



## Boylston Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes



**Tuesday, January 2, 2024**

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

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

### **I. Call to Order by Claudine Underwood at 6:38pm**

- a. Commissioners Present: Claudine Underwood, Alison Leblanc, and Arielle Strzelewicz
- b. Commissioners Absent: Eric Hoffses, Steve Nason
- c. Coordinator: Present (Pam Frechette)
- d. Public Present: Jeffrey Turgeon of WSF for Disc Golf Update, Mark Anttila for Pickleball Update and Manor Court Project. Many Pickleball players (see attendance list on file in the Parks & Recreation Office)

### **II. Approval of Meeting Minutes – 11/07/2023**

No vote – held for next meeting.

### **III. Meeting Dates for 2024**

No discussion

### **IV. Disc Golf Update**

Jeff Turgeon of Worcester Sports Foundation gave an overview of the Disc Golf project from the start. By late summer there was a soft launch. It been a very popular course. Jeff said that with the popularity, parking has not been negatively impacted during soccer. In November one of the top Disc Golfers in the country, that happens to live in Shrewsbury, did a YouTube video on his channel, which helped get the word out. There were 800 tracked rounds in November in U-disc and on average 250 players a week – both local and out of state. Fundraising has been very successful. The volunteers got 10 hole sponsors, 8 basket sponsors, individual donors and grants. They also used job corps volunteers for some labor. There's a regular Sunday morning league with about 25 players. The group is looking to do a grand opening in the spring, probably sometime in April. A regional Disc Golf league wants to have their team challenge in Boylston, so we will need to figure out how that will work. There's now a lost and found for the discs and a Facebook page for the course. Connor Graphics has done the sign work for cost because Kyle (Connor) is a volunteer. In the beginning someone was taking the signs, but that person has since been identified and the town took corrective action (not a resident). There's been a lot of rain, so they are working with Steve Mero and others about mitigating that. There's been 3,000 players since August. The interaction between Disc Golfers and dog walkers has been respectful. Alison suggested posting a sign that states there is no leash law. Trash removal hasn't been an issue. They are currently working on a shorter tee-box on the front 9 for kids, which is about a mile and a quarter. Jeff said they are also working on a longer tee-box on each hole to make it more of a challenge for some.

Jeff said he thought it would be nice to put in a welcome sign. It would be in the grassy area in the upper parking lot and envisions it being a 'Welcome to Hillside Park' to include information about what's located at here, along with information on the Disc Golf course. Alison liked the kiosk sign that in the pictures because it has an area to post notices. They will be working with Connor Graphics on the sign and the WSF will pay for it through fundraising. Alison pointed out that Connor Graphics has done signs

for the town before, so they are familiar with the style. There's also another sign by the 18<sup>th</sup> hole where everyone takes their pictures when they complete the course. Jeff asked what would be needed to move forward. Claudine said he would need Board of Selectmen approval. Jeff mentioned that stairs might be a nice addition at the end of the course up to the drive. He said they would work with job corps on installation with feedback from Steve Mero and Bob Bourassa on design. A building permit will be needed for that.

The grand opening is being targeted for April. Arielle suggested the school bring students if bussing could be figured out. Jeff said food trucks would be fun and Pam suggested Christo's since they do movie nights for P&R. The Commissioners thanked Jeff and the volunteers for the course and all their time.

**V. Master Plan Implementation Update if any (Claudine)**

(Taken out of order after Harrington Park information) Claudine said there is no update.

**VI. CPC Update if any (Eric)**

(Taken out of order after Harrington Park information) Eric wasn't in attendance, so Mark, also a member of the CPC gave an update. The deadline for the CPC project reviews was extended. No other department filed an application. The committee talked about holding the money or doing something visible for people to see. Mark said Manor Park would be very visible because it serves everybody. Next meeting is the 9<sup>th</sup>.

**VII. Manor Park Updates**

a. Grant information/discussion

Mark Anttila came up to the table to discuss the proposed Pickleball court project at Manor Park. There were many Pickleball players present in support and Mark thanked them for coming. The majority of players present were from Boylston.

Mark went on to explain they have been getting quotes for the work and applied to CPC for CPA funding. The project we deemed to be appropriate for CPA funds and the project was the only submission. Mark said it needs to go on the Town Meeting warrant and then we would apply for a state grant that we may or may not get. Mark said the project includes more than just Pickleball, like parking expansion. Alison added that the project was going to include the basketball courts, too. Mark said they are proposing two tennis courts with two pickleball courts on each side for a total of four. Eventually they would look to add more, and Hillside might work once the Hillside Master Plan is in place, which would be approximately one year after they get a grant for the plan. Alison said her opinion is that it's worth looking at doing courts at both Manor and Hillside. Mark went over the timeline for the grant applications with Town meeting. Mark added that there's a court at Center Court and equipment can be borrowed from the library.

Brad Barker from the floor added that noise may be a problem for residents at Manor and Center Court. Alison said at Manor it being placed on an existing tennis court that is being revitalized. Mark said there's a new paddle and balls that may help reduce noise, as they are working on new ways to help with that all the time. Mark said 500 feet away shouldn't be a problem but houses closer may hear it. Mark said there's probably enough space for six courts, but due to sound they are only doing four. Pam asked if the grant would include sound mitigation like the vinyl on the fence. Mark said it can all be part of the application, maybe on two sides.

Mark added that parking will need to be addressed. A question was asked if there is lighting at the park. Alison said there is, but she wants to see it updated because it's not direct and one is not currently working. Mark said lights need to come from the sides.

Mark said he, Alison, and Eric have a month to pull all the information together for the proposal, as the CPC application is due on Jan. 29<sup>th</sup>. He stated was unsure about when the information for the warrant is due. Pam said articles were due to April on Dec. 28<sup>th</sup> and she submitted to April they were seeking to redo the courts at Manor, adding four pickleball courts -so they would need funding, but did not attach specific dollar amounts. Also submitted was that they were applying for CPA funds for the project, and funding for Harrington Park, Alison asked if the funding would come from free cash. Pam said she's not sure where the funding would come from, but she wanted to make sure that items got submitted to April so she was aware of what the Commission was planning. Conversation for the benefit of the players present ensued about the timeline for funding. Mark then asked when Alison, Mark and Eric will meet again.

Pam asked Alison if \$250,000 is for the complete project so she can attach dollar amounts to the articles, since they need to be completed by the end of February. Pam has requested a meeting with Fin Com. for the department. Alison said the numbers reflect similar projects done by other towns. Mark noted that the next CPC meeting is on January 9<sup>th</sup>.

Mark asked if there were questions from the floor. Claudine asked anyone speaking to identify themselves. Brad Barker (Boylston) said he wants to show his support for the project. He's a Pickleball player and a senior and he thinks it's a good opportunity for Parks & Rec to support a benefit to the seniors. He said they all enjoy Pickleball, it engages the seniors in town and provides income from people outside of town. Claudine replied that she wouldn't necessarily say we weren't running activities for seniors because there's programs, but she doesn't want anyone to feel like they're excluded. Pickleball just came out of nowhere and she thanks them for bringing it to the community. Arielle said that she likes that it's a physical activity. Pam shared that during the month of December she had 136 Pickleball players come to the office for cards. Brad asked if there were counts on how many Pickleball activities there were and how many players. Mark said sometimes there's 5 sessions per day, but if they could, they'd have more but it's a shared gym. Mark said come March there will be more time available, and some people will also be going outside. Mark pointed out that the floors were done and the mats installed in the gym using some Pickleball money. Brad pointed out that people leave Boylston in the good weather to play outside elsewhere as there's no outside courts.. Judy Mcauliffe asked if any other facility can be used, like maybe the schools. Arielle said that would have to be negotiated with the school. It was pointed out that the high school is full, but the elementary school might be an option, but Mark said he heard the floors have dead spots.

Alison asked if there are particular concerns at an outdoor court for seniors, like balance issues or anything else? Mark said that an AED would probably be needed. Brad added that it's also good for youth sports if a child were to get hit with a baseball. Mark said Groton has one mounted on the fence. Arielle said benches as well. Mark asked if anyone would set a Facebook page up for Boylston Pickleball. Claudine said she can help start it up. Arielle asked if there were anything else? Mark said temporary nets, maybe a locked box to store them. Judy Mcauliffe mentioned the rolling nets in Berlin work well. Mark said he that they can be rolled over to the side out of the way There are no permanent bathroom facilities at Manor, so porta-potties placed seasonally. Joanne Collins asked what the surface would be? Mark said it would be a standard surface. Brad said to make certain that it's properly graded, as that's been an issue for other towns with puddling. Brad added that Pickleball is moving down through the younger ages, so the more courts the better. A question about payment came up and Mark said outdoors has always been free. Other towns like Groton allow court reservations, while. Ward Park charges a yearly fee. West Boylston collects \$2/person/session on Tuesday/Thursdays. A nurse, new to town, said it's nice to have a program like

Pickleball available to seniors. They should stay active and studies have shown that seniors that don't have companionship don't live as long, and there's great companionship through the program.

## **VIII. Harrington Park Updates**

### **a. Grant information/discussion**

Arielle explained that the Commission is working on a grant for an accessible trail at Harrington Park and people are welcome to stay for that conversation. At the last meeting, the project wasn't clearly defined. Arielle said parking needs to be addressed and she's investigating adding ADA accessible boardwalks and paths. She asked the other Commissioners how far they want to go with the project. Alison said she thinks the entrance to the park and re-wilding that front area needs to happen in one of the earlier phases to be more attractive and environmentally friendly. She suggested a loop path and long-term she'd like to see boardwalks added, but she thinks the front part should be made attractive and useful, without getting into the wetlands, to be more achievable in one year.

Pam explained how the current parking area was designed so that it can be flipped if the entrance or exit ever changed. Arielle said maybe parking should be kept in the same place for now with work on a half mile loop. Alison said she envisions a one-way horseshoe parking eventually, which could be safer when people are coming in while others are leaving. To get the grade right might be difficult. Resident, Lydia Cerce said the traffic situation is dangerous due to speeding, so cars going in and out in that area it could be dangerous. Alison noted the area in question is pretty steep and material would have to be brought in to get the grade right. Questions were asked about the easement and what is private versus town property. It was explained that the easement is being used to drive in and park and the current trail was made to wind to avoid private property, and where it meets up with the old road is where the easement ends.

Alison said she went for a walk with Laura Broderick of Broderick Design and she offered to do 5-7 hours of designs for the Commission to have options to view. Alison said she mentioned using large flat stones to make an outdoor feature for programming, she also had ideas for wind breaks to stabilize the hill, and plantings that would guide people through the areas. Alison said she likes the idea of using something more stable like crushed stone for the path and adding native plants for the environment.

Arielle said she has bits and pieces of budget information, and she still has time to pull it all together. She's making sure that it's accessible and that's why parking keeps coming up for her due to the wood chips. Alison said there's an ADA commission in town and they had verified for another project that stone dust is acceptable. Alison said everything can be added to later and steps are being made in a sequence. Arielle said the state does take into consideration phased projects and the parking area right now for her is a concern, she wants to make sure her budget makes sense for the application due 2/01. Arielle and Alison will meet with Laura Broderick about designs.

## **IX. Town Meeting Warrant Information**

Pam submitted to April by the deadline of Dec. 28th articles for Town Meeting that she anticipated the Commissioners would be seeking. The list included: changes to the revolving account, changes to Manor Park, funding for Manor Park both CPC and applying for a PARC grant, changes and funding to Harrington Park and applying for a grant. Budget meetings with the Town Administrator begin soon by requests and then information gets forwarded to the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee for review. Later there will be a meeting scheduled with Fin Com, as a request was put in for that meeting.

Pam asked about the lights at Center Court Park and who sets the schedule. A Pickleball group wants to play there. Pam said the outlet was off at the Park and the light (electric) department turned it on. They said if it still doesn't work, we would need to hire an electrician. Pam tested it and it does not work. Alison said she would like to have that light looked at, with the light directed at the court and a button that would turn it on for an hour for court users. Pam said we asked for \$1500.00 just for maintenance and that could use a bulk of it. Discussion ensued about not having a maintenance budget. The condition of the Manor Court Park retaining wall was discussed, along with the reliance on volunteers and donors. Alison said a lot of people think the Highway Department can help, but they have their own budget. Mark said the Highway Department in Sterling did a lot of work tearing the fencing out. Alison said they would if they could, but she doesn't want that to be the expectation.

Alison introduced Jess Bourque, a town resident. She would like to raise money for bleachers at the Hillside Gym and a play structure for Center Court Park. She wasn't sure how to get started so she came to the Commission to discuss her ideas. She said for the bleachers she was thinking of doing a tournament to get the basketball organization involved with donors and sponsors. Alison said the Commissioners could be present to help, they just could not facilitate or organize the event. Jess asked if the money could go specifically to bleachers. It was explained that money can go into gift/donation account for a specific purpose. Because it's a building improvement, it would need to have approval from the Board of Selectmen as a first step. Jess said she would need to research the cost. The group then talked about retractable bleachers with two tiers due to space limitations. Jess said at basketball games there is just not enough seating. Alison said the board can do the research on vendors, but they just could not solicit donations. Alison said park improvements should go before the Selectboard to let them know about the project. Claudine said the next Board of Selectmen meeting is January 15<sup>th</sup>.

Jess said for Center Court Park she was thinking of a letter writing campaign. Claudine suggested getting as soon as possible due to other groups looking for funding. Jess said she doesn't mind doing the legwork to get the money but would want help choosing equipment. Alison said originally they were going to put Pickleball at Center Court Park, but now that we are looking at Manor for that, it might make sense to use that space. Alison said we have contact information for Miracle Playthings, so we can contact them. Jess asked for a ballpark and Alison said she thinks the last project was \$32,000.00. Discussion ensued about the bigger businesses in town that could be potential sponsors. Alison said some businesses might want to choose specific items, so it might be good to have a list. Claudine suggested finding Community Outreach people at the companies through LinkedIn. Claudine said she would send Jess some ideas on how to fundraise and suggested that she connect with Eric and potentially use youth basketball as a non-profit to collect the funds and make the donation. Mark said he talked to Bob about moving the light switches in the gym so that you would not need to flip the circuit breakers. He was asking who would be responsible for that because he keeps asking to get a quote on getting it done.

Jess asked how the money from a letter writing campaign would work. Alison thought all the money could be deposited into the gift account. Claudine suggested, especially for the bleachers, to post a banner naming the sponsors. Alison noted that site-preparation for playground equipment is expensive and a lot of work – maybe double the cost of buying the equipment. The Commission clarified for Jess that the money raised would not go back to the Town at the end of the year because it would be in a different (gift) account that stays with the Parks & Recreation Department. Mark said the Pickleball players may even donate or have a tournament.

Pam said she wasn't sure if the Commissioners need to vote on the revolving account. And definitions need to be made on the ins/outs and spending cap. Maybe that's something that Fin Com could help with.

**Vote:** *Alison put forth a motion to change the Parks & Recreation revolving account to a regular departmental revolving account. Arielle seconded. Arielle, Alison, and Claudine voted in favor.*

## **X. Budget Report**

### **a. FY 25**

Pam went over the new numbers for the new budget requests with the Commissioners. Portapotties increased slightly, Irrigation said there shouldn't be a change, a maintenance line item was added, and myrec.com was based on volume, so they gave us a new figure for 2025 that was reflected in the numbers submitted to the Town Administrator.

- b. Pam gave the Commissioners an updated budget sheet. Alison asked if some money could be used to update the electrical at Center Court. It cannot because Center Court doesn't currently generate revenue, which is a rule. Pam asked the Town Accountant about the rule and there is not a threshold that needs to be met, so doing some programming at Center Court and Harrington Park are possibilities. Maybe a Pickleball Clinic at Center Court and a foraging/native plant/birding class at Harrington.

### **c. Annual Report is due 1/15**

## **XI. Coordinator Report**

Pam said she's hosting another babysitting class, working with the Town Clerk's office on a rabies clinic with Tufts, and a slime/carnivorous plant program with Tower Hill. She's currently trying to land some dates on the calendar and plan the spring/summer.

## **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.)

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

## **XIV. Adjournment**

**Vote:** *Arielle made a motion to end the meeting. Alison seconded. All in favor. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:40pm.*

### **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
Disc Golf Presentation/Sign/Stairs	On File in the Parks and Recreation Office
Budget Sheet	On File in the Parks and Recreation Office

Respectfully submitted by: Pamela Frechette, Parks and Recreation Coordinator