

**Burlington Recreation Commission
Meeting February 27, 2023**

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Commissioners in Attendance: Chair Steve Nelson, Vice Chair David Norden, Kevin Sullivan, Bill Gaffney, and Carl Foss.

Staff in Attendance: Parks and Recreation Director Brendan Egan and Superintendent Bill Baker.

Commissioner Nelson called the meeting to order at 6pm in the School Committee Meeting Room at the Burlington High School, 123 Cambridge Street.

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Sullivan moved to approve the Recreation Commission meeting minutes of February 9, 2022, as amended.

VOTE: 5-0-0

Public Participation

None.

Director of Parks and Recreation Report

Parks and Recreation Director Egan presented the following report:

Treehouse Graffiti

There has been some graffiti at Simonds Park, the floor below the roof of the treehouse was one of the areas. The graffiti has been sanded off. There was also some graffiti on a picnic table and pickleball courts that have been cleaned up. There is a person walking through the park around 9 PM but the image is not that clear. The police worked with department and are keeping an eye on the area and what was written to see if there are other areas in town where it may appear.

Spring Field Requests

Requests for the fields have started to come in for spring. The fields need to dry out before staff begins any work, but the department has begun to taking requests. Communication has been open and there is a list to ensure each request is completed in the order it was submitted. There is a basic request from high school and they are working with that to plan out the rest.

Spring Brochure

The Spring Brochure is being finalized and the department is hoping to release the brochure online and announce the registration date soon. There is no firm date just yet, but this will be announced via social media.

Year in Review

The Year in Review began last year and was designed as a snapshot to highlight the department's accomplishments over the last year. This shows efforts across the board, including numbers in programs, maintenance programs and to tell the department's story better. Emma Jones worked on the design and layout and is responsible for how good it looks.

Mental Health First Aid Training

The Board of Health offered an opportunity for the department to join in a Mental Health First Aid Training for volunteers. This program would help participants to understand, identify and respond to signs of mental illness and substance abuse disorders. There are a few staff members participating on March 7th, and it will be an all-day training and free of cost. There is some work that needs to be done prior to the training.

Commissioner Nelson noted the Annual Report is excellent.

Commissioner Norden asked if motion light could be added to the treehouse at Simonds Park. Director Egan noted they could look into adding one to a pole in the area and would check with town electrician to see the possibility.

Commissioner Sullivan noted to make sure the light would not shine on the neighboring houses. Director Egan noted the light would be angled straight down and shine on the ramping of the treehouse. Commissioner Norden added the lights can generally be set for a minute or so but would be enough to startle someone. Commissioner Nelson asked if there are any lights on the ramp leading up to the treehouse. Director Egan noted there are not currently any lights, but they are looking to add some soft solar lights. If they can add motion light as security, it will light up the area and camera will be able to pick up the imaging. Director Egan added that he will investigate some options for security lighting and look with company who installed the camera for additional suggestions.

Commissioner Nelson added they are fortunate they were able to remove the graffiti.

Assistant Director of Parks & Recreation

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Lehman was not in attendance, but the report was sent out via email.

Chairman's Report

None.

Subcommittee Report

None.

New Business

FY 24 Capital Request Discussion and Vote

Director Egan noted they have been working on items for a while, pairing them down and working with all the changes and specifications. The final list is ready to go, all items will be discussed, and some items might be able to come off.

Replace R2

R2 is currently a Ford F250, and they are looking to replace it for a F550 with plow and dump body for \$90,000. The current truck is at the end of its useful life. It has 115,000 miles on it and is a 2011 with front-end issues. Central Maintenance has looked at the truck and repaired some minor wiring/electrical issues in cab as well. Replacing the current truck with a F550 with dump body and plow will allow staff more flexibility with daily duties. Currently, the one dump truck is being tied up with the leaf box for eight weeks in the fall and an additional four weeks in the spring. There is no other option for dump truck, and it is a labor-intensive process to switch the leaf box on and off. The time has come for truck to be replaced.

Commissioner Sullivan noted usually Central Maintenance will send over a letter that notes that a vehicle needs to be replaced and asked if this would be the case. Director Egan noted there is a new individual at Central Maintenance and may not be aware of them preparing letters, but they can ask for one. Commissioner Sullivan noted it would make Town Meeting's decision easier if there is a letter from Central Maintenance to replace the vehicle. Director Egan noted he will work on getting a letter.

Superintendent Baker added the truck has 115,000 hard miles from plowing and other labor and it is time for a replacement.

Commissioner Norden asked if it would be the same type of plow or if they would be getting a larger one. Superintendent Baker noted it would be an 8ft plow which is bigger.

Commissioner Sullivan made motion to approve the expenditure of \$90,000 for a new Ford F550 dump truck with plow. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Foss.

VOTE 5-0-0

Replace Body and Lift Gate in R6

Replacing the body and power lift gate in R6, the request is for \$24,000. The current body on R6 was swapped from an older vehicle when R6 purchased in 2013. The current body is starting to rot, however, the vehicle itself is in good shape and well maintained. The power lift gate is also bent and doesn't latch, which is a safety issue. By changing out body,

they could get another five or so years out of the vehicle. This request would cover a new dump body and new power lift gate.

Commissioner Sullivan noted this is a safety issue and they don't want anyone to get injured while working with heavy equipment so this would be high priority.

Commissioner Sullivan made motion to approve the expenditure of \$24,000 to upgrade Recreation Maintenance vehicle R6. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Foss.

VOTE 5-0-0

Accessible Van

In FY22 it was approved to purchase an accessible van to assist the Therapeutic Recreation Division. At the last meeting it was noted the van was not being made in the early stages of COVID and now they are not producing as fast as other vehicles. The price has also increased \$20,000. The request is for \$20,000 to go to the previously approved Warrant Article. This is included to insure there is a funding source incase there is no other way to locate funds and make sure this item continues to move forward and not lose out on the opportunity. This van is needed for Therapeutic Recreation as it would be the only accessible vehicle and can hold up to two wheelchair riders and would include seats that can fold down on the side. The van would be used every week in programs and in summer, every day of the week. The funding source could still change.

Commissioner Sullivan made motion to approve the expenditure of \$20,000 to supplement the prior Warrant Article approval for the accessible van. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Norden.

VOTE 5-0-0

Renovation of Street Hockey Court at Simonds Park

The creation of the pickleball courts on the old tennis courts caused noise disturbance with the neighbors on Church Lane. Different options have been discussed, Acoustiblok sound dampening panels were added and there was a short trial to move the courts up to the street hockey area without sound panels. The surface of the court needs to be completely renovated and paved. The pickleball posts need to be put in and surface needs to be painted. Staff would move the Acustiblock panels to the upper court. The paving cost is in the \$70,000-75,000 range and they are waiting on a quote for new fencing to handle the weight of the Acustiblock panels. The area is tricky to pave and would require more handwork. This project would have to go out to bid and they are estimating \$84,000 to complete. This bid could come in higher or lower. If successful, they will try to bid right away in July for a late August competition.

Commissioner Gaffney noted the only way to support this effort is if it is not a temporary measure. Director Egan noted this decision is up to the Commission. Commissioner Gaffney asked if this was just for the street hockey court and not the skate park. Director Egan notes this effort has nothing to do with skate park.

Commissioner Norden asked if this cost would include the fencing. Director Egan noted the \$84,000 would include the fencing and is just waiting on a final quote.

Commissioner Sullivan made motion to approve the expenditure of \$84,000 to renovate the street hockey area and swap it with pickleball courts. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Norden.

Commissioner Nelson invited the neighbors in attendance to join in on the discussion.

Donna O'Brien of Church Lane added that Director Egan and the Committee have been great. She added the sport is not just a bothersome to neighbors, it is an issue historically across country. She asked if this could be presented as a problem across country and not just neighbors. Donna O'Brien also asked if it was worth getting an estimate to move the courts to an area where there aren't any neighbors and using the funding towards a permanent location.

Commissioner Norden noted he agree with noise level, but there is currently no spot to move the court to. Pickleball is probably the fastest growing sport in the country and as a Commission they need to look at residents who want to play and

residents who live nearby. Donna O'Brien noted that if it is a growing sport, it would be better to find some place that if it continues to grow it can be expanded to meet the needs of the residents. Commissioner Norden added that would be the ultimate goal to move the courts to where there are no residents, but all the parks are next to residential areas. A private company might do this in the future, but currently there is nowhere to go. Donna O'Brien asked if there could be commitment that the other three courts never be converted to pickleball. Director Egan added he does not foresee those being converted to pickleball. Everything they have looked at is in residential area and even looked at option on Blue Sky Drive, but the company is only interested in adding the one court at this time. Donna O'Brien asked if it was an option to look at Mary Cummings Park. Director Egan noted they don't own the property and there is potential there would be a Conservation Easement on the property. Town Counsel has been reaching out to the City of Boston and have received no response for almost a year. Donna O'Brien noted the residents are willing to do anything to help meet with those who may have a location available for pickleball courts. She also asked if there was a gym in town that would have some space. Director Egan noted an indoor court would be ideal. Donna O'Brien also asked if the funding could be held to use if a better location comes up. Director Egan noted it needs to be designated with a purpose.

Diane Leva of Church Lane asked if a better solution was determined would Town Meeting allow using the funding at a different location. Director Egan noted potentially, but they would have to wait until the next Town Meeting which would cause some delays. Town Meeting is May 8th and the next one would be held in September. Diane Leva noted she would like to move forward with presenting this to Town Meeting as this is the best option. She noted if there are no other options, at the least, the court needs to be moved to the street hockey location as there needs to be some peace and quiet.

Donna O'Brien added the participants are bringing their own nets and Diane Leva added they were out there on Christmas morning and the noise is a huge problem. Both residents noted the players are not always respectful and can be rude.

Commissioner Nelson noted the Commission hears the concerns and he has spoken with Director Egan regarding Mary Cummings Park. There is a license agreement with City of Boston that restricts what can be done in the area and they are hoping to negotiate going forward. He noted they are not giving up on Mary Cummings Park as an option as well as other locations for the pickleball courts.

Commissioner Gaffney noted it would be a good idea to look at other towns and how they manage the times on the court. Woburn schedules for residents only and has a time limit. He added looking into other options as this is a national issue and there are courts near residential areas.

Director Egan noted they will continue to look for a better location for the pickleball courts.

Commissioner Sullivan added they have been looking at this for two years and the problem is recognized. When they go ahead to Town Meeting for vote, they will want to ensure if the funding is the best use for the town. Before the vote, he wanted to make sure that the neighbors would be happy with the solution.

John Alberghini of Elm Ave added the pickleball court is quite noisy even from a distance away. It may be better than nothing to move the court to the new location, but not a huge improvement. He asked if approved as a warrant article, during time frame a better place arises, is it possible to then allocate the funds towards a different option. Commissioner Nelson added the Commission could vote to request the Town spend the funding on a different location and there have been situations where the warrant article is approved but the effort doesn't begin for a year or so. Director Egan added they can continue to explore potential sites, but the courts would stay where they currently are. Donna O'Brien noted this should go to Town Meeting.

John Alberghini also asked why the courts can't just be shut down as the players could find another location and it would help the neighbors with the noise issue. Donna O'Brien stated approving the vote and bringing to Town Meeting is the best option for the time being. She also noted she appreciated all the Commission has done. Director Egan noted they would continue to search for locations.

Vote to approve expending \$84,000 to renovate the street hockey area at Simonds Park to pickleball.

VOTE 5-0-0

Parks and Outdoor Facility Master Plan

The document will allow to adopt an implementation strategy and establish Capital Budget and meaningful improvements to Park and Recreation Facilities. This Master Plan is something that has been on the Capital List for a few years. It was previously pulled due to the pandemic and having more important requests at the time. The last 20-year facility plan expired in 2020 and covered all parks, schools, playgrounds and more. The School Department's athletic field master plan will be incorporated into this plan. A master plan for Simonds Park playground and Overlook Park renovation/reimagining have been added as well. This will go through all parks, facilities, playgrounds, school properties, amenities (non-athletic) as well as a specific plan for Simonds Park playground and Overlook Park. There will be focus group and public meetings to go over these plans. This document will be a guide going forward for all outdoor facilities.

Commissioner Norden asked if there was any way to look at Mary Cummings for the future. Director Egan noted this can added. Commissioner Gaffney added he still thinks office parks and working with businesses is a great option for pickleball courts. Director Egan added there has been conversation with Planning and they keep it in their mind and are aware of the noise issue.

Commissioner Foss noted that the school athletic field will be incorporated, however, Town Meeting spent \$70,000 last year on this. What type of questions will arise when spending an additional \$58,000? Director Egan noted he does anticipate questions and will clarify that the School plan does include the athletic fields they play but did not include all of the parks. Director Egan has reviewed the draft of that plan and has asked to have all Town athletic fields included. He added there are parks they would like to add bathroom facilities, irrigation and more.

Commissioner Sullivan noted adding the Simonds Park playground and the Overlook Park conceptual plan could have been \$20,000 items on their own, one master plan that looks at everything is a great idea. Director Egan noted when they apply for a Land and Water Conservation Fund grant, they will want a conceptual plan, and this will help.

Commissioner Nelson added this is a good price for all the work. Director Egan agreed and noted few years ago price was \$46,000. There has been some changes and price increase, but they were able to take some items out.

Motion – no motion was made

VOTE 5-0-0

Dog Park Improvement Approval

Director Egan noted the Stanton Foundation provided an Improvement Grant for \$26,500 for improvements at the park. This was a part of the initial grant application. We could have applied for improvement grants after 18 months, 2.5 years or 3 years or all together at once. The park is success. Over the past year and a half, they have been meeting to go over improvements to the park. The improvement that is most requested is the addition of some K-9 turf; artificial grass meant for dogs. The total cost for the K-9 grass and installation would be \$27,700. The request is for \$28,500 in case bids come out higher. The Dog Park donation account has a total of \$49,865.64. The only other item they are looking to add is for a shade structure and they are currently looking for a solution.

Commissioner Sullivan made a motion to approve the expenditure of a sum not to exceed \$28,500 for the Dog Park donation account. Commissioner Foss seconded the motion.

Commissioner Sullivan noted he participated on subcommittee and the K-9 grass would be a great help and well used.

VOTE 5-0-0

Mary Cummings Park

Director Egan noted he had a conversation with Town Counsel regarding Mary Cummings Park, and they have received no response from the City of Boston. Town Counsel is working on something the City has asked for and they have not responded to this issue either. They will keep pressing, but currently no movement. Director Egan asked if this is something that could just be approved without taking in any concerns and it is unlikely, they would do so. He also asked about the possibility of them granting that section of land to the town, but it would break the trust and most likely not something they would be interested in.

Commission Sullivan asked if Town Council could ask if Boston would be willing to sell the property to the Town. He added CPA didn't pass because there wasn't a major fundraising event that you needed to raise the money. Commissioner Nelson noted he believed Town Councils position was it was already being put to public purpose so if the town was going to take for eminent domain for public purpose, they weren't sure the argument would be won. Director Egan added it would break the trust, and the town would lose as they would use it for the same thing. Commissioner Nelson also added to get them to agree they would need to find funding and it would be a Warrant Article.

Commissioner Norden asked why they couldn't add pickleball, there already is other sports that use the property. Commissioner Nelson added the potential of adding clay courts instead of asphalt. Director Egan noted he would ask Town Counsel

New Assistance Program Coordinator

Jeff DiSalvo, the new Assistant Program Coordinator started February 27th. There is a lot of information as well as an onboarding process to help him get adjusted.

Old Business

Ways and Means

Scheduled for Ways and Means budget hearing on March 15th. They wanted to wait until Town Administration has had a chance to go through capital request before setting up meetings for Capital Budget. Once the date is announced, Director Egan will let the Commission know.

Executive Session

Not Required.

Agenda for Next Meeting

Nothing new.

Adjourn

VOTE: 5-0-0

Meeting adjourned at 7:30pm

Next meeting will be March 20th.

Respectfully submitted,
Emily O'Donoghue
Recording Clerk