**Town of Westborough Recreation Department**

**Recreation Commission**

**Meeting Minutes – April 13th, 2021**

Members Present: Recreation Commission Chair Earl Storey, Recreation Director Jenn Kirkland, Colleen Dowd, Brian Kane, Beth Travis, Katie Welch, Golf Course Superintendent Mike Hightower

The Recreation Commission Meeting opened with Recreation Director Jenn Kirkland reading the Governor Baker statement suspending certain provisions of the open meeting law.

**Introductions - Meet members of the golf operations**This was the first meeting of the Recreation Commission after additional members came over from the Golf Operating Committee. Everybody took turns introducing themselves.

**Review how meetings will run moving forward**The golf items on Recreation Commission agendas will be addressed first.  With Mike Hightower and Jack Negoshian in attendance at meetings, these things will be addressed first so they can leave if needed before getting into the Recreation business.  There are still 5 voting members of the commission, with Katie Welch attending as a non-voting member.

**Golf Course Updates**There cannot be any expenses out of the Recreation Revolving Account for golf course business.  Enza, the golf course admin is not in attendance.

**Golf Manager Update**
Jack Negoshian, the longtime pro at the golf course is back.  Jack is now working as a town employee running the day-to-day at the golf course.

**Superintendent Update**The golf course is open, and in good shape coming out of the winter.  There are some long standing operational issues to be addressed now that the Recreation department has taken things over.  One of them is a gas pump, which is a self-contained unit at the shed for the equipment used in maintenance.  This would prevent trips to the DPW and bringing back gas cans.  The town electrician can install it, but there needs to be a check to make sure the current pad size is adequate.  The expected cost would be $3900.

Once installed, a vendor would be paid to fill the tanks.  The current line item for gas would cover everything except the installation.  Without this being on a line item for a vote, a motion cannot be made until the next meeting.

There was a question about retained earnings for funding, however there is already an item on town meeting to use some of this money to repair a damaged net.  With the operations typically coming in under budget, this expense should not be a problem.

**Pro Shop Staff Update**The Rec Dept. is trying to hire more seasonal staff to help him out.  Some of the hires already made are college kids who cannot start working until they’re back from school in May.  Two of his old staff are back, as well as Rec Staff and Katie helping out currently.

**Golf Carts Update**Electric carts are there, however not the newer models that are on backorder.  There are 5 carts still to come, but things have been adequate for the time being.

**Liquor License discussion and vote**Due to the change where Jack Negoshian is now a town employee, a liquor license cannot be issued to him as it was in the past.  Last year there were about $8000 in revenue from alcohol sales, and there are a few options about how to proceed.

Option 1 - there are no alcohol sales at the golf course.

Option 2 - the town goes out to bid for companies to sell alcohol at the golf course.

Option 3 - there have been preliminary discussions to assess their openness to this path, which would be to come to a mutual agreement with the Civic to sell from their site.  Golfers would then be allowed to take the alcohol onto the course.

Earl Storey noted that he believes option 3 is the best option.  Even if the town isn’t retaining any of the revenue from the sales at the Civic, he believes that being able to sell alcohol on site is important to be able to retain golfers themselves.  If option 3 is pursued, Kristi Williams (the town manager) would be re-negotiating the lease agreement with the Civic with town council to accommodate this extension of their liquor license.

There was a question about the Civic’s hours, which have not been determined yet without a further discussion between them and the town.

Beth Travis noted that alcohol is both important to the golfers and the revenue.  She believes that either of the options allowing alcohol sales at the course would be acceptable.

A future option could be the town petitioning the state of Massachusetts to be able to hold a liquor license.  This is a longer process, but something that could be entertained down the line.

Colleen Dowd made a motion to vote to engage the Civic in discussion to sell alcohol on behalf of the golf course.  Beth Travis seconded the motion.  The motion passed 4-0.

**Program Update**All programs will be running as ‘normal’ this year, with current guidelines in place such as masks.  With a year of experience with this, people are more comfortable with these sorts of guidelines and being able to adhere to them.  The Playground programs will be held at Armstrong instead of Fales, which is a good change as the program with older children is already held at Gibbons.

Colleen mentioned that the playground at Armstrong is not useable, due to an article being voted down at Town Meeting about 2 years ago.  Part of it is broken, but another part is OK.  Jenn noted mentioning this to Adam so he is able to accommodate this.  The fields at Gibbons were mentioned, with the older age group using the soccer field in the back, and the baseball fields/outfield being reserved for the younger programs.  Earl noted that they’re all irrigated and should be in great condition.

**Beach Discussion/Potential Vote**The beach is the only thing undecided for the summer at this point in the process.  Lifeguard applications have been slowly coming into the department, however there haven’t been any applications for the Waterfront Director to this point.  Options for beach operations were presented.

Option 1 - The beach operates as ‘normal’.  The lifeguards with experience would act as Head Lifeguards and handle the schedule as well as communicating issues with the Rec Office.  Brian Doherty (the aquatics director at Westborough Tennis & Swim) is willing to do bi-weekly trainings.  There was some mention of him being able to help more, however the fine tuning of that arrangement would still need to be made between him and Jenn.  Passes would be purchasable online, with lists given to those working at the beach.  Anybody who entered the beach area before opening would be kicked off in order to comply with COVID-19 protocols.  The hours would be 11-4pm.  The cost would be $10 for a daily pass that allow up to 6 people entry, sold only to Westborough residents.  Refunds would be given only for rain or special circumstances.

Option 2 - A method was discussed at the prior meeting where ‘rangers’ are hired as opposed to lifeguards.  There would be a charge for parking, but without lifeguards it would be “swim at your own risk”.  It was noted that the Assistant Town manager is not a fan of this plan.

Option 3 - the beach would be ‘closed’ as it was last year.  It’s common for people to walk around the fence and use the beach anyways if it’s closed, as was done last year

After being asked, Jenn Kirkland noted that she things the department should try to open under option 1.  There is always the option of shutting down operations if issues arise after trying.  Her biggest concern is the lack of a Waterfront Director.

Colleen Dowd wants to try to find a way where lifeguards are present and able to teach swim lessons.  Jenn noted trying to find an alternate plan.  Brian Kane needed to leave at this point, however the commission is not ready to make a vote on an option yet.

Earl discussed the bath house at Chauncy, as he is working on replacing the siding out of his own budget.

**Fields Update**It was noted that the field requests have been plentiful this year, with cricket requests being more abundant than what the department is able to accommodate.  Jenn has had preliminary discussions with Johanna DiCarlo about possibly turning the field at Hastings into a cricket pitch.  There is still a question of funding for this project.

Earl discussed the status of the other fields around town.  Rogers Field is the only one that is questionable at this time, with standing water still present on some of the fields.  Moisture from the frost coming out still has not evaporated causing this.  The other fields are all in good shape, and have been turned over for use this season.

**Next Meeting**Beth Travis made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the previous two meetings.  Earl Storey seconded the motion, and it was approved 4-0.  The next meeting will be held on May 4th at 6pm, with plans to vote on the Beach and Gas Pump.

After a vote, the meeting was adjourned.