



Natick Recreation & Parks

People Driven. Service Focused.

Karen Partanen
Recreation & Parks
Director

Recreation and Parks Commission
Meeting Minutes
April 4, 2022

Present: David Ordway, Peg Waters, Wayne Szretter, Kelly McPherson, Barbara Fahey, Mike Fair, Seth Levine, Karen Partanen; Recreation and Parks Director, Andrea Verdelli; recording secretary.

Absent: Jason Brandt, Jessica Ordway

Meeting called to order:

Minutes: Approval of minutes from March 4, 2022.

Motion to accept minutes as written made by Mr. Szretter, seconded by Ms. McPherson.

Motion approved unanimously.

Citizens Concerns:

None

Guest Speaker: Ganesh Ramachandran, vice chair of affordable housing trust fund, and Martin Kessel, member of Open Space Advisory committee, join us to talk about adding Community Preservation Act in Natick. This group comprises of Affordable Housing Trust Fund Commission, Open Space Advisory Committee, and Natick Historical Commission. The Community Preservation Act allows communities to establish funds for historic preservation, open space, recreation, and affordable housing. More than 53% of municipalities in Massachusetts live in a CPA community. These communities have collectively raised over 2.65 billion dollars for over 14,000 communities. Mr. Ramachandran is proposing a 1% surcharge on real estate tax exempting the first 100,000 assessed residential property values, qualified ownership of Natick's low income housing and taxpayer on file receiving regular property tax exemption. On average, this would cost Natick residents around \$67.51 per year. If successful, the town will receive a surcharge revenue of 1.4 million dollars which could be divided up between affordable housing, open space, recreation and historic preservation. These funds would be matched by the state at an average rate of 27% resulting in an additional \$300,000. Mr. Ramachandran asks the Recreation and Parks commission for support to present at the spring town meeting. More information can be found on their website; CPAforNatick.org. Mr. Ramachandran thanks the Commission for their time and hoping to gain their support in the Community Preservation Act. Ms. Waters reminds commissioners that they discussed this a few months ago and decided to not take a stand on this act. She states the commissioners can revisit that at another time. No motion taken today, a discussion will take place at the next meeting.



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Directors Report:

Donation Report: Ms. Partanen would like to bring commissioners attention to a donation listed under Ryan and Olivia Peters for \$2,500 which was a collection of approximately 30 to 40 neighbors who contributed a go-fund-me to help support a donation towards the Cole Center Playground additions. Other recognizable contributors are Roche Bros, Needham Bank, Capitol, and BAA.

BAA Request: Each time administration changes, the BAA requests and funding changes as well, Ms. Partanen asks commissioners if they have any requests, and if they think of anything to contact her. In years past we have received playground enhancements and beach repairs. Historically, up to \$25,000 has been awarded. Ms. Waters suggests putting aside playground repairs. Mr. Levine suggests requesting funds for Camp Arrowhead or Woodtrail.

Outreach to community: Ms. Partanen inquires if anyone on the commission is interested in keeping the community informed by opening up a table at the Farmers Market to represent the Recreation and Parks Department. Ms. Sanchez and Ms. McPherson volunteer.

Goat Scaping at J.J. Lane: Town has been doing experimenting with goat-scaping at J.J. lane park. This involves releasing goats in the outskirts of the park to control vegetation.

Department Trending & Planning: Ms. Partanen is in the process of putting together data regarding how the department is currently are running in regards to revenue, registrations, contracted services vs in house, days and times programs are offered, and other categories for administration to get a better understanding of what is trending.

Playground Updates: New playground updates at Cole Center are scheduled to be installed the week of April 25th and would take a few weeks to complete. The goal is to have the playground fenced off doing construction to keep it useable and safe for residents. The new playground equipment for Loker Park is still on backorder.

2022 Beach Pricing: The department is currently finalizing beach pricing back to pre-COVID prices. The main changes would be reintroducing the family pass, swim lessons, swim team, opening back up to non-residents and creating nanny pass. Preregistration will be offered online at a discounted rate but not required. A QR code will be displayed outside to help people register online, the goal is to limit the amount of physical cash being transferred between people. Administration will not subsidize the beach this year, last year the town subsidized around \$14,000 and the year prior they subsidized \$20,000 to keep the beach open during the pandemic.



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Common Request:

America's foundation for suicide prevention to host the MetroWest out of Darkness Walk on the Natick Common Sunday October 2nd, 2022 from 7:30 am-12:30 pm. Ms. Waters suggests we make sure the public safety officers are aware of what is going on due to the 500 expected participants.

Ms. Sanchez moves to approve pending the approval by the Natick Police Department, seconded by Ms. McPherson.

Sustainability committee to use the Gazebo from 9:00 am- 1:00 pm on April 30th, 2022 as part of Earth Day all around Natick. This request is partnering with Eco Natick who previously requested the same date and time but is now being organized by the Sustainability Committee.

Motion to approve made by Ms. Sanchez and seconded by Mr. Szretter under the condition that the police are informed about the capacity of the MetroWest out of Darkness Walk that is expecting 500 people. Motion passed unanimously.

Member Announcements:

Election of chair and vice chair: Mr. Ordway makes a motion to keep the chair and vice chair the same. Ms. Sanchez seconds. Motion unanimously passes. Ms. Waters remains Chair of the Recreation and Parks commission and Ms. McPherson remains Vice Chair.

CRT: No date has been set to repave the Mechanics Street parking lot. Ms. Sanchez suggests ordering signs prior to the completion of the parking lot.

PATH: The next meeting is scheduled to take place on April 12th at Community Center. Harry Nezbit and Andrea Roshier were voted into the PATH board. PATH has gotten approval and licensing to run raffles with the state.

Charles River Dam: It's becoming more evident that breaching the dam is the best option. If the dam is breached, it's going to have a large impact on neighbors. Discussions on rehabilitation that would need to take place and would need to be added to the contract as well as discussion of a walkway to multipurpose court.

NEETEGA: Clerk term expiration, Jessica's term expired, Mr. Ordway moves to keep Jessica as the Clerk. Ms. Sanchez seconds. Vote passes unanimously. NEETEGA is hoping to partner with PATH to clean up Camp Arrowhead for Earth Day all around Natick.

Open Space: The last meeting date was March 10th where discussions about how to tie in the South Natick Multipurpose with the South Natick Dam as well as the CPA tax increase.

Gazebo: No new updates.



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Next meeting Zoom or in person. Virtual meetings have been extended until July 15th. Commissioners decide to meet via Zoom for the next meeting and meet in person in June.

Motion to adjourn made by Mr. Ordway at 6:56.

Next meeting date:

May 2, 2022 at 6:00 pm.