ben Kiwanuka, Ed Kelley, Jr. and Adam Green logged into the Zoom Meeting. Recreation Board members have requested them to attend a meeting to acknowledge their efforts. Director Abruzzi recognized the staff for their efforts in adapting COVID-19 protocols into successful outdoor summer experiences. The staff takes tremendous pride in their work. Recreation Board Members acknowledged the staff and shared their appreciation.

Next on the agenda was the Annual Youth Sports Presentation – Waltham Youth Baseball. Representing Waltham Baseball was Bill Hanley, President as well as Sean George, Treasurer. The League's financial report was sent to the Board, prior to the meeting. Mr. Hanley described how the League has made adaptations to the COVID-19 protocols and planned for their season. The spring season was pushed to the summer months. The State Reopening Protocols granted approval to begin practicing on June 10, 2020 and games began on July 6, 2020. The League gathered many generous donations. Athletes who had previously registered were given the option to play or to receive a refund. Many athletes who opted out of playing this past spring/summer donated their registration fee back to the League. Donors provided face covering to all athletes. Registration numbers for the spring/summer program as well as the fall season were stable. Mr. Hanley was pleased to report there was no cases of COVID-19 to date.

Two Waltham Youth Baseball board members will be retiring at the end of this season. Mr. Hanley will return for his final year as President, in the 2021 season. He has held the role of President for seven seasons.

Sean George, Treasurer noted that many strategic planning sessions were held prior the start of the spring/summer season. The decision was made not to host a T-Ball division, in 2020. Overall expenses for the season were less, due to fewer games played. Mr. George and Mr. Hanley also discussed a grant received from Little League International and Honda. This funding will be used to replace refrigerators and freezers in the concession stands. Director Abruzzi asked to be included in the process of upgrades. Mr. Hanley took a moment to thank Matt Philpott from the Park Department for his efforts in maintaining the fields. The Recreation Board thanked Waltham Youth Baseball for their efforts.

The Warrendale Little League and Waltham Girls Softball chose to not operate, due to the pandemic. Their financial documents and a summary were provided as well as a letter from each league with their plans for the upcoming 2021 season. Both leagues reflected a positive balance in their financials.

Director Abruzzi has already been in conversation with Trish Dagostino, Waltham Girls Softball President with questions and plans for the upcoming year.

After four years as the President of Warrendale Little League, Tim O'Toole has decided to step down. His successor Chris Jenson, will be meeting with Recreation Department staff to begin planning for the upcoming season, in the near future. Director Abruzzi thanked Mr. O'Toole for his time and energy devoted to Warrendale Little League.

Recreation Field/Facility Application Discussion was next on the agenda. A copy of the current Waltham Recreation Department 2020 Athletic Field and Recreation Permit Policy and Procedures as well as a comparative chart of other local recreation departments was provided to the Recreation Board. The topic of discussion focused on the current policy's need for a definition of an "organized group".

During the pandemic, there has been a number of unauthorized groups using Waltham facilities. Traditionally, there is not an issue, as facilities are scheduled and there are staff overseeing the facilities. Two facilities were noted to be "permit only" use. Those groups who request permits are not that of concern, but those groups who show up and are using facilities without an understanding of health and safety protocols or without proper notice. A formal definition would assist with enforcement at the facilities. The Recreation Board is not due to approve the 2021 Athletic Field and Recreation Facility Policy until the upcoming winter and this discussion gives everyone time to review the information and ask questions. The Department's comprehensive policies are reviewed and updated each year by the Recreation Board.

Board discussion included not wanting to discourage pickup games and wanting to encourage families to be active at their local park, especially during the pandemic. A permit request form would not be for basketball and tennis courts. A potential "organized group" definition might include, specifying a minimum number of individuals to be

considered a group. The fiscal implications of unauthorized users could cause additional wear and tear on facilities.

Director Abruzzi made a final recommendation that a definition was to be presented to the Recreation Board at the November meeting. At that time, they will discuss and approve the definition. The final verbiage will be sent to the Law Department for review.

Director's Report:

Graverson/Mokema Project – The Graverson Playground project has had an outstanding issue with the Conservation Commission. The Playground had an additional 2,500 cubic yards of fill added during construction that needs to be removed prior to meeting the Order of Conditions close out requirements with the Conservation Commission.

In conjunction with the Conservation Commission, Mokema Conservation Land was identified as a location to remove the excess fill. The removal of fill at this location will begin the week of October 19, 2020. The approved design was created by Carolyn Cooney and Associates and the work will be completed by Green Acres Landscaping. Completing this work at the Mokema site will satisfy all requirements at Graverson Playground and a certificate of compliance will be approved by the Conservation Commission once this work is complete.

Prospect Hill Park – The bid opening was held on September 30, 2020. There were eight bids submitted. Green Acres Landscaping & Construction was awarded the bid with a price of \$1.75 million. The Recreation Department was extremely pleased with this cost and are currently seeking funding.

Summer 2020 Summary – The Board was sent an overview for the 2020 Summer season. The many challenges and new COVID-19 protocols were outlined. The staff did an amazing job in providing a great experience and memories for all participants.

Wellington House Farm Restoration Project – The land clearing and tree removal at the Wellington House Farm is almost completed. Belko Construction is scheduled to be completed in the near future.

Fall Program updates – Fall programs are being held outdoors. With minimal weather interruptions everyone is having an enjoyable experience. We have received positive reviews from families. The programs will continue outdoors as long as the weather holds. Staff and participants are discovering new parks for programming experience that have not been used previously.

Winter Programs – The winter program offering is currently being created. The City of Waltham COVID-19 rating and the reopening of public buildings will influence if programs can potentially be held indoors. In the event that indoor programs are not possible, Recreation Staff will continue to plan for outdoor programs, virtual programs, and “at home” boxes.

McDonald/Thompson Project update – The design for both facilities is close to completion. Plans are being circulated to relevant City Department's for review. The

finalized plan will be presented to the Recreation Board in the near future for approval and then the project will seek funding.

Infield Renovations Project – Bids were received in the winter of 2020 for renovations to the infields of Monsignor McCabe Playground and Nipper Maher Park. The projects have been sent to the Mayor and City Council seeking funding.

Veterans Memorial Skating Rink update – The Rink has been open over a month and the Recreation Department is pleased with operations. The staff enforce the new health and safety protocols and keep the facility safe and clean.

Fields update – As the permitting for fields commences, it has been noticed that there is a decrease in unauthorized groups using the facilities. Most groups will complete their seasons by mid-November.

Pickleball – As discussed at previous Recreation Board meetings, pickleball is becoming a very popular sport. Lines have been recently painted at the Graverson Playground and Lowell Field tennis courts. Recreation Supervisor, Ben Kiwanuka has been offering pickleball times at Graverson Playground, this fall.

Letter of Thanks – A letter of appreciation was recently forwarded to the Recreation Department from the Mayor. The letter shares the resident's positive experiences at a few different parks.

Declaration of Public Health Emergency – Prior to the Recreation Board meeting, Director Abruzzi forwarded a Declaration of Public Health Emergency notification. This requires everyone to wear a mask when around Waltham. This notification has been shared with Recreation Staff, youth sports leagues, as well as permitted users to the Rink and fields. Updated signs will be hung in the parks in the next day. We will continue to update everyone as we learn more.

Bench Dedications – Two of the recently approved bench dedications have been installed. There are no current dedication applications for review.

Other Business:

It was brought to the Board's attention that the staircase leading into Monsignor McCabe Playground is wrapped in caution tape. A concern for the stairs and a timeline for repair was inquired. Director Abruzzi will investigate and report back.

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

The meeting adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kimberly A. Scott
Assistant Director