

## **Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting**

**Date of Meeting:** Tuesday, February 2, 2021

**Location:** Zoom

**Time:** 6:00pm

**Members in attendance:** Eric Hoffses, Ali LeBlanc, Arielle Strzelewicz committee members, Crystal Byron Program Coordinator, Jessica Runinow, Gerry Quam, Helen Dexter, Paul Dexter, Jaime Underwood, Teresa Prunier, Elaine Jones, Anita Thomas, Karen (no last name stated), Sue Hudson, and Jessica Borque.

Department Chair Eric Hoffses discusses the process of applying for grants for the Camp Harrington property. Claudine asks if the high school will be using the potential field for lacrosse. Jessica Rubinow states it will only be used for youth lacrosse. Crystal Daher states that the field will be a multi-use field and that lacrosse plans to use the field for approximately 8 hours per week for practices. Jessica explains the Lacrosse program and practice/games schedule in detail. Claudine asks if lacrosse plans to maintain the field similar to how other town sports teams maintain the other sports fields. Jessica Rubinow states that lacrosse will be maintaining the field year-round. Ali goes into detail about the sports teams and the Parks & Recreation Field use agreement. Arielle states that for years that the former summer camp bused kids in and out for camp, and that the plan is to have a parking lot to reduce street parking. Eric reads a comment about the building on the property, GWLT, and the Boylston Fire Department plan on tearing down the building in the near future. The entrance gate will be removed and large boulders will be placed. The next question asks if soccer/lacrosse pay to use fields or use them in exchange for maintenance, Eric explained that it is a mix of both.

The Committee calls on attendee Gerry Quam to speak. Gerry Quam voices his opinion about the demographics of the Camp Harrington area of town and that a majority of the population are seniors. He asks if all 18 acres are usable land. Claudine states that there should be approx. 6 acres of land after the field is installed for trails, etc. Arielle says she believes that there are existing trails in the area and we could revive them as part of the project. Ali states that trails are a part of the plan by GWLT. Eric confirms that is part of the GWLT plan. Gerry reads some of the Open Space Plan Survey results about the Camp Harrington property. He asks if the 140 field can be shared by lacrosse and football. Ali states that lacrosse has used it in the past and it did not meet their needs. He

asks the board to consider the needs of the community within a half-mile radius when planning the park's use. Claudine stated that the liability insurance for a town beach would be far too expensive. Crystal states that lacrosse plans to use the field 8 hours a week, which would leave 160 hours for anyone to use the open field. She also states that having lacrosse maintain the field is a benefit for the community. Gerry states his concern about traffic and that it needs to be considered. Claudine asks if softball is adding a large amount of additional traffic. Arielle thanked Gerry for his time. Eric will email Gerry the plot of the land.

Helen Dexter talks about the trails in the area. She asks the board if GWLT will be willing to build a boardwalk due to a portion of the land being swampland. Eric thanks Helen for her map drawing of the trail system. Eric states that GWLT would like the town to look into trail work grants due to the more complex work needed. Paul Dexter asks about the definition of active vs. passive recreation. He states he read that GWLT does not want passive recreation. Eric states GWLT does not have a say in what we plan to do with the land in the future as the town plans to purchase the land from GWLT. He also asks how Sterling funds their town beach. Claudine states they have a "friends of" group that fundraises on their behalf. Ali states they also sell beach passes to help fund the beach and that it may be a possibility further down the road. Eris reads a question asking if kayaking and canoeing are the same as swimming. He states that it is not the same and it is a possibility.

Jaime Underwood gives background on what the town is trying to do with this plan. He explains the town meeting process and that all the town-owned fields have been donated. That is what has helped us acquire the fields we have. The committee thanked him for his time.

Teresa Prunier states that the land needs to be stabilized and not just leveled. She thinks a subcommittee should be formed to gather information to produce a plan. Eric states that GWLT is not part of the process of coming up with the park plan. She also talks about the abutters of Sewell Pond who have tried to approach the conservation commission to clean up the pond. A subcommittee would allow for the application of potential grants. She states that abutters would like it to stay in its natural state and that she believes the property should be secured so that outsiders can not access it. If there was an association then memberships/dues could be sold to maintain the area. Claudine states she is concerned that having that sort of watch-over of the property should be given to all parks and that the local police department currently monitors all town parks. Teresa asks if out-of-town residents will be allowed to access/use the property. Crystal explains the field

use application process for renting our current fields. Teresa asks when Mr. Richardi will be stabilizing the property. Eric says he believes when the snow melts the process should begin. Teresa states he was originally supposed to donate the property. Claudine states it was a hypothetical plan but it was never brought to the town. The committee thanks Teresa for her time.

Elaine Jones asks if we have a group that uses the property like lacrosse would we have someone doing maintenance. Eric explains the budget. Claudine explains that lacrosse will maintain the field for the town. Elaine states that no matter what is put in the park it will need a parking lot. She asks if the plan will be a part of the next town meeting. Eric states there will not be enough time. Claudine states it will be a part of the 2022 town meeting. Elaine did research into the grants available and that they are reimbursable grants. She explains the process. She asks if investigating costs will be a next step. Eric explains it will be as well as researching grants. The committee thanks Elaine for her time.

Ali asks Eric if the town planner is familiar with grant writing. Eric states he does have experience and Colin from GWLT has extensive experience and will be a great resource for us when applying for grants. Arielle states she also has grant writing experience.

Ali explains that hiking, running, access to open water, playground, dog park, community rec center, sports facility/field are some of the top use suggestions for the property. Claudine explains the liability issues with having a dog park. Claudine explains that we are in the process of relocating the Parks & Rec. office to the old library space at the town hall. This will provide more room for committee classes and activities.

Anita Thomas asks if the land on Sewell North can be considered. Eric states that the area needs significant clearing to put a field there. Anita asks if the people of the town vote and make the final decision or Parks and Recreation. Eric states that the final decision on the use of the land will be made by parks and recreation. Claudine states that as far as accepting the land the town has to vote on that aspect. Ali states that any decisions made will be in an open meeting. So when it comes time to choose what grants to apply for there will be an opportunity for community feedback, she also states there is an open seat on the Parks & Recreation Committee.

Eric reads a comment that people feel that a decision has already been made. He restates that a final decision has not been made, and that lacrosse is being considered because the original plan was that the area had to be active recreation and that has since changed.

Claudine encourages people to attend meetings to voice their opinions or email the committee.

Karen (no last name stated) asks if a survey has been done to see how much of the land is usable/ Eric states we have a plot plan from GWLT, he will ask them how much is usable land. She states noise concerns for abutters. Eric states that lacrosse plans to use the field weekdays from 5-7 pm. Claudine states opening the land will allow for better visualization for the local police.

Arielle asks if we can speak to why we are not considering a dog park. Eric explains that when an area is officially designated a dog park it needs liability insurance and the town does not currently have a leash law which could lead to safety issues. Claudine states it would require a full-time employee as well.

Eric reads a comment that states the area should be general use. He says that is the plan for the area.

Eric reads a comment asking how many players are typically playing lacrosse. Jessica Rubinow clarifies 10-15.

Sue Hudson would also like a subcommittee formed as she is an abutter to the land. Claudine asks if abutters would be allowed to be on the subcommittee as it would be a conflict of interest. She voiced her concern about the gate being removed. As she and her husband have seen people swimming in the water in the summer. Claudine asks if they had called the police when they saw this. She states that had called a few times, but for that instance did not as they felt bad as children were present. Claudine reiterates that if anyone sees people there they should call the police as it is private property. Arielle states that having the area opened up with help prevent this as there will be better visibility for the police.

Jessica Borque speaks to the committee about the possibility of renting the Hillside Fields for the Jazziks Dance Recital in the summer. She explains what her thoughts are about breaking down the size of the dance recital into smaller shows to comply with Covid gathering limits. Eric asks what type of stage she is hoping to use. Claudine voices her concern about the potential for field damage and how to prevent it. Jessica says she would need to rent a stage and could get more details about the set-up. Claudine asks if performing under the gazebo would be a possibility. Jessica states the poles of the gazebo would be an issue. Crystal asks if people would be bringing chairs or would she be renting them and that the legs of the chair could cause damage to the grass. Jessica states

she would rent seating. Claudine states a police detail would be needed. Crystal states that additional porta-potties would need to be rented. Ali states that gathering limits will need to be monitored as the state adjusts them. Ali explains the field rental process. Jessica will research more information about the stage, seating, etc. Claudine asks if there is another space in town that could accommodate the recital. Ali suggests reaching out to the cemetery dept. about the field near the cemetery on Scar Hill Road. Crystal reads a comment by Michelle Similar suggesting the park behind First Congregational Church. Claudine states the church does rent out the exterior space and parking available. The board thanks Jessica for her time.

Mark Antilla was on the agenda to discuss pickleball but it will be pushed out to the next meeting.

Ali makes a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 pm, Claudine seconds the motion, all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Crystal Daher

Parks & Recreation Program Coordinator