



## Boylston Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes



**Tuesday, August 01, 2023**

**6:30 p.m. in the Nicholas Ward Meeting Room**

**Boylston Town Hall, 221 Main Street, Boylston, MA 01505**

### **I. Call to Order by Eric Hoffses at 6:31pm**

- a. Commissioners Present: Eric Hoffses, Claudine Underwood, Arielle Strzelewicz, and Alison Leblanc (Alison entered at 6:35pm)
- b. Commissioners Absent: Steve Nason
- c. Coordinator: Present (Pam Frechette)
- d. Public Present: None

### **II. Approval of Meeting Minutes – 06/06/2023**

***Vote:** Claudine made a motion to accept meeting minutes from 06/06/2023. Arielle seconded. Arielle, Eric, and Claudine in favor (Alison had not yet entered). Motion carried.*

### **III. Date for September meeting (potential conflict with planning board)**

Pam verified the planning board will host their meeting September 11<sup>th</sup> so there no conflict now.

### **IV. CPC Information/Update**

Eric said the CPC is meeting regularly, but there is nothing significant that needs to be discussed. They are working on the application for people from town to submit ideas for projects.

### **V. Disc Golf Update**

Eric said the disc golf volunteers are making great progress and share updates in their Facebook group. Some permanent baskets are now in place. Tonight, they have a podcaster on the course who is a professional disc golfer. It is still a bit off from opening to the public. They are trying to wear down the weeds. Arielle asked if there will be an unveiling day or event? Eric said after they put the finishing touches on things, they will do something. Pam said Jeff has some sort of key for the baskets and will provide a copy to keep in the Recreation Office.

### **VI. Harrington Park**

#### **a. Citizen Request to improve gate**

Pam said she got another request from a resident indicating the 'gate' was down again at Harrington Park. Pam does not know if the wind is taking it down or if someone is cutting it. The resident was concerned that motorized vehicles have access and asked for the gate to be improved in some way.

Arielle said it is currently woven wire that goes through a clip. She said she thinks someone is prying it, because we haven't lost length. Eric asked where the wire is and why we need to prevent people from driving on it. Pam said the trail is on the road now and neighbors have reported motorized bikes and a truck towing a boat before.

Arielle suggested instead of the braided wire we get some sort of chain and try locking it. There was agreement that a padlock may be better than a keyed lock. Eric wants to be sure emergency personnel and vehicles would be able to enter. Everyone agreed they should have the combination, but if needed would probably cut the chain to get through. Eric said he would worry that if something happened in five years, the code may be lost, but Claudine said they keep them for various places around town. Arielle asked to follow town protocols when giving out the combination. Pam will check on what that protocol is.

## **VII. Sunscreen Update**

### **a. Graphic**

Pam said the dispensers should have been delivered (today). She shared a graphic of what the dispensers will look like. One will be mounted on the snack shack at Manor, one on the pillars at the pavilion, and one on the sign at Center Court Park that needs to be installed. Alison asked about the cement left over from Manor and noted it should be easy enough to install. Pam said the cement is in the office.

## **VIII. Coordinator Report**

### **Open Meeting Law & Conflict of Interest:**

Town Clerk, Dawn Porter, gave Pam some information to share with the Commissioners. All Commissioners present signed the notice stating they are aware of open meeting laws and know where to access materials. Pam will get the signed forms to the Town Clerk for her records. All (present) Commissioners were also given a notice regarding Conflict-of-Interest Training that needs to be completed by all board members within 30 days. Arielle asked if she would be exempt because she just completed it and handed in a hard copy certificate. From the notice, it appears that training is good for two years. Pam will check with the Town Clerk.

### **New Office Space:**

Pam said she has the key to what will be the new office in the basement (to view the room). All town hall employees will be helping with the last push to get paperwork into the archive room. The bathroom is completed and the move to is getting closer.

### **Other Updates:**

- Pam met with Paul, the New/Former Town Planner to review Parks priorities. He was just getting up to speed on what happened since he was gone. He was also going to check in with Eric.
- The gym floors were refinished. The mats should be installed the week of 8/28 when the academy is off site. The company came and took their own measurements.
- Two sets of golf discs have been purchased. The volunteers working on the course said it could be set up to donate unclaimed lost/found and used sets to Parks & Recreation. Pam may give the new

sets to the library as part of the library of things, so they could be checked out and used when the office is closed.

- A movie license was purchased for the year. Pam talked to Eric, and the rental of a PA system and screen was \$500.00 last movie night. She can purchase both with the programming budget for less than that. Arielle said she likes that idea. It was noted that the license prohibits charging admission, but money can be charged for concessions – like popcorn and drinks. Claudine said we could ask for donations, too. Eric suggested selling beer and Alison said with the proper licenses we could do that. Pam explained the license agreement prohibits advertising the movie title and actors.
- The licensing for the Soccer Camp was approved through the Board of Health. There are 24 kids signed up, which exceeds the 20 minimum.
- The Matthew John Philips Memorial Cornhole Tournament date has been approved – with football in agreement on field time- for 9/9 and a rain date of 9/16.
- Football got their paperwork submitted early this year and porta-potties have been ordered and delivered to the field for their start date.
- Pam is in the process of updating the signs in the gym and will be updating the field use facility form as well to add Harrington Park and take out redundancies. She will do the signs in the gym on her own but will run the field use facility changes past the Commission for approval. In addition, she wants to combine the liability waivers. There's been two versions outside the gym – the regular waiver and one that has Covid information. Now that Covid protocols have changed, both forms can most likely be combined into one, but would require Board of Selectman approval.

**Current Programming (subject to change):**

- Mark is running a Pickleball clinic during the meeting. He did three in July.
- July 28<sup>th</sup> at Town House – The Science of Superheros (grant) – Small attendance

August

- Aug 7-11 – Best Soccer Clinic – 9-noon – ages: 5-12 – 21 signs ups so far
- Aug 5 yard sale
- Aug 12 women's self-defense class at Arteca studio in West Boylston
- August Movie Event depending on PA system

September

- Sept. Gnome walk on trails with Town Clerk
- Sept. Wednesdays - Tinkergarten – k-8yr exploration of nature with lessons
- Sept. 7 evening – Neurographic Sketching at Harrington Park with Artist Nikki Howland
- Sept. 21 Felting class (still in works)
- Sept 24 Free outdoor Karate class with Arteca
- Sept 21 – Felting a landscape
- Sept. 30 – Boylston Fall Festival

October

- Oct 6<sup>th</sup> Stargazing
- Oct 15<sup>th</sup> scarecrow install
- Oct 12<sup>th</sup> – Pumpkin/Dried flower arrangement with Bemis Farms
- Oct 21<sup>st</sup> – Birds of Prey Program (grant)
- Oct 24 – Trick or Treat at Hillside for younger kids
- Oct 30<sup>th</sup> – Nov.7 – Make a card for a vet – drop in

November

- Nov fused workshop (in works)

- Movie Event
- December
- Dec. Centerpieces with Florist Lisa Marks
- Spring
- Spring vax clinic with Tufts Vet School & Town Clerk before dog licensing.

## **IX. New Space**

Discussed above with coordinator update.

## **X. Budget Report**

Eric said the budget is above \$10,000.00 again, so that is great.

Pam gave two budget reports to the Commissioners. One was an unofficial end of year report that was not compared to official totals yet from the Town Accountant. The report for the new fiscal was changed slightly from the previous year format to be easier to read; it shows budgeted number, current withdrawal, cumulative withdrawal, and current balance. Pam reviewed the budget categories and pointed out the increases from the previous year (potties and office supplies) and noted myrec.com went up significantly in price and they are over budget now for that line item.

Claudine asked if myrec is the only program for recreation. Pam said Ali (Kennedy) is looking into new website vendors to see if there is a website that will encompass all departmental needs across town hall. Claudine said sometimes myrec.com is difficult to log in. Pam said it is a good program, but sometimes it is a little frustrating and has limitations. Pam will attend the meetings about the new website and will be able to ask questions. Alison said doing the dog clinic was the most complicated thing that she had to do using myrec because people had to select a time slot. Pam said doing the Pickleball cards is a bit convoluted, too. Alison said she doubts there will be a town-wide website that can offer that level of specificity.

Pam said they were not approved for maintenance in the budget as they requested. Alison said for a majority of the parks we can use the revolving account, but for the parks that don't generate revenue, like Center Court; we need to be creative. Pam said she talked to April about some items, like the bleachers in the gym that have been talked about and we could put in capital requests to for town meeting consideration.

Alison said she was thinking more along the lines of emergencies, like the time they needed to hire pest control for Center Court. There's no budget for maintenance at that park. Pam said for Center Court, Mark was considering hosting a clinic there and that could generate some revenue.

Alison asked if we could work with Town Counsel to change town bylaws so we could use the revolving account money at any of the parks. Eric said that it is a state law (how the revolving account works). Eric said you can talk about carrying it over. Eric said we always say we are going to look into it, and we forget. Pam said this past year, we encumbered funds with a written contract so the accountant could hold the funds back. Pam will find out the difference between the different revolving accounts, as Ninotchka had suggested a different type of revolving account. Alison said she is thinking that if it needs to go for a vote on a ballot, we should look into it soon. Pam will find out for the next meeting.

## **XI. Associate Member Discussion/potential vote**

**a. Mark Anttila interested in position**

Eric said Mark is interested in becoming an Associate Member of the Commission. Eric said he is at almost every meeting and has done a lot of work helping with the floor and mat projects. He said Mark feels like it may give him more weight working on projects. Eric said he feels he should go for it. Pam said Mark just wanted to be sure that he could still run programs and get compensated. Claudine said she does not think that would be a problem since he does not get a vote. Eric asked if anyone had any questions or concerns. Claudine asked if it would need to be approved by the Board of Selectman because when she got her seat, she thought they had to approve it. Alison said it was brought to the Selectman at that time because Claudine was appointed.

*Vote: Claudine made a motion to make Mark Anttila an Associate Commissioner, contingent that all the rules are followed, and we check that is all we need to do. Arielle seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.*

**Before adjourning, Eric wanted to bring two items up to the Commission:**

1. First a thank you to Pam, her husband, Alison and her son, and residents – Sonia Johnson and her son, and Shane Johnson - that all helped clean up Manor Park. Alison thanked Eric for helping as well. Eric said it was a successful day.

2. Eric said the other item is fresh from yesterday. West Boylston's recreation coordinator left and West Boylston have reached out to Boylston to see if our coordinator would be willing to put a couple hours a week for West Boylston either in the short term to help them out, or to help a new hire get a successful program running.

Eric said he attended a meeting with Pam, West Boylston's Parks Chair, and April to find out more details. Instead, West Boylston came to the meeting to ask if there was interest in regionalizing Parks & Recreation. Eric said he was not expecting that and there is a lot of questions surrounding it. He asked the benefit to Boylston and the answer was greater attendance for programs. He said we kind of already share to West Boylston Neighbors Connect and Berlin Neighbors Connect when we need more people. Eric said April told him another benefit is that it could help in the future if Boylston was ever in a similar situation. Claudine said she feels like it is backtracking by giving up employee time, pointing out we just got Paul back full-time.

Eric said on one hand he was fine with the original idea of Pam helping out if she had time and wanted to make extra money, but regionalizing is a lot more complicated than loaning a coordinator a couple hours a month. Eric said they talked about their budget and he was surprised their revolving budget was lower and the amount they had to work with each year was smaller than ours. He said he was thrown off by the ask. Claudine asked how long they were without a coordinator. Arielle asked if it would be the same hours or a smaller position. Pam said the position is just recreation in West Boylston.

Eric said West Boylston proposed to run possibly six programs per year for them. Eric said there's a lot of questions about whether West Boylston is paying for that and what the budget will be. He said he would be more open to discussing that with them than regionalizing Parks and Recreation because that seems

like a huge undertaking, and he is not sure of the benefits. Claudine asked how regionalization would work since they're not truly the same departments. Alison said she feels Boylston is understaffed without a maintenance department. Eric said if they want to use Pam, and she has extra time, and they will pay her, he is open to that. He said West Boylston has an interest in coming to a future meeting to talk about it. His initial thoughts with regionalizing are that it seems complicated with our budget, and our bandwidth just getting done with Camp Harrington. Claudine said regionalizing the school committee was a huge undertaking and what will happen if something with maintenance happens, will they pay Bob half?

Alison asked if they have a location to host programming. Pam said her take-away is they are asking for West Boylston residents to attend Boylston programming (which we do now), and they would provide a facility to host six programs a year in West Boylston that would be open to Boylston residents. Claudine said that would be over 40 hours a week. Pam said she did not think with just recreation it would be. Claudine asked that since it is only recreation programs, could their volunteers run programs since they do not have to maintain property? Pam said they do have a Parks Department and Commission. Claudine asked why they are not asking to regionalize that? Pam said she learned they are tied with the DPW when she reached out to West Boylston for ideas to work our budget. Claudine said she's not against it, she just does not see how it would work.

Alison asked if there's precedent, maybe other small towns that have done something similar that the Commission could chat with and see how it works for them? She said there might be other small towns in Western, MA that are doing this. Eric said one of the surprises to him was that since they are a bigger town, they might discuss how much money they have to put into this. Claudine said yes, some benefit. And Eric said they somehow have less, which surprised him. Eric said he's not seeing it make sense from the limited information he has. Claudine said it makes sense to them. Pam talked to April that afternoon and she shared that a lot of towns are finding themselves unable to afford things that towns are supposed to have, so regionalization is something towns have been doing. Claudine asked the population of West Boylston. Eric replied that it is more than double Boylston's. Claudine said our budget would now have to go for programs that are three times bigger. Pam said they didn't talk about that, and one of the things she talked to April about was that the conversation didn't get down into the weeds. April said it was more brainstorming, not getting into the details. Pam said West Boylston would like to send two reps to attend a meeting with Boylston Commissioners in September and then have two Boylston Commissioners attend a West Boylston meeting in October. Eric said yeah, if everything went right. Pam said then it would involve an Inter-Municipal Agreement if everyone decided to move forward; it could be done for just a year to see how it goes.

Claudine said it would probably have to go before the town for approval. Eric said there would be a lot of steps that would be beyond the board. Arielle said if Pam were interested in more hours, it seems like it would be easier just to help them limp along and see if they have more details. She said we are moving along right now. Claudine said town approval is probably needed to regionalize, so that wouldn't happen until May or later. Arielle said she has some thoughts on how residents may feel about that.

Alison said what she was worried if there was a program that was very popular with residents, they would have to compete for a spot because we were regionalized, and we could not open it to Boylston residents only. Arielle said she is concerned about how things would work grant-wise, like grants for smaller towns of certain sizes and populations.

Eric said initially he thought the idea would make sense with a smaller town like Berlin if they were to come to us. He looked it up and West Boylston has a greater population than Boylston and Berlin combined. Claudine said they have so many businesses, how are they not contributing? Eric said he has limited information, but maybe they need a budget increase. Arielle said maybe Princeton or one of the Wachusett towns would be a better regionalization fit for them. Alison said the Boylston budget reflects the Parks and Recreation, if it was just recreation, it would probably be equally tiny.

Eric said as Chair he has to get back to them. If the Commission does not want to talk them, that is an option. Arielle said she will entertain what they have to say. He said he can indicate at first glance they are not super interested but will hear what they have to say. Claudine said they can be put on the agenda for the next meeting, but they need to be honest with residents of the town so they can be present to hear what their pitch is because it is a big decision. And it does not hurt to get the word out now. Eric said they will not be voting at that meeting.

Eric said every board member should think of their questions beforehand so they can be given to West Boylston ahead of time, so they can answer them instead of having to get back to the Commission.

Claudine brought up pop warner football and asked why they are not offering to help with that? Discussion then ensued about how several sports are combined with West Boylston/Boylston, how youth sports are separate entities from the Parks Departments in both towns, and school properties versus town parks. It was noted that softball, baseball, football, and lacrosse are combined sports. And at the high school level there is more, like field hockey. Alison pointed out not all those sports are recreation.

Claudine said she thinks it is important to have April at the meeting to answer questions. Eric said West Boylston will just be pitching an idea, but Claudine said she could be there to ask questions herself, too. Pam will ask April.

Alison said she wonders if they would be willing to come to the meeting to discuss the original idea (of allowing coordinator hours with them) than regionalizing and start there. She is more comfortable having a discussion about that. She agrees with Claudine that ‘regionalizing’ could cause an uproar. Claudine asked Pam if she wants to work 40 hours a week? Pam said she did not think it would amount to that since the ask was six things a year. Claudine said it might be problematic for residents if they see Pam doing West Boylston things on (Boylston) town time – there will be big upset and she foresees getting calls and emails about it. Alison said doing it off (Boylston) hour, you (Pam) would want to be paid for that and that is really the only big question is if they have a plan for that; so they don’t need to come before the board, that’s more a conversation they could have with Pam. Arielle said she wonders why they did not stop there and made the jump to regionalization. Claudine said anyone that works for the town can take a second job. Alison said that is correct, but if it is on the scale of regionalization that is a completely different conversation because there is a lot to it. She said she is more of... let’s put that on the back burner and is voting for them not coming to the meeting. Claudine said, send them an invitation? Send them an invitation. Arielle said sure, send them an invitation – she wants to see what they think the benefit is – because she’s not seeing it. Alison said she agrees with Claudine’s point that regionalization can cause a lot of concern in town. Arielle said she just wants to be sure they maintain their grant status.

Eric said to be transparent, he is not at the moment interested in regionalization, but he did ask April about the benefit for Boylston, and she said that with grants you get bumped up in line if you are a regionalized committee – and he’s just repeating that information. Arielle said it could mean that for Parks and Recreation things, like for purchasing land, that everyone is open to voting and that changes things. She is not sure if West Boylston values the same kinds of things. She said she’s making assumptions. Claudine said it could be different priorities. Alison said if when they have meetings, would they need to discuss Boylston and West Boylston things every time? Arielle said she just likes the things they are voting for now. Alison said, like Arielle pointed out - things are going nice and smoothly, we have a good rhythm, and we’re getting things accomplished and if we have to add a whole other town to it...? Arielle said they may not understand their (Boylston’s) desire to preserve land. Eric will set expectations with West Boylston that the board is not interested in regionalizing Parks & Recreation, but they are welcome to come to the meeting. Pam said she told April, and reiterated to Eric that she wants the commission to know that no matter what’s decided, she’s not leaving. Alison and Arielle said they will be open-minded.

**XII. Citizens’ Comments**

(Except in unforeseen or emergency circumstances, any matter presented for consideration of the Commission by a member of the public shall neither be acted upon, nor a decision made the night of the presentation. A scheduled time on a future agenda may be necessary, at the Commission’s discretion.)

None.

**XIII. Future Agenda Items** (topics to be proposed for discussion at future meetings)

Next meeting with West Boylston Parks Commissioners

**XIV. Adjournment**

**Vote** *Arielle made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Alison. All in favor. Motion carries. Meeting adjourned at 7:37pm.*

**Meeting Materials:**

Agenda	On File in the Parks and Recreation Office
Minutes	On File in the Parks and Recreation Office
Public Attendance Sheet	On File in the Parks and Recreation Office
Budget Sheet (close out & new)	On File in the Parks and Recreation Office
Sunscreen Logo for Parks	On File in the Parks and Recreation Office
Certificate of Receipt of Open Meeting Laws (signed)	On File in the Town Clerk’s Office
Conflict of Interest Law Requirement Sheets Notice	On File in the Parks and Recreation Office

Respectfully submitted by: Pamela Frechette, Parks and Recreation Coordinator