

Recreation Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes for June 20, 2013

Location of meeting: Clifton Ballroom, Sharon Community Center

Attendees: Gary Bluestein (chair), Rick Schantz (minutes writer), Neil Grossman, Steve Lesco, Steve Ferrara, Mike Goldstein, Katie Dykman (new member), Amanda Levasseur (Recreation Director), Christine Kasparian (Assistant Recreation Director)

Call to order at 7:11pm

Discussion of minutes from May meeting: Rick brought to attention the sparse notes from the May meeting from the outdoor session at Lake Massapoag, and suggested that they could be made more readable and understandable to others outside the committee. Acceptance of the May minutes was deferred and Gary will augment and resubmit at a later date.

Meeting guest Bill Martin, Sharon High School Athletic Director: Bill introduced himself, his personal background, and his goals as the new HS athletic director. Bill indicated a top priority focus on better integration of the high school programs with the town's recreation athletic programs. He wants to encourage and stress the importance to his varsity coaches and players of participating in some way and working together with the volunteers running the town's athletic programs. There was also discussion of miscellaneous related topics such as potential collaboration between the HS sailing team and the recreation sailing program for boats, and coordinated field maintenance. Follow-up actions to facilitate scheduling of shared fields were proposed. Overall, Mr. Martin made a very favorable impression in his introductory visit with the RAC, as part of a hopefully continuing series of interactions.

Katie Dykman introduced as the new school committee representative to the recreation advisory committee, replacing Laura Salmons. Katie was also present to discuss with the committee the Stars program that she coordinates, providing structured athletic program opportunities for and tailored to children with special needs, especially focused on children with varying degrees of autism. Katie started by giving an overview of the Stars program, which is now in its 5th year of service to the special needs kids of Sharon and surrounding towns. The programs offered, which now span activities in soccer, basketball and tennis, provide for 1 on 1 mentoring and coaching in the sport. With origins in the soccer program, which now has 2 groups differentiated by age (6 to 12, and 13 to 21), programs are now run all year appropriate to the sport season. Although the number of children in the programs remains modest (10-15 for each sport) the impact is great, providing opportunities otherwise unavailable to these children. Program registration is handled through the recreation department, with the Stars program currently utilizing Camp Everwood facilities for soccer, East Street Elementary for basketball, and Deborah Sampson Park for tennis, all in the Sunday 12-1 slot. One of the main issues faced by the Stars program is getting more volunteers, especially critical because of the 1 to 1 approach that is necessitated. An arrangement with the

Stonehill College basketball team is especially helpful. As follow-up to the visit by Bill Martin, there was discussion of potential for using HS student volunteers. Another significant issue concerns transitioning leadership of the programs. Right now it remains largely a Dykeman family production, and concern was raised for continuing beyond the participation of Katie's own children and passing to a new generation of committed leadership.

Christine discussed her Assistant Directors report, with a review of current, future and planned programs that she is working on. There was a "golden arrow" archery program held, as well as a "breathe joy yoga" program. She is exploring the potential of a glee club concept as a new program for fall, with an August 1 date for solidifying the fall program lineup. She is working on a socialization program for adults featuring wine and painting, and indicated that newcomers to town might be an important focus group. There was discussion of need for publicizing these events more widely and various options, including direct mailing (but costly), electronic mailing, a Facebook presence, and word of mouth. July (was) Parks and Recreation month, with some focus programs coordinated with the NRPA.

Amanda reviewed her Director's report. The primary focus was on the summer programs and camps. There was a discussion about the care and maintenance of the docks at the lake. After issues with the previous approaches, the docks have been made more easily reconfigurable. The current plan is to remove the docks from the water after the season, but there was additional discussion of various winterization issues. There was a brief review of beach sticker and camp registration sales to date. No problems were evident according to Amanda, but there has not been time for comparison to earlier years so it is hard to interpret in isolation. When things settle down a bit, Amanda indicated that she would be able to provide the previous year's context for better and earlier interpretation of this data in the future. The online purchase program for beach stickers and passes seems to be working well and will continue. The early weeks for camp registration are well booked at this stage; later weeks less so. There was discussion of methods to encourage early registration for the whole summer, including financial motivations, to avoid problems arising late in the season. There will be a kayak rental franchise operating at the lake this summer. Rentals will be available from a private vendor (Yakshare.com) on Thursdays and Saturdays, on a trial basis to assess the demand. The town will get a percentage of the revenue from the vendor, who supplies the boats and associated gear at the boat dock at Memorial Beach. There was a discussion of safety precautions for the sailing program including the mandatory use of helmets for participants. Other discussion concerned meeting with the Sharon Basketball Association toward better coordination of recreation and travel team scheduling that would allow players and coaches to more easily participate in both, and preliminary discussions with a group desiring to start a cricket program in town.

Sacred Heart Property update: The next meeting is scheduled for June 27 at the Community Center. The recreation department will be responsible for developing a

policy for scheduling use of the property beyond general public access. The open area is expected to be seeded over to create a pleasing, useable surface area.

Field Permit Forms Update: The field permit forms are undergoing major revision. Among the changes are new rules for prioritization of use, and place for specific dates and times in place of more blanket reservation. Steve has offered many further suggestions for improvement to the documents that are under consideration. A key issue that was discussed was the appropriate tradeoff between detailed reservation scheduling vs. providing adequate scheduling flexibility to teams using the fields (e.g. in handling rainouts and rescheduling). No resolution and policy is still in development.

Review of Policy for use of Personal Flotation Devices (PFD) at Lake Masapoag beaches: Currently all PFDs are prohibited at the beaches, enforced by the lifeguards. This policy was thought to be unique in Massachusetts. Discussion ensued concerning the feasibility and advisability of modifying this policy, for example to allow use of Coast Guard approved devices. No resolution and the issue will be brought up again at a later meeting.

Old Business:

There was discussion of the viability of the “wave to flush” flushing mechanism for the new toilet facilities at the Lake. It was generally agreed that this was not a good idea as demonstrated by many instances of unflushed toilets already. Concern was also raised about the adequacy of the strength of flush. The current mechanism is already scheduled for replacement due to these concerns.

Discussion of adopting the Massachusetts State CORI policy.

Facility tour note updates to be made available at next meeting.

The issue of replacing the archway and putting back the signage at the entrance to the Community Center, that was damaged from a car accident, was brought up and being worked on.

Next Meeting: September 19.

9:35 PM: Motion to adjourn by Steve, seconded by Mike; unanimous

Respectfully submitted by Rick Schantz 9/15/2013