



Boylston Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes



Tuesday, February 6, 2024

5:30 p.m. in the Nicholas Ward Meeting Room

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

I. Call to Order by Chairperson, Eric Hoffses, at 5:36pm.

- a. Commissioners Present: Eric Hoffses, Alison Leblanc, and Arielle Strzelewicz
- b. Commissioners Absent: Claudine Underwood, Steve Nason
- c. Coordinator: Present (Pam Frechette)
- d. Public Present: Jeffrey Turgeon of WSF (Disc Golf Update), Mark Anttila, and Brad Barker

Chairperson, Eric Hoffses, took items out of order to accommodate guests present.

II. Approval of Meeting Minutes – 11/7/2023 & 1/2/2024 – No discussion, skipped over

III. Meeting dates 2024 – No discussion, skipped over

IV. Disc Golf Update

- a. Fees and course reservations

Eric invited Jeff Turgeon to give a Disc Golf update. Jeff said there's some smaller, informal groups that have been using the course. There's now a request for a regional play-off on April 13th and they will have a lot of players. They would like to close the course for the day, as it's an exclusive event and members have to be invited – which is an honor. Jeff said this would be something different and he knows they would need to have insurance, and have them making a payment makes sense. Jeff is asking for a policy that would work for the Commission. Jeff said they wouldn't need to use or close the trails. Alison asked how many people could safely be on the course at time. Jeff said it's 18-holes and 4 people could be at each hole. Eric said that would be 72 players. They will probably want to set up tents and bring in food trucks. Parking will be big issue, and they could look into parking in the upper field. Jeff said they will have to coordinate with Parks & Rec on the details. Eric said he would check if it was the opening day of soccer and likes the idea that if they are shutting the course down, they would make a donation. The would need to be spread about parking. Alison asked how many people are expected? Jeff said 150 players, and maybe some family/friends. Eric said we would have to check with the town about food trucks. Pam said the town has some pre-approved food trucks and would check on the approval process for trucks not on the list. Jeff said he's not sure of the typical fee, but Meadow Brook charges \$10-12 and probably gives them a discount for the day. Eric said he will check with soccer because it will take coordination. Jeff said they were talking about a caterer, rather than a food truck. Pam will check on that approval process. Jeff said he knows bottom line is they would have to follow whatever the town requires. Alison wondered if they wanted alcohol, if it's allowed and if there was a process. Pam said she believes there was a beer truck at Fall Fest and they went through an approval process with the Board of Selectmen and provided additional insurance. Alison mentioned a licensed bar tender, and Pam acknowledged that would be key. Jeff said there was no mention that the group wanted alcohol. Pam said that the facility use form has information about number of people at events and states that

some things like grills require additional approvals. Eric said we definitely have some take-aways, but asked Arielle and Alison from a high level if they had issues with the event – shutting down the course and accepting a donation for that -he likes Jeff's rough draft he submitted that states Parks & Rec. has to approve it. Arielle said it sounds like they would make a donation of at least \$1000.00 to advertise the course, and as long as all the items can be tied up, she doesn't have an issue with it. Alison said she thought the only issue that could happen is if a resident wanted to privately rent the course, they would have difficulty providing \$1M in insurance and that would stop most people from approaching that (based on Jeff's write up). Jeff said he meant 'outside' groups, meaning not a Parks & Rec event and we could differentiate between outside organizations renting and renting to a resident. Pam added that we talked about renting it out for birthday parties, similar to how we rent the pavilion, gym and fields. We would charge a fee for use of the course; in that case we wouldn't require insurance but rather have all participants complete a liability waiver.

Eric confirmed via text it is NOT opening weekend for soccer, but soccer will be running during the event. He asked Jeff if Sunday was possible. And added that Saturday parking will be the biggest thing to figure out; they need to have a plan. He can work with Jeff on that. Jeff said unless there's thunder and lightning, the event is probably a go. Eric told Jeff he's free to move forward.

Alison suggested that we put redoing the facility use form as an agenda item. Pam said this is the form that she's been wanting to do as a fillable form because it's the one everyone forgets to complete. Eric said the form should be sent to everyone ahead of time so they can with comments – and he'd like to review it when Claudine is there, too. Alison suggested sending it to counsel.

Eric skipped to the Hillside Gym agenda item and opened the floor up to Mark and Brad.

- V. Master Plan Implementation Update if any (Claudine)** – No discussion, skipped over
- VI. CPC Update if any (Eric)** part of larger discussion mixed in with Hillside Gym
- VII. Manor Park Updates**
 - a. Grant information/discussion

Word article in such a way that it is not contingent upon grant funding, but free cash will be used if grant is not awarded. See larger discussion below.

- VIII. Harrington Park Updates**
 - a. Grant information/discussion

Word article in such a way that it is not contingent upon grant funding, but free cash will be used if grant is not awarded. See larger discussion below.

- IX. Resident Fundraising Initiatives – no discussion – skipped over**
 - a. Bleachers for Hillside Gym
 - b. Play piece for Center Court

- X. Hillside Gym**
 - a. Gym rules/allocation of time

After the Disc Golf conversation, Eric skipped other agenda items and opened the floor to Mark Anttila and Brad Barker to discuss the gym, asking if there were any comments they wanted to start with.

Brad opened the conversation stating there is just the issue of how the gym is allocated and when it is being used, especially in the primetime hours being key. Since everyone is trying to fight for the primetime hours. In late spring through the early fall, it's not as big an issue because so many people are playing outside. But during the months of mid-December through mid-March there seems to be some opportunities there to share a bit differently. Pickleball has the same issues as everyone else, there's a lot of retired folks that play. Pickleball could probably fill up the entire day, with retired folks especially, but there's people that still work that want to play in the evenings; the adult group as opposed to the senior group. They are starting to get teenagers that are starting to play with grandparents. He said he doesn't know how much (the board) knows or follows Pickleball, but it's going to continue to grow for years – it's not a fad. There's continuous demand for more courts and there are Pickleball courts sprouting up everywhere. The real interesting aspect is that this is about the only sport that seniors can play – there's chair yoga and the senior center offers certain exercises like that, but there's no sport that seniors 60s through 80s can play. Hillside is one of the better places to play during the winter months, indoors. Their interest is looking to find a balance during primetime hours. He said in his email he's certainly getting the idea of being able to offer time for the kids, it's just a matter of identifying those primetime hours and finding a way to make it so everybody can enjoy the gym.

Mark said his only request about this whole thing is 'communicate' – he said he doesn't think they communicated well on how much youth basketball was going to increase in the beginning and it was surprising. He wishes communication was better in the beginning of the year about how the (Pickleball) schedule would be impacted. But we're doing good now and he's getting information on when things are happening. He appreciates that. On 3pm on Friday, he had Pickleball players there on Saturday. Mark said it's not his life, he doesn't want to do it all the time, but the interest is there -especially this time of year. As soon as it opened, it was full. He fields emails and texts regarding sessions at night that he hasn't open sessions, and as soon as he does they fill within an hour.

Brad added that one of the things he has been told is that Pickleball gets more hours than everybody else. But he said, they could fill up every single hour of the day if allowed. They don't necessarily want to do that. But if there's an hour available, they can use it – and used the example of opening a session Friday and having it filled for the next day. He said it's that simple – that's how Pickleball is right now.

Mark added that he talked to Pam about how to get kids and families involved. He said they're not going to play during the day because they're not prime hours. People come home from school and work - and there's weekends. He knows they could get activity going there, too, but the timing is difficult. It's opening up now because youth basketball season is ending soon and all this other stuff, but he would like to talk at the beginning of the season about how they can figure it all out. There's opportunities that fell – he really wants to get kids and families involved. He sent Pam a note the other day about the Friday 4-6pm session – maybe doing an open house or discount pricing.

Brad wanted to reinforce that he's not asking for more hours – from youth basketball – but he wants to make sure that if there's time available, they know about it.

Arielle asked them how many hours they think they lost out on hours here and there? Mark said he put some stuff together and did a quick calculation, stating they lost 30% of their hours to youth basketball. Arielle said that's different than what she asked – there's two premises – the time basketball is using and the gaps of time. Eric said that on Monday nights the gap was a real thing and there was an issue – there were sometimes 30-45 minutes that wasn't being used due to a lack of communication by a coach. Eric talked to Mark about it, but it was probably 30 minutes per night over six or seven weeks, so a total of about four hours total.

Brad said they don't know what other hours are available because they are not here. He said they lose an awful lot of hours to the Police Academy, but there's nothing they can do about that. Pam said Parks & Rec could also use those hours for toddler programs. Brad said he knows they take priority and that's okay – but they don't know what hours the gym is not being used.

Mark said he looks at myrec. He contacts Pam when he sees open space – and will sometimes say youth basketball is not on the calendar to be told they actually are. He suggested that Pam schedule everything on the calendar so there's no confusion when things get put on there. Eric said she does, except the Sunday night thing. Eric asked if that's when there was an issue with myrec and Pam said yes, she added dates multiple times and had to manually check things due to a problem with the software.

Eric addressed the Monday night gap, saying it can be fixed. He told Mark in November or December that when the 8:30pm Pickleball group started, there was a time when no one showed and he could have used that time. So, it's tough. Eric said that he and Mark are volunteers, and they are only as good as the people helping them out. It can be fixed, and they will keep better communication next year.

Eric added that when he started, basketball just had their block of time on the calendar and there was no giving back even if they didn't use it the whole time. Now, each week there's communication on giving back time from youth basketball, which is an improvement. Mark said last year he could go to the Nashoba website to see the schedule. Eric said that's one of the things that became problematic as last year basketball would give the time back to Pickleball, and then the league would reschedule a game later in the day. That created issues with giving time away and needing to take it back. That's why that situation is tough. Eric said on Saturdays it's very tough with a buffer because of overtime. They had that happen last year with two games going into double overtime and there were Pickleball players waiting to get in. They might finish early, but they might run long. There's no way to know. Eric said he doesn't have a good idea for those situations.

Arielle said, so we're not going to squeeze out every single hour. That's just the reality of the situation because of our systems, how life goes, and because people are volunteers.

Mark said the other way to look at is when Pickleball comes in, they are collecting money. Good money. So, if there's time available, we should be getting what we can get out of it.

Pam said the flip side of that is she has people requesting gym time. And on Saturday the gym is busy from 8:30am in the morning through 10:30pm at night with no gaps. She has a skating troupe looking to do some choreography and a soccer coach looking for two hours for some conditioning. Alison mentioned that in the past they've had lacrosse and girls' soccer looking for hours. Pam said she does have a request from lacrosse and she told them she couldn't provide an answer until after the meeting, but she's looking at the requested times and how they fit into the schedule. They're not requesting a lot of time. Alison said that's not counting birthday parties.

Arielle said she can appreciate that Pickleball is becoming a popular sport and she appreciates the accessibility, but because it's becoming more popular it's kind of the opposite issue - now they need to advocate for the smaller groups that use the gym so that no one particular group is dominating. She said looking at hours from July to February Pickleball accounted for 54% of all hours total of gym time.

Mark said he wanted to differentiate that more than half of that time is during the day when no one else uses the gym. Alison asked, you want more time? Mark said they want prime time, so they can get families involved and kids after school and weekends. He said on Saturdays they normally just go from 7:45am-9:45am. Pam added, for three months.

Eric said basketball has nine or ten Saturdays during the winter. What is the solution? He said if you tell the group of parents, whatever your message is, that they won't have as many home games, you will have 85 parents asking why youth basketball is being kicked out on Saturdays.

Arielle pointed out that they don't even have the opportunity to during those non-primetime hours...but it works (for Pickleball) because there's a lot of retirees, so they can use hours that others can't take advantage of.

Brad said that number of 54% is a little misleading because they will fill up any time that's available. They aren't asking that anyone get bumped because of it. That number is a little misleading because if it's sitting there empty, especially when the police academy has told us that it's not being used... Alison said that has nothing to do with us...the Police Academy has nothing to do with. Brad said but you're tracking the hours. Alison responded saying we're not tracking anything...they say these are the hours we're going to book...our hands are tied - we have no choice. Brad said he's not suggesting that's wrong and you don't have any control over, he's just saying that the 54% is because they will take whatever time is available, they will fill it. Mark added that if the Police Academy took no time, they would be at 70%, but they work around whatever they are given. Alison said the Police Academy is not around on the weekends, so it's the same hours that you're talking about that you're splitting with the Police Academy. Mark said he doesn't understand. Alison said you're talking about prime hours, so let's leave Police Academy out of it a) we have nothing to do with the Police Academy so that doesn't need to be brought before the board b) Police Academy is using the same hours that you're talking about as non-prime hours. She said if we're talking about prime hours, then the groups that you're having issues with are existing groups that have been here long before Pickleball that are getting booted. Brad said, just to be clear, he's not having any issue with other groups - they want to boot them. He wants to make that very clear because he thinks there's a misconception. Alison asked what it is they do want? Brad said mostly what Mark said, when there's available time the

communication that it's available so they can use it. Alison said it sounds like that've been resolved. Mark said it's gotten better. Alison said that's a win. So what is it that you need?

Brad said what he's listening to, it sounds like the board needs to have a policy to how the gym is going to be used in general and to figure out how the gym is going to be allocated. What if all of the sudden the high school lacrosse team comes over, do they get priority or whatever? He suggested the board figure out what their policy is with the use of the gym because Pickleball is arrived...it wasn't here a just couple years ago. Now it's growing leaps and bounds and there's people in town that want to use it and seniors that want to use it.

Alison said Pickleball is here, but Pickleball cannot bully other groups. There are people that want time on that field (gym). She's not sitting here because it's a corporation, or because it's a business and we need to make money. She's sitting here because residents in town want to use the facilities and she wants to make them appropriate, the best they can be, and fairly distributed. So if someone comes to her and says they would like to bring a group of people to use the facility and another group has been using the gym facility a ton, they will get priority – they absolutely will, because it needs to be distributed fairly.

Arielle said that was what she was kind of talking about – there are smaller entities and it's the board's job to make sure they don't get pushed down. She asked if there was talk about building a senior center with a gym? She said that may be something they can work with the senior center on. She gets that chair yoga probably doesn't feel super dignified when you're fully able bodied. She laughs when she sees senior areas that tout 55+ when her dad is hiking the Patagonia at 70. She feels like if it's that big, maybe it can't be fixed with the gym space we have and maybe we need to talk about another dedicated space.

Alison said in terms of what the board needs to talk about it's how to make sure all groups are getting an opportunity to use the gym. And she absolutely feels that there needs to be a weekend block set aside for rotating, with a two week maximum, that people can book for rental use. It can't be for an on ongoing group. Mark said as long as it affects equally, meaning that basketball gets impacted and Pickleball gets impacted. Alison said we will need to find a time that impacts the least amount of people, but there needs to be an opportunity for lacrosse, the birthday party, the girls scouts, for people. This is public use facility.

Brad said that he takes exception to the word bully. He has not tried to bully anyone. Alison said she's received many emails from him and she's all done receiving emails from him, he can send them to BPR. Brad said his emails have all been very professional, expressing his opinions on this. He said there's a couple things going on, he said he has not talked about money today – the fact that Pickleball is bringing in thousands of dollars; and that he's not talking time away from anyone but just making certain that time available in the gym is properly announced so that people can go in and use it. Mark's watching whatever is available and he's going in and setting up a Pickleball time if it's free. He said he hasn't asked for time from any other organization or that money is a big factor. He said in his email he thinks he did say that it's not a bad thing that Pickleball is producing thousands of dollars of revenue for the town. But he did not say that should give Pickleball priority over anything else, just that it's nice that Pickleball is doing that. He said he thinks she is misreading his emails and misinterpreting what he's saying in the room.

Alison said he sent an email, then another email less than 24 hours later asking why he didn't get a response, and he would take that to mean he was being ignored. Alison said that is bullying. Brad said his letter had nothing to do with this discussion about the availability of the gym. He told her she should read his emails more carefully and he's still waiting for an answer as to why his email was not included in the package. Alison said she would not be taking anymore emails from him, he can send them to BPR.

Eric intervened, saying he can appreciate what Brad said in his letter, but he doesn't know if that's the best way to go about it. The letter was in support of the Pickleball courts, and then said how Parks and Recreation has never done anything for seniors...it had a negative tone. Arielle said she didn't appreciate it. Brad asked if it's true or not true. Alison said it's not important, who is the letter written to? Eric said it's not true, Pam sets up...maybe it's not athletic...Arielle said maybe not to your liking, but...Brad said he's asking what Parks & Rec has done for seniors...tell me... besides Pickleball? Eric said Pam has done Stargazing that seniors can do, nature walks that he thinks seniors can do. Arielle said that Memorial Day is for everyone. Eric said we purchased Camp Harrington.

Brad said, you have to be careful about what I'm saying in my emails, what I'm saying is Parks & Rec hasn't had a lot for seniors and this is an opportunity for Parks & Rec to hit a different demographic. Eric said you're trying to partner with us to do these outdoor courts and in the same letter...Alison is taking her own personal time and many hours as a volunteer to help you do this. She's been on Parks and Rec longer than anyone on the board by a long shot, for many, many years, and the letter goes on to say how Parks & Rec doesn't do anything for the seniors. Eric said he doesn't understand how Brad couldn't see that when Ali reads a letter like that she's thinking that it's really unfair. Eric said it actually doesn't look good to the CPC committee. Alison agreed saying it looks terrible, that you're sending a letter to say please partner with me because we want to make a partnership to solve a common goal and the letter says (reading directly from the letter): *Boylston Pickleball suffers frustration at the low priority given to Pickleball by Parks and Rec.* She said this is a letter that you're sending to somebody asking them to partner with Parks and Rec. Do you want to partner with this person? Brad began to speak and Alison continued to read another excerpt after stating that she has the floor: *I've lived in Boylston for 40 years. Parks and Recreation Department has offered few physical recreation programs for seniors or adults.* Alison asked Brad if he checked that out? She said they've offered many, many. They don't take, they haven't been popular, and end up getting cycled through. She's said they've done many yoga classes, a walking club, she said she personally started the rabies clinic – and she's been involved with walking club. They've had tons of craft classes and Alison said she sponsored the accessible garden.

Arielle said we are not going to knock everything out of the park, she doesn't see how that contributes to the argument. She feels a little insulted – seniors came forward and asked that no fields go on the Camp Harrington property, they wanted it to be a quiet area to be for walking. She just submitted a grant to make accessible walking trails. She said it's kind of a rude letter. It's not a good way to start a partnership with someone. You're asking us to go forward with you to accomplish something, but how are we supposed to? The tone is accusatory.

Alison said she spent hours and hours trying to put together the grant on Pickleball's behalf. She doesn't play Pickleball and doesn't have a dog in the race, and then the letter she gets said that most of the effort, funds, and facilities go to youth programs. She said her personal effort and time has been spent on this.

Brad responded, like he said, he's been there for 40 years and has not seen those programs. Alison said that's a you problem, sir. Look into it and don't send a letter and publicize a letter making accusations that you did not look into. Brad said he doesn't go to the website because there's nothing there for him, but that's not the point. The point he's trying to highlight is the fact that there is an opportunity, and a really important one. Alison asked, so what are we doing here? What do you want?

Mark asked if he could answer that. Eric said yes. Mark said it is, and always will be a Park & Rec program. It was started by Parks & Rec in 2014. This is a Park & Rec program so all they are asking for is for Park & Rec to support it.

Arielle responded that Alison wrote a whole grant, spending her free time writing a grant with you, how can you not see that? I'm sorry it's not fast enough for you, but that's not reasonable. Mark said the situation with the grant he understands. There's still a lot of questions and he's not sure we will be in a position to apply for the grant, not because of lack of effort, but Parks & Rec probably needed to hire someone that understands it.

Arielle said Parks & Recreation doesn't have the budget to hire someone to write a grant specifically. Mark said we are collecting thousands of dollars from Pickleball. Arielle said then Pickleball as a group, if they decide the board is inadequate to write a grant, they can certainly...she said she thinks they are completely misunderstanding what they have for funds. Eric said the revolving fund has rules on how it can be spent. It gets dicey when you're talking about hiring someone to write a grant. Arielle added that we don't even have a maintenance budget. Mark said it's a small town, there's a lot of volunteers, he puts a lot of hours in too. He said the hard part is the money part. The other hard part is how do they get the system in place so that they can get some of the grants. He doesn't think they are in the position to do that right now. Arielle said it's kind of like, you get what you get. Alison said they just got an enormous grant...Camp Harrington....\$90,000 last year.

Arielle directed a statement to Brad saying that she doesn't want to play a game saying that Pickleball should get priority because of the money being brought in, but she can read between the lines and proceeded to read from an email: *Pickleball isn't a fad and isn't going away. The fact that it produces significant income for Park & Rec isn't a bad thing either. As an aside, as a citizen of Boylston, I would be interested to know all the sources of income for Parks & Recreation.* She said you don't have to directly say that for her to understand the implication and she doesn't appreciate the...can we be honest and just admit that is the implication...that Pickleball brings in significant money and you want to see how it compares to other groups? Brad said he won't agree that's how it was meant. It's just in the sense of trying to send in a letter of support for the courts, it's that Pickleball is producing money for the town. Alison said, then that's what you need to say in your letter. Arielle said she interpreted it as "you better watch out, we're the ones that are buttering your bread here." Alison said that's what it was meant to

say. Arielle said it's a shame, because everyone here has been so amicable to Pickleball, so this has become a thing for no apparent reason. She said they already addresses squeezing more hours out, if the gym's open, of course you want squeeze it out. We addressed that. So back to the original question. What do you really want here if you don't want to push basketball, because again basketball gets mentioned a lot? You're not saying basketball, but you are saying basketball. We're disagreeing on the implications of your sentence...so fine...so what's your suggestion?

Brad said he has a couple of questions. He was looking for some facts. There's a thought within the Pickleball community that basketball is not just Boylston and West Boylston. Alison asked if Pickleball is just Boylston? Brad answered no. He said he was trying to figure out if basketball was a Boylston/West Boylston event or other things. He doesn't know. And what is the policy regarding the gym? And what is the policy regarding the revenue that is being produced? How many of the various organizations are producing it? Just facts. He's looking for facts and said all of it is public information. Arielle said of course, she has no issue with him asking for public information. She just wanted to point out to him that it kind of felt that you're saying I don't believe that anyone else is contributing, but I know Pickleball is contributing and therefore...Again, she can read between what he's saying. She asked if someone could address the Bolston/West Boylston numbers for basketball.

Eric said there's a Boylston Youth Basketball recreational league with 153 kids signed up for that and also a travel Basketball league made of Boylston, Berlin, and some West Boylston kids. They use the gym for practice, not games on the weekends. He thinks the big thing in question is the weekend usage and that's all Boylston Youth Basketball, the 153 kids. Arielle sked how prime hours are defined? Mark said weekends and nights. Mark asked how many kids were in basketball last year? Eric said 110 or 120, and like Pickleball, that's only increasing because the town's getting bigger. Mark said then we have to figure out how to put the two together. Eric said one thing that Brad said that he agreed with is that they gym needs a policy similar the Town Hall (House?) – it has a defined order of who gets time. He thinks the Hillside gym, for years has gotten by putting Basketball, Pickleball and the Police Academy in. It's still largely will be that, but the board will have to come up with a defined order of how the hours get picked and who has grandfathered hours in between Basketball and Pickleball that has Thursday and Sunday nights like they've always had.

Arielle stated that when talking about basketball, the non-residents are Berlin and West Boylston, which we have reciprocal relationships with. But for Pickleball, the non-residents are all sorts of towns. Eric said yes, for Pickleball, Boylston, Berlin and West Boylston are considered residents. Eric said if we're talking facts, there are more non-residents that use Pickleball than residents. Mark said they pay more. Eric said that's another thing we have to discuss tonight. He has a form that he wanted to discuss. Alison read the current facility use form that states "Boylston adult programs comprised of 80% Boylston residents take higher priority." Eric said currently the high priority is BPR sponsored youth/children programs, other Boylston children/youth programs comprised of 80% of Boylston residents, BPR sponsored adult programs, other adult programs comprised of 80% of Boylston residents, all other Boylston based non-profit, social, and athletic groups, Boylston based business, and low priority is all others. Eric said we would have to look at that more, since the Police Academy gets highest priority.

Brad said if that's your policy, then that makes perfect sense. If that's how you're managing the gym, he's good with it. It makes sense since it's a Boylston resource and using it for Boylston utilization is good for the gym and town. He's 100% supportive of that as a resident. He's interested in the facts and is being provided with a lot of facts. He doesn't really want to feel like it's a conflict between us because that was not his intention. His intention was to support the outdoor courts and also support the seniors. And if offense to his words was taken, he apologizes for that. He's here to work with us not against us.

Arielle said he failed to mention that Ali has been advocating for that and she feels like he's not reading the room. Ali is the one that has done the grant and is working on the outdoor courts, and they're balking at an hour here and there. She said she saw the emails that were sent and it was just embarrassing. She said maybe they perceive it differently, but it's just not the way to come at it. She said realistically, basketball has more residents than Pickleball. Brad said he sees that. Arielle said it kind of just looks goofy now. Alison said he's infuriated someone that has been there helping for a long time. Brad said he apologizes to Alison and that he does appreciate the work. He hopes over time if she can see to it to change her mind about him. She said she would like the letter retracted. He said he will retract it. She said she would like an apology in writing. He said he probably won't do that because he didn't really put anything in there that was not factual. Arielle, directed at Alison said it's good, we have a different perspective on these things. If he can't understand how this is impacting your help... (then Arielle to Brad)...again her personal help that she's not required to give you, giving this of her own free volition as she supports her family, does her job, and piling on something in excess to all the other stuff...that's an interesting choice. Mark asked if the group knows how much stress he's under? He said Ali understands this, not Pickleball stress, but he has life stresses, too. We are all volunteers and do the best we can. Alison said, but we don't send you nasty letters. Arielle said we've only done supportive things. Again the outdoor courts have been a huge topic of conversation the board has tried to support. It feels a little greedy and blind to the situation. It could have been approached in a lot more polite manner. She said we will continue to support pickleball, and put everyone on the schedule to the best of our abilities, and try and sweep up the little hours here and there. She said she still hasn't heard what they want the board to do. It still hasn't really been address.

Brad said as far as the topic of gym use, it's communication. That's all he's looking for, if there are times available...again, Mark is the real leader of the Pickleball group, but he's talked to a lot of people within and outside town that are looking for more opportunities to play. All they are trying to give them is give them as many opportunities to play as they can without taking time away from other organization that deserve the time.

Alison said she will say one more things about communication, since that seems to be the thing he's ringing the bell on, this started because rather than sit here, come to a meeting, and say you have a few questions about how gym time is allocated, you sent a letter to the CPC about how mad you are at Parks & Rec. So, if that's the type of communication we're starting with, I don't know how it's going to get any better. Arielle said it sounds like a weird escalation. The board meets every month, he could have just come here and asked. It also sounds like the CPC is the boards intermediary somehow.

Alison said he thinks they are holding the purse strings. Brad said he certainly doesn't, but he understands how the CPC works and he sent a letter in support of the courts. Alison said it's not a letter in support, it's two paragraphs that says how mad you are at Parks and Rec. Arielle said that's not how you write letters to ask for things.

Mark said he was on the Master Plan Steering Committee for three years and it was and it was very obvious what the master plan was asking for. If for some reason Parks & Rec. doesn't have the resources to do that, we have to find the resources to do it. We've been asking from the beginning. They've been asking from the beginning. His only other comment was that the letters of recommendations that came in were very nice, but there was no discussion about seniors. He said we need the full demographic of support in town. Alison responded saying, then send me the letter in support of courts on behalf of the seniors, that was not the letter she received.

Brad said he was the chair of the library board for 15 years and they had a lot of residents come in and they had their issues with the library. Residents in the area that had issues with drainage and all the rest of the stuff, and as a member of the board, it was their responsibility to listen to the residents. With him as a resident, he's coming to Parks & Rec. expressing his personal thoughts about what Parks & Rec. has done for him and you are taking it emotionally when he's trying to convey to you what his particular perceptions are regarding Parks & Rec. as a senior.

Arielle said he didn't come to Parks & Rec. to do that, he wrote a letter to someone else, the CPC, so that's not expressing himself to Parks & Rec. Brad said he sent the same letter to CPC and the title says 'support of courts'. Alison said the title doesn't match the body content. Brad said he's going to reiterate the intention of the comment about seniors is to let people know that there's a healthy opportunity for seniors and that's why the courts are so important to them. Alison said write THAT letter and they will submit it. Brad said, that's basically my letter. Alison said that is NOT the letter. Eric said that Alison has his support in not submitting the letter unless it's rewritten. He said has hasn't spoken much, but he listed some programs off the top of his head that were run for seniors, and if you have suggestions, definitely tell Pam and we'll look into it.

He said it's a good segue...he's heard a lot of feedback from Boylston residents that play Pickleball that have reached out that they can't get court time. He understands there's probably different reasons for that. We shut off cards to non-residents...that was one solution (Pam clarified later that it was only new cards to nonresidents that don't have never purchased cards). The other thing he found is that our rate is below everywhere else that offers Pickleball. Eric made a sheet of the prices for the board members. Mark asked if Lancaster was on the list. Eric said the first one is not a good comparison because it's a private corporation (Rte. 12 Pickleball), but he put it on there to show the max that's being charged of \$15/hour. Leominster Boys & Girls club charges \$6/session. Greendale Y is \$5/but you have to be a member, so there's added cost. Boylston charges \$3 for local residents, \$4 for non-residents. He said he feels that Parks & Rec. priority is to provide opportunity for Boylston residents, not other towns. So, he doesn't want to do anything with the rates for the residents – and West Boylston and Berlin would be included. He would propose an increase for the non-residents to \$6/hour (session) for the card rate. And opened it up for discussion. Mark said that Lancaster is public and they charge \$3 for anyone. They are a public court. The Boys & Girls club are not a town facility, so they pay to rent the

gym there, it's not a Park & Rec. program. Lancaster is a Park & Rec. program and we have a Park & Rec. program. He's not sure how much Northborough charges for open play, but the Boys & Girls Club and Rte. 12 are totally different animals. Eric said he knows that, but he wanted to show the board the information. Mark said he just mentioned Lancaster and they only charge \$3. Arielle said she's willing to bet they aren't having the same usage issue. Eric said that's the major issue - that he has Boylston residents complain they can't get their time, so that's his priority as the Parks & Rec. Chair is Boylston residents. He doesn't want to sound unthoughtful, but it's not his priority to help out non-residents. Mark said a lot of that has been resolved. Every morning at 8am, he opens the next week sessions. The rates that you're trying to compare to are not the same. Let's find out what Northborough charges for a public facility. Eric said he's comfortable looking at the other ones. Mark said the \$3-\$4 is representative of a public facility and when he went online today the public facility charged anywhere from \$2-\$5. Eric said the demand seems to be well past what we can take on. Mark said he would suggest holding off until next winter when demand is back and we see what happens with Rte. 12 and other places in the area that are either going to make it or not make it. Arielle said you're saying it's the fastest growing sport, so she hopes they make it. Mark said it's a fast growing sport and the indoors is different than playing outdoors. The seniors will be playing outdoors as soon as the weather changes, they won't want to pay the \$3. He suggests we don't raise the rate in the middle of the season because the punchcards are out there. Eric said they are, and the new rate would be for new ones. Mark said he would suggest that we get through this season, through the end of March, rather than throwing this all up right now. Arielle said we are talking about immediately addressing the issue so that Boylston residents can have access. Mark said that's not going to change their access though, raising the rate. Arielle said some people might think \$6 is too much. Eric asked why wouldn't it.

Mark said what percent of Boylston residents do we want to get to? Eric said he doesn't know, but right now it's below 25%. Mark said so we're not at the 80% that was part of the guidelines, so this is not going to have a significant impact on the amount of time that Boylston residents get to play. There's already been some potential impact from Rte. 12, we'll see what happens there. Eric said we've put cards on hold for out of town residents, so that tells him that we have a problem. Mark said from the Playtimescheduler.com side, a lot of times, there's no waitlist anymore and it's been changing in the last couple weeks. The other thing he's done to allow for more playtime is to set up the drill court as a 4 person session so people can sign up to use the court and if people don't show up for the 16, they can slide over if they want. Mark continued that some people that had trouble getting court time didn't understand that you have to sign in at 8am, that's how it works. He would highly recommend that they don't do this in the middle of the season.

Alison said this was all brought up because they asked to talk about it. We weren't talking about it before, and we've used a whole meeting on this. Arielle said you guys wanted more Pickleball time, but not the reality is that we have to find Pickleball time for Boylston residents. Mark said he's giving his experience working with Playtimescheduler and knowing the community that's out there. He's been managing the PTS for 2-3 years. He can show the board the trend that sessions are not filling up. There's space for people to still play. He asked how many complaints have there been - 2, 3? Eric said 3 to 4. Mark said that's 3 to 4 out of 600 plays per month, that's

not a big percentage. He's asked to pull data together this year and see what's really happening. Arielle said she inherently agrees with that, but that should have been the first thing that happened. She asked, do you see how it looks now? That they're asking to research it more? She said we could have had a good, healthy conversation where it wasn't insulting...

Brad said he's just got to say you're talking about one guy who wrote a letter and expressed his personal feelings as a resident. He's not representing Pickleball. He wrote the letter in support of the courts because he's a Pickleball player and resident. He apologizes if the board didn't like his language, but he was expressing his views as a senior and resident and asked not to mix what he said with Mark, as he was acting as an individual resident of Boylston.

Pam asked Eric if he needed to leave, and he indicated he needed to leave soon. She asked that before he leaves if the board could decide if the Manor Park Grant and Harrington Park Grant articles were going to be contingent upon getting the grants? Mark said if you take free cash, you can't apply for a grant. Pam asked, so it can't be contingent? Mark said it can't and he got that information from Elaine Jones and he sent a message to the PARC grant administrator. Mark said if we pull CPC money and spend it, and pull free cash and spend it, we cannot go back for the grant if we spend the money. Mark said with Harrington, we didn't have a contract to purchase until we got the grant, we didn't buy the land until the grant came through. Mark said if we spend the money before we get the grant, they don't reimburse us for what we've spent. Pam said she's not talking about spending the money, she's talking about appropriating free cash because you have to fund the grant, then waiting to get an answer on the grant. If they say no, rather than giving back, holding on to the free cash to get the project done. Mark said some of the questions was if we are planning to do anything this summer (that was part of CPC)? If we do anything with it, the grant can't reimburse us for it...that's all he's saying. He's not sure how you write it up. Mark said if we can get the free cash, take the free cash. Arielle said she would generally think that's not the best idea, she said that's her gut reaction - the optics of it. Alison said the last time they went for free cash, it was straight up \$50K free cash to do the tennis courts and basketball courts at Center Courts and it passed easily. Alison used the example of buying the million dollar piece of property, the BOS said they hope to get a grant, and it still passed unanimously. Alison her feeling is they just go for it, it has to be done. Alison said at the select board meeting they said they wanted to see the town maintaining their currently owned properties including Harrington and the Manor, and that the longer we wait on this things...the worse they get at the end of the day. They are encouraging us to go for maintenance projects. Arielle said she changed her mind and we should absolutely say we will keep the money. Alison said that's just her opinion. Arielle agreed. Mark said we should assume we're not going to get the grant; we'll get CPC money and then this is on top of what the CPC money is - \$100K from CPC and \$150K from free cash. Mark said the contract for the land wasn't signed until after the grant was obtained. Mark said if we get the money, we could get something done in the summer. We won't hear about the grant until December. Alison said there will be two different groups, one looking at the bottom line and others that think we own the property and it shouldn't become a health risk. Arielle asked if a vote was needed. Pam said they need to know what they are asking before they go to Fin Comm and the meeting is on 2/26.

Eric suggested approving the minutes at the next meeting.

The board looked over the agenda to address anything that needed to be done before Eric had to leave.

Alison read under the budget report that there was a Not to Exceed limit on the revolving account. Pam explained what that was and that they could add that later after meeting with Fin Com. Eric said a million.

Mark asked if the additional answers would be ready for the CPC meeting because they had a lot of questions. Eric said he will answer what he can for sure but won't have a lot of answers about the parking concerns. Mark said he's been sending out emails and doesn't know of any other outdoor Pickleball facility that locks up their courts at any time. Alison asked if they had parking issues? Mark said you're right, maybe that's not what we want to do there because if we don't have the parking...you're not going to lock up the basketball court. Eric said you're right and that's back to the talk of prime hours, April and May on a Saturday mornings are prime hours. Mark said if you go to Sterling after they did it, it was packed on nights and weekends, so the idea of trying to lock up a facility during prime time— 5:30-7 at night and weekend mornings, it might be virtually impossible. Alison said a good solution would be to not line it for Pickleball but keep it for tennis and basketball; that would keep the numbers down and solve everyone's problem.

Eric said we never finished the conversation about the non-resident Pickleball. He asked the board their thoughts. Arielle said ultimately, they are going to have to raise the non-resident prices because it's a basic supply and demand issue. Decrease demand by increasing the price for non-residents. She's okay with benching it until next year, if the rest of the board is okay with that. She said we're coming to the end of the season anyway, and it would be a sign of good grace after the conversation we've had. Alison asked for clarification on what she's suggesting. Arielle said that we would leave the non-resident cost alone for now as a showing of good faith that we're trying to work together. Eric said he's willing to do that, but if he or Pam continue to hear about Boylston residents not able to play, we will have to think about doing it before next season.

Mark said if they have questions, have them contact him because they don't understand how to sign up. Pam said some people were signing up for two sessions and that's stopped. Mark said that's a rule. Eric said his biggest thing is why they are giving a such a discount to non-residents compared to other places, if it's such an issue to get court time, why are we giving such a deal to non-residents? That's a disconnect for him. Mark said we give deals to a lot of other people too, so why are we doing that? Eric said we give deals to residents whether it be youth sports, or our gym with resident versus non-resident fee. Mark said that Lancaster is \$3 and said we should look at public facilities, not private places. Alison said she just googled it and got \$1-\$5, some up to \$25/hour for outdoor Pickleball. Mark said once you get to Boston, everything gets more expensive. Alison said Marlborough, Upton, Worcester.. Mark said he's paid in Marlborough and they charge \$55/year unlimited play time and if we want to go to an annual fee, go to an annual fee. Eric said the hard thing that he's having trouble wrapping his head around is that we don't have enough hours, and we charge the lowest out of everywhere... Mark said you keep saying that, but we don't. Eric replied that we do, with the exception of Lancaster. Mark said look at other public courts. Eric asked what the benefit to the board is to keeping the rate the same for

non-residents if their mission is to the residents of Boylston. Mark said he'll tell him...if the concern is that they are over filling, he's not seeing that they are maxing out at 16 players. If we can max out the 16 players at the rate we have now and Boylston residents get to register, that will be a benefit to Parks & Rec. – you'll get plenty of people to register. Arielle said they're not looking for profit, but looking to serve Boylston residents. She said she understands the different rates and facilities, but it's not the board's obligation to honor the rates of other towns. If they were having an issue getting the courts filled, they would be talking about bringing the rates down. It's basic supply and demand. Demand is high, so we have to increase the price and she's not going to do it to Boylston residents, but she can do it to outside residents who are the majority of the attendees. Mark said he will be more than happy at the end of the season to pull the numbers and figure how increasing will impact the overall income of Parks & Rec. Arielle said if income means blocking out residents, she doesn't care. Eric said if income was number one, he would have kicked out other groups and given it all to Pickleball. Arielle said they are, there's not enough time, there's not enough time for Boylston residents, they don't believe the basketball team are configured of Boylston residents, but it's okay for Pickleball because they are bringing in money. Mark said there's been three people as far as he knows that have complained. Eric said the overall thing is the actual amount of court time, who is the court time is servicing – Boylston residents or out of town people that we're charging \$4/session. Alison said she's not sure why it's taken a meeting and a half to talk about three people complaining. Eric said there were so many people signing up for Pickleball that Boylston residents couldn't get their favored time to play, and that's when we started digging into the numbers – how many Boylston residents do we have? Less than 25%? So more than 75% non-residents? So who are we serving here and are we too concerned about out of town residents? Mark said to have people call him. Eric said he gets that, but the number of out of town residents that play and we're here debating over court time. Are we having this debate because out of town people can't get enough court time? That's what he's questioning.

Alison said she's very concerned that there are people that have used the gym for years and years that got zero hours. Mark said if there's something that comes up, let's talk about it. And not just the recent stuff, but if there's something that someone wants to use the gym for, let's talk about it and maybe can move stuff around. Alison said we'd love to talk because it's always been an amicable relationship, but at the end of the day, Pam schedules the court. If she says that lacrosse is coming in, she wants to hear from the other people, okay let me know when's it open. She doesn't want to hear that it's unfair or they're not seniors.

Arielle asked why it is such an issue to raise the price for non-residents? Mark said if we're doing it to open up time, that's not going to happen, there's enough time. Arielle asked why then are we having this conversation? Mark said it was three people and he explained how it works and the waitlisted people are being moved in.

Arielle asked if scheduling hours is an issue? She said they are asking for contradictory things...they're saying there's not enough prime hours, the board's objective is to service residents of Boylston, and they have to take into consideration the amount of non-residents. Mark said there's enough hours for the people playing now, but if they want to service families and people that work, there's not. Alison said what if they people and families that work want to be involved with Lacrosse, soccer, or just rent to play Pickleball with their family? Mark said

that's fine. Alison asked if that's true because he said to send them to him? Mark said only Pickleball people, there's not a problem now, he doesn't see the sessions being full now. He added a fourth session on the drill court.

Brad said he thinks the issues are being confused. He said what they're really getting at is to make as much time for Boylston residents, he thinks they can all agree on that.

Alison said, then Sunday afternoons is going to go to Boylston residents time that is not to be scheduled.

Brad said the whole thing...is he came in saying that if there's extra time available...

Eric had to leave. Alison said she thinks they can continue talking but can't vote. It was in question if a vote to adjourn was necessary, so the board voted to adjourn.

- b. Facility Form/look at rules, fees, etc. for potential updates.

Discussion previously in the meeting. Send to Commissioners to read and suggest updates.

- c. Disc Golf addition – fees for private events/tournaments/insurance requirements – how approvals for events should be handled – discussed in the Disc Golf update portion of the meeting.

XI. Town Meeting Warrant Articles Information/Vote

Discussed in previous meeting. In this meeting, commissioners agreed not to make the articles for the work at Manor and Harrington contingent upon award of grants.

Will discuss revolving account maximum after meeting with Fin Com

XII. Budget Report

- a. FY25 Departmental Budget update – no discussion.
- b. Current budget report – not distributed, no discussion.
- c. Annual report - submitted.

XIII. Coordinator Report

No report.

(May contain departmental updates, project updates, community reminders and announcements, etc.)

XIV. 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.)

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

- a. Facility Use Form

XVI. Adjournment

Vote: *Alison made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:10pm. Eric seconded. All in favor. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:10pm.*

Meeting Materials:

Agenda
Minutes

On File in the Parks and Recreation Office
On File in the Parks and Recreation Office

Public Attendance Sheet

On File in the Parks and Recreation Office

This is not a transcript, but a general summary of the discussion during the meeting.

Respectfully submitted by: Pamela Frechette, Parks and Recreation Coordinator