



Boylston Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes



Tuesday, October 3, 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 6:33pm

- a. Commissioners Present: Eric Hoffses, Claudine Underwood, Alison Leblanc, and Arielle Strzelewicz
- b. Commissioners Absent: Steve Nason
- c. Coordinator: Present (Pam Frechette)
- d. Public Present: Mark Anttila

II. Approval of Meeting Minutes – 09/05/2023

***Vote:** Arielle made a motion to accept meeting minutes from 09/05/2023. Alison seconded. Eric, Claudine, and Alison in favor. Arielle was absent at the 9/05/23 meeting and did not vote. Motion carried.*

III. Master Plan Representative

Claudine explained the Master Plan Steering Committee she was part of is revamping to start up again and they're making 2-year seats for each committee involved. She has three years left of her term on the Parks & Recreation Commission and will fill the position if the Commission agrees. Claudine was appointed to the Master Plan Implementation Committee by a unanimous vote.

***Vote:** Alison made a motion to appoint Claudine Underwood to represent Parks and Rec. to the Master Plan Steering Committee. Eric seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.*

IV. Regionalization/Updates

Eric asked Pam if she is sharing Boylston's recreation information to West Boylston? Pam said she's continuing to share information to the West Boylston neighbor's page, and West Boylston is sharing on their own recreation page as well. Eric said he has not heard from West Boylston since the last meeting. Claudine suggested tabling it. Eric explained that he felt they weren't committed to the same idea and were disjointed. He said it was a good discussion but even at the end, they didn't seem to have a clear vision. He'll wait for them to present to Boylston, since they want assistance from us. He asked if there were any other comments or questions. There were none.

V. CPC Update

Eric said the CPC hosted an open forum for residents with different stations, including recreation, historic, and affordable housing stations. Participants could put stickers on ideas on the different boards at the stations to indicate what they wanted to use CPC funds for. Recreation got the most stickers by far, and an outdoor pickleball court was a popular item. Eric said next with CPC, people will be able to make first run proposals for use of funds. Mark added that applications are due at their (CPC) November meeting. Eric added that anyone can submit an application, but they need to obtain approval of the board involved to put on the form. This discussion led into the grant and park priorities discussion.

VI. Grant Discussion/Park Priorities

Eric said he recently met with Paul Dell'Aquila, Town Planner, and he suggested the Parks Commission should decide on their priorities. Obvious ones are an outdoor pickleball court and Camp Harrington.

Eric said Paul was under the impression that the Parks Commission was wrapping up the pickleball court with a huge renovation of Manor Park, but he doesn't think that's the quickest way to get a pickleball court done, as that would take years to complete. Eric said he and Mark have talked to other towns that have done similar projects, with Berlin being a linear comparison. They did almost the exact project Boylston is looking to do. They had a run-down court and put in new pickleball and basketball courts. Eric said they were connected so they kind of had to do both; at Manor it would make sense to do both at the same time, but if it's too much money it could be two-phased. Mark Anttila said Berlin was the most recent project that we could probably get good numbers from, but Sterling was the only town that used a PARC grant, while all other towns used mostly CPC funding. Eric said Berlin used \$100,000 from CPC, and some other funding, but the CPC was the largest contributor. Mark said we have a really good template from Sterling that worked for a PARC grant, but some of the vendors might be outdated.

Mark said he gets confused with what Paul's role is in putting a packet together versus what Parks and Recreation's is. Eric said Paul advised next steps is to get quotes so we can be advised to what needs to be done – either paving it over or digging it up. Once we have quotes, we can decide the best route to get funding – either CPA, PARC grants, or something else. For just pickleball and basketball courts, Paul told Eric he didn't think engineering drawings would be necessary. Mark said if you get a PARC grant, the first year is planning and the second year is construction. Eric said it would be a little different because Camp Harrington had an acquisition year and then a building year. He said Paul advised since we already own the land it wouldn't be spread over two years since there would no acquisition. Mark said for PARC grant timing, it would have to go before Town Meeting for approval for the application to go in for July, with a decision coming at the end 2024. Eric said if plans had to be engineered, we would have to ask at Town Meeting and it's not a cheap thing and then we wouldn't get them until fall 2024, and that will set everything two years behind. Mark said maybe the PARC grant didn't cover the engineering plans. Eric said Paul didn't think it did. Mark said Paul was also going to look at benefactors; if turned out at \$150,000.00 maybe that's something they can find someone to fund.

Alison asked Mark if he prefers the Manor Court location as opposed to Center Court. Mark said that's a good point because one of the biggest issues about pickleball right now is the noise. USA Pickleball has just put in a standard for quiet balls and paddles, but they have to perform the same way so, who knows how long that will take to engineer them. So, another gentleman that plays pickleball suggested Hillside.

There they can play outside, but if the weather isn't good, they can pay and play inside if the gym is open. Mark added there were three acres at Hillside set aside for a new library, so that would be municipal use, but Hillside is also set up for recreation. Mark said it's not necessarily just the decibel of the noise with pickleball but the pitch; and any noise complaints would have to be based on the existing ambient noise. Mark said 500ft from courts is optimal (regarding sound), 250ft is okay, but mitigation measures can be put in place. Eric said at Manor there were tennis courts, so there should be no problem there. Mark said Mashpee just put a 'no pickleball on Sunday' rule at their courts.

Mark asked if the grant request had to be specific to location, as neither location (Manor nor Hillside) would include having to acquire land. When he talked to Steve Mero, there were some pockets on the courts that would have to be taken care of at Manor. But added that if they do move to Hillside, what would happen to the existing courts at Manor? Eric said it might be more difficult at Hillside because of the permissions necessary. Claudine said she liked the idea of being able to switch to go inside if needed (at Hillside). Eric said Manor is one minute down the street and he likes the idea of taking care of two problems; building the pickleball courts and making Manor look nice, which is why he's leaning that way. Mark said Hillside was just brought up the other day and that's why he's bringing it to the board. Claudine asked if they would be playing while Little League was playing at Manor? Mark said they would. Claudine pointed out that parking might be a problem. Eric asked how many people would play pickleball at the same time? Mark replied fifty, and a popular time is 8:00am-noon on Saturdays. He said his goal would be to put in six courts, and four people would play on each court, and that number could be doubled for substitutions. The Commission all agreed that parking would be tough and negatively impact the neighbors. Mark said there are various ways to control use of the courts: playtimescheduler.com could be used, or court reserve which is used by Groton (and they charge a fee), while Ward Park has an organization that plays and pays to reserve the courts until noon, and team reach is another application used.

Arielle asked if it's feasible to have both groups (baseball and pickleball) there at the same time with the current parking. Eric said no, and Claudine agreed that it's cramped with just baseball. While viewing the concept drawing previously created for Manor Park, discussion ensued about the way the park is currently versus the drawing. Alison said the drawing calls out squash and volleyball, which could be where pickleball could go. Mark said he would like to see the two tennis courts kept, with the addition of 3 pickleball courts on either side, so the tennis court would act as a barrier, very similar to what Sterling did. Claudine asked if the trees would act as a sound barrier. Mark said it's interesting that trees don't work so well, but acoustic fencing (heavy vinyl) does. The fencing would have to be strong to support it.

Mark asked if the Commission should be working on the project at each meeting or if there should be a separate subcommittee for the project to present it at meetings? He may be able to get some residents involved. Eric said that makes sense.

It was noted that the drawing shows more parking than currently exists. Alison pointed out that other town bodies would have to be involved in the grant process if there's going to be extensions of any roads. Some of what is shown in the drawing is just footpaths. Pam asked if the footprint of the court area would change or impact water displacement, as neighbors get water in basements and such. Discussion began about how the concept plan shows the addition of swales, but fixing drainage could cost millions of dollars and become a massive project. Mark said if the same footprint was kept for the basketball and racket courts, it would be no different than it is now.

Alison said the problem will be parking and unless it's addressed, she's not sure how you will get people in there. Claudine said she's not seeing residents approving a plan to stretch the road out for pickleball. After clarifying that Intervale does not go through to the park as shown on the drawing. The whole board agreed that parking will be an issue at Manor.

Eric asked who would like to be on a subcommittee? Arielle said she would volunteer, but her schedule is too variable. She asked if meetings would be in person and if the same rules apply. Eric said no, and Claudine suggested Arielle could participate via conference call on speaker phone. Arielle said if that's viable, she could do that. Mark said that would be great and asked if Pam could participate. She deferred to Eric, who said to wait until a schedule is established and they figure out how much time is pulled from the day-to-day.

Mark said Sterling had all their quotes in by January for their Town Meeting. Looking at their template, they put in two tennis courts and five pickleball courts (across each tennis court which uses tennis net, with wrench to lower) and one on the basketball court (which uses a temporary net). Mark wondered how everyone could park there, as they don't seem to have many spaces but also have two ball fields. Mark said a resident that is an engineer did all the drawing work in Sterling, and they had 40 residents attend the meetings in support. Claudine said it's great to get residents involved.

Alison said she was thinking about Center Court and doesn't see how that many would fit. Mark said there's less parking there. Arielle asked Mark if a tie over would be to add one or two at Center Court and look at a deeper plan to add more courts all together? Alison said or both, if we fix Manor without making it too big using just the existing tennis court and do a couple at Center Court. Eric asked how many would go at Manor just using the tennis court. Mark replied six – three on each side of the tennis nets. Eric asked how many players would be on a court at a time. Mark said 24, but sometimes they do four-in, four-out, so 48 people. He used the gym as an example, saying on the two courts they usually have 16 people with eight people playing and eight people sitting out.

Mark said the timetable for the Sterling was: end of December bid docs available, January site walks, Feb. 1st last day for bid changes, and bids due Feb. 6th. Mark said everything would need to be done by the end of January to the warrant for Town Meeting. Mark said the town would have to approve the total cost, contingent upon other things (using Camp Harrington as an example). The Sterling bid is good because it has everything laid out. Pam asked when the Hillside Master Plan is supposed to be done. Eric said that it would be a long process to get anything approved at Hillside, as it took months to get disc golf approved. Mark said it might be because disc golf was interfacing with other activities and not a standalone space. Alison said maybe step one for Hillside would be to find out what pieces are currently maintained by Parks & Recreation, as we can't vote on property that's not run by Parks & Recreation. Is it all recreation or are there portions set aside for recreation land? Eric said there's a Master Plan Committee for Hillside and it seems complicated.

Arielle said that goes back to her original point that it sounds like a bigger, more involved project; and no matter where it's built something would need to be done about parking. She wonders if two pickleball courts would fit at Center Court? Mark said there's only about 10 parking spaces there. Arielle said there's downtown parking on the hill by the Church with a sidewalk, and by the library. It seems a little more flexible. She's just trying to figure out how to get a court in the more immediate future. Mark said there's one pickleball court painted on the basketball court now and the library has paddles and balls to borrow.

Only one fit because there wasn't enough room behind to stand on for two across; players would be in the grass. Eric asked how many courts Berlin added and how they handle parking. Mark said they did four, and they have a big soccer complex with parking. Arielle said the elementary school has a bunch of parking spaces, too. Eric said in the fall on Saturdays Berlin runs both soccer and baseball on the weekends. Claudine suggested maybe they don't have as many that play pickleball.

Alison wondered if a rubberized surface could be put around the basketball court to fix the 'falling off the court' situation at Center Court? Mark said it would have to be graded because the courts are raised and there's no fencing either, so the balls just roll off to the side.

Mark said maybe going with four courts using the two tennis courts at Manor Park would work for now, with the option of putting in more later if parking turns out not to be too bad. Other towns have lockboxes at the courts for storing nets. Arielle said she just doesn't want to crush residents with people driving in. Claudine said there are parking complaints without pickleball there. Alison said that *will* be a question at Town Meeting – "where is everybody going to park?" She was wondering if more parking may fit along the treed area (referring to the drawing). Mark said ultimately, we would need a professional to look at the parking issue. Alison said we have the plan and we're just asking to expand parking in the area where it already exists. It would also address dumping because that area would now be parking. It would address the question people have about parking, and it could double the parking. Eric joked that he knew Alison would figure it out.

Arielle asked what the next steps are? Eric said to get quotes, Lazaro would be one and we'll get some more names. We'll get quotes for basketball, too, but pickleball would be the priority. Mark asked if Steve Mero could do the parking area? Alison added that it doesn't necessarily have to be paved, but compacted gravel. Claudine said in Leominster their dirt parking lot has posts and rope to designate where to park. Mark said maybe Steve would be willing to grade and take care of that. The group agreed he probably could if they paid. Eric said he would get Pam some names of companies that could quote. Mark asked who would enter the CPC request. Alison said she would enter it as a resident since Mark and Eric are both on CPC. Alison said she can't be on the subcommittee due to time, but she can submit the paperwork to CPC.

VII. Disc Golf Update

Eric thanked Alison for planting along the Disc Gold sign. As a resident she was happy to help and as a resident, she would be happy if someone wishes to mulch that area.

VIII. Coordinator Report

- Conflict of Interest Training is due with a deadline of Oct. 15th.
- The Board of Selectmen approved waiver and donation at the 9/25 meeting.
- Working on the facility use form changes. During 'Tuesday Talks' someone asked if there is there a timeframe for boards to review fees. April said there is not any formal timeframe, but it would be a good idea in the future for all boards to review, say in November, with new rates beginning in January. Eric agreed that looking at non-resident rental fees for the gym is a good idea because the rates are low. Eric explained that basketball has an annual fee, pickleball charges are also different, and that sometimes Soccer uses the gym for free because they do field stuff. But non-residential rental rates could be reviewed, as it's been a long time. Mark asked how other gyms charge for basketball. Eric said that the

schools let the organization use the gyms for free and Hillside is the only gym that charges them a fee, but they have to use it because there's so much overflow.

- Mats were installed in the gym, but one piece needed to be redone. They will be doing that in the future. Pam was not sure if mats for the doors were supposed to be part of that work. She reached out and am waiting for a reply.
- Checked on the spending account limit that gets set at Town Meeting for departmental revolving accounts and it would be the commission that would ask for that at set-up.
- Parks & Recreation should request to go before the Fin Comm. to justify adding maintenance to the budget. Pam has been keeping a list of items as they come up, but other items for justification we welcome. Alison said we could make great use of someone to do maintenance items a couple hours a week. Eric would like to request a conversation before the Fin Comm this year.
- There's a joint committee reviewing financial policies and procedures which could impact how P&R accepts payments in the office, especially cash. Pam explained that she's been trying to use the software to its fullest potential and currently transacts all in person payments into the system while people wait. Then they get an automated email showing their transactions. At the moment, there seems to be a push to use paper receipt books. Claudine suggested printing the email receipts and attaching those with the turnover. Pam said she is trying to find a report that will satisfy the needs of the group so things can continue to be automated. She submitted one that may work with the last turnover. Eric asked to be looped in on any of the conversations.
- Attended meeting about websites vendors. A decision will be made shortly. None of the vendors have their own Parks and Recreation program so we will need to continue using our own site.
- Sunscreen program – HD has all the stuff now and just needs to be installed.
- Office move- getting closer, there is a budget for completing the room.

Programming:

- In the spring, we could potentially do a bird watching/native plant program at Harrington Park
- Picked up some DVDs for Parks & Recreation at Beman used book sale.
- Northborough is hosting Unified Soccer and Basketball through the Special Olympics. Youth 8-15 with and without intellectual disabilities are invited to participate. Sign-ups can be found on the Northboro page and we've shared their link.
- Felting class has been cancelled.

September

- Used Rain Date for movie night, 9/22 – went well, but low turnout.
- 28th – Felting class with Artist Lyn Slade – cancelled.
- 30th – Participated in Boylston's Fall Festival – with a small craft.

October

- 6th Stargazing (grant)
- 15th Scarecrow Contest Start
- 12th – Pumpkin/Dried flower arrangement with Bemis Farms
- 24th – Trick or Treat at Hillside for younger kids – Town Clerks, PD, FD, Library – invited COA and Hillside Preservation Rep
- 20th – Candy bar bingo – Arielle can probably help.

November/December

- Dec. 2nd Birds of Prey Program (partial grant) moved to December.

Spring: Camp Harrington – possible Natives/Bird Watching walk – small fee

Archery

Current Basketball program - Eric has teamed up with Berlin Recreation to offer a middles school basketball program for boys and girls in grades 6-8 on Friday nights. Twenty kids are enrolled.

IX. Budget Report

Handout. No discussion.

X. 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

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

XII. Adjournment

Vote: *Arielle made a motion to end the meeting. Alison seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.*

Meeting:

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	On File in the Parks and Recreation Office
Manor Park Drawing	On File in the Parks and Recreation Office

Respectfully submitted by: Pamela Frechette, Parks and Recreation Coordinator