

**Burlington Parks & Recreation Commission**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**May 12, 2021**

**Commissioners in Attendance:**

Chair David Norden, Vice Chair Steve Nelson, Commissioner Kevin Sullivan, Commissioner Bill Gaffney, Commissioner Tom Murphy

**Staff in Attendance:**

Director of Parks & Recreation Brendan Egan, Program Coordinator Kelly Lehman, Superintendent of Park Maintenance Bill Baker,

Chairman Norden called the meeting to order at 3:33 p.m.

Chairman Norden announced the virtual meeting reminder pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting law imposing strict limitations of the number of people who may gather in one place. This meeting of the Recreation Commission is being held via remote participation. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings as provided for in the Order. Voting will be done by a roll call vote.

Director Egan announced that residents who would like to attend or listen to the meeting may do so live via the BCAT Government cable access channel; or by dialing 408-418-9388 with the meeting number 173 289 8800.

**Minutes****Approval of Minutes**

April 28th minutes are not ready to be approved.

**Public Participation**

No Public Participation

**Statement from Chair Norden**

Chairman Norden acknowledged and countered some negative comments on social media regarding the Parks & Recreation Department. Chair Norden complimented the Commissioners, the Parks & Recreation staff on their hard work, diligence, and dedication providing programming to the community and care for the athletic fields, parks, playgrounds, school grounds, Town buildings, dog park and the Common. Chairman Norden reminded the community that Burlington Parks & Recreation has been recognized as one of the best Parks & Recreation Departments in the state.

## **Parks&RecreationReport**

presented by Director of Parks & Recreation Brendan Egan

### **New Maintenance Facility**

Director Egan announced that the new facility will be ready for a move in date of June 1st. The electric door openers are installed, the sprinkler systems are being put in place, and the flagpole was delivered. The painting finish work is being completed and the outdoor site work is moving along.

The Mohawk lift is in and will be tested on May 17th. It is a 2 post lift in the small engine repair shop and can lift the small mowers and smaller equipment for maintenance and repairs. Lastly, WB Mason, will be delivering and setting up the office furniture on May 28.

### **Regan Park Light**

The Regan Park light work is set and operational. Director Egan worked with the Town electrician to set it. There was one issue with the light staying on. Director Egan had the vendor come look at it and he was able to fix the problem. Director Egan tested the motion sensor part of it Monday night after the budget was approved during Town Meeting. The motion sensor worked properly and the light was positioned well, illuminating the park without being a disturbance to the neighboring residents.

### **Rahanis Park Parking Lot**

The Engineering Department notified neighbors of Rahanis Park of the beginning of the parking lot paving project. The contractor began with the Patriot Road side, and then will continue with the Mill Street side. On the Patriot Road side, they noticed that the black top on the far back parking lot was poured on top of dirt. They had to put down a base coat and grade and pack it to prepare for the binder coat of asphalt. The Parks & Recreation department will keep the community up to date via social media for programs using the tennis courts and youth sports leagues that use the fields.

### **Rahanis Park Tennis Court resurfacing**

The contractor is scheduled to come the 3rd week in June if not sooner to complete the crack fill and repair process.

### **Town Meeting**

The FY22 budget was approved on Monday night and Town Meeting continues tonight (May 12). Two of the department's articles were held, the overseeder and the Wildwood Park sunshade. Capital Budget voted not to support the sunshade as they believed it to be a reactionary request to the incident that occurred when a person received burns from sitting on the hot equipment. This request, however, has been on the department's capital plan prior to that incident. Director Egan hopes that although Capital Budget does not support the article, it will still be approved.

### **Summer Registration**

Summer Program Registration took place on Wednesday, May 5 and we experienced some technical difficulties. After closing down registration for the day and coordinating efforts of our IT department and Vermont Systems staff we thought we had resolved the issues. When registration opened again on Thursday, May 6 we quickly realized the issues had not been resolved. We made the decision to have Vermont Systems host us completely and do not anticipate having these issues in the future. Although there is a fee involved, this was something the department was considering prior to the pandemic.

Director Egan thanked Parks & Recreation front office staff, Melinda Sullivan, Nancy Santilli and Beth Garvey for being on the front lines responding to frustrated residents professionally and politely.

Program Coordinator Lehman worked closely with Vermont Systems on the transition and to prevent this from happening in the future. Assistant Coordinator Hampson and Therapeutic Recreation Specialist Jones worked with social media responding to residents and keeping the community updated. Registration will open again on May 12 at 5 PM.

### **Discussion**

Commissioner Sullivan asked if the new server will allow for email blasts.

Director Egan agreed to look into it but mentioned that the department doesn't share residents' email addresses and does not send unsolicited department emails.

Program Coordinator Kelly Lehman added that with the new system, it will be easier to share emergency and allergy information with Program Directors in the field, as well as, registration and roster information for summer programs. Burlington residents will be happier with the faster online experience.

### **Recreation Maintenance Report**

presented by Superintendent of Recreation Maintenance Bill Baker

Superintendent Baker reported that the crew has been continuing with all the Spring work on the fields, preparing for play, cutting, trimming, lining, overseeding, aerating, and fertilizing. Last week, the crew put up the temporary baseball and softball fences at lower Simonds. The staff also changed the Common lights from blue to green for Children's Mental Health Awareness week which was May 2 - 8. They took apart the wooden guard rails at Rahanis to save for future repairs of other wooden guard rails in town. The crew also assembled and placed new full size soccer goals at Marshall Simonds Middle School; and continues to maintain bathrooms at Rahanis and Simonds and keep up with trash.

### **Discussion**

Commissioner Sullivan asked if the grass at the Human Services building, Town Hall, and the playgrounds could be fertilized.

Superintendent Baker explained that they fertilized the municipal buildings in the center of town, but ran out of fertilizer before getting to the Human Services building. Commissioner Sullivan mentioned that the Memorial School athletic field

has a sprinkler system, but the grass is not in the best condition, and asked if the School Committee changed their stance about using non-organic treatment on the school fields.

Commissioner Murphy indicated that the majority of the School Committee has not changed their mind. They do not want to use non-organic weed killer on the school fields.

Chairman Norden asked if it would be prudent to extend staff in both the Program and Maintenance divisions to keep up with increased programming and maintenance work in outdoor facilities.

Commissioner Gaffney commented as Burlington has grown and the demographics changing that there's an expectation for instantaneous improvement, but residents may not be aware of the process that's involved and the time it takes to get school fields into shape without using weed killers.

Commissioner Nelson asked for clarification about the Maintenance division being down by one position for years.

Director Egan confirmed and explained that it was due to an employee that had multiple surgeries over that period; and that they are looking to fill that Maintenance Craftsman position soon to return the department to fully staffed.

Commissioner Nelson agreed that the Tom Irwin program is more demanding and supports the need for an additional staff member to next year's budget and advocating for it at Town Meeting.

Commissioner Murphy agrees with and supports Commissioner Nelson's statements. Historically, we've needed more help in the Spring, before the temporary summer staff comes on board. Commissioner Murphy explained that Town Meeting may push back stating that the demand for a full time employee lessens during the winter months; but that he would support getting the additional staff on knowing there would be off-season work to be done.

Chairman Norden added that the programming side could use help as well.

Director Egan indicated that he is not prepared to have the discussion today but that he sees a need for another full time position not specific to the Maintenance division but in the overall operations of the Department. Director Egan stated that he does not think that a full time employee on the maintenance side is necessary at this time, but supports additional seasonal staff.

Chairman Norden and Superintendent Baker were happy that conversations about extra staff have started and Superintendent Baker hopes they continue. He explained how the staff is stretched thin and he is expecting to need more help this year with the Tom Irwin program since everything was shut down last year due to the pandemic.

## **ProgramCoordinatorReport**

presented by Program Coordinator Kelly Lehman

Program Coordinator Lehman echoed Director Egan's comments regarding the staff and the issues with the Summer program registration. The front office staff has been handling all of the stops and starts with professionalism and grace.

Although Governor Baker has relaxed some of the COVID-19 mandates throughout the state, the camp guidelines have not changed yet. Program Coordinator Lehman recognized Therapeutic Recreation Specialist Jones and Assistant Program Coordinator Lehman for creative solutions to expand offerings while still adhering to the guidelines. Locating indoor spaces to accommodate participants in the event of inclement weather has proven to be difficult, but the staff continues to work to find space.

### **Discussion**

Chairman Norden asked if more participants could be added after programs began if the guidelines change.

Program Coordinator Lehman explained that programming will be offered similar to how it was last year; and will allow more participants to join when the guidance allows for increased numbers. The staff is constantly checking guidelines and programming staff has been extremely creative with offerings. Program Coordinator Lehman explained that public gatherings are an area that we can expand right now. The number of people has increased to

200. She explained how the different types of program offerings follow different state guidelines and gave examples of how they have been able to increase numbers only if able to still do so in a safe manner.

### **NewBusiness**

Presented by Director Egan

#### **Accessible Walkway**

Director Egan stated they opened the bids for the Accessible Walkway. There were two qualified bids. The winning bid was Cella Construction from Burlington with a bid of \$38,850. There was an, add alternative part of the project which was to make the walkway from the kiosk area down to the picnic area. The total bid was \$42,850.

Director Egan recommends that the Commission vote to approve the bid in the amount of \$42,850 for the Simonds Park Accessible Walkway and award the project to Cella Construction of Burlington.

Director Egan explained that the funds are coming from Simonds Trust and Disability Access Commission which donated \$10,000 towards the project. He anticipates the project starting in the next week or so.

Chairman Norden asked for a motion to approve.

Commissioner Nelson made the motion; seconded by Commissioner Murphy.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:**

Commissioner Murphy – aye

Commissioner Sullivan – aye

Commissioner Nelson - aye

Commissioner Gaffney - aye

Commissioner Norden – aye

**VOTE: 5-0-0**

**Marvin Field Title**

The Town of Burlington took the property in the 1960s but was never recorded or not recorded properly. Town Counsel confirmed through a title search that the Town of Burlington did take the property from the City of Boston, it was part of the Mary Cummings Estate property.

The City of Boston disagrees; has done an initial title search and will likely contest that the Town of Burlington took the property. Director Egan explained that the property can only be used as it was stated in the trust, as a public pleasure ground, which includes a ball field as one of the uses.

Town Counsel believes the best course of action is to create a long-term agreement with the City of Boston and to maintain that the use of the property is for athletic purposes.

Town Counsel is in the process of working on the agreement with the City of Boston

Commissioner Sullivan asked if it would be possible and prudent to have either Commissioner Nelson or Commissioner Murphy attend the Town Counsel discussion as a sub-committee to understand the issue better.

Commissioner Murphy suggested that the Recreation Commission connect with Town Counsel to understand if they would be welcome.

Commissioner Nelson offered to review documentation; and offered his opinion on possibly making a claim on adverse possession; or else the Town of Burlington could take it again for a public purpose.

Chairman Norden would prefer to have a written agreement that the Town of Burlington has the right to use the property for an extended period of time.

Director Egan suggested having Town Counsel attend Recreation Commission meeting to update the Commission.

### **Commission Reorganization**

Chairman Norden steps down as Chair of the Recreation Commission.

Director Egan takes over the meeting and thanked Commissioner Norden for his time and work as Chairman of the Commission.

Director Egan entertains a motion for a new Chairman to the Recreation Commission.

Commissioner Norden and Commissioner Murphy expressed their opinion that the Chairman should be one of the elected officials, Commissioners Norden, Nelson, and Sullivan.

Commissioner Norden made a motion for Commissioner Sullivan to be Chairman; seconded by Vice Chairman Nelson.

#### **ROLL CALL VOTE:**

Commissioner Norden - aye

Commissioner Murphy - aye

Commissioner Gaffney - aye

Commissioner Nelson - aye

Commissioner Sullivan - aye

**VOTE 5-0-0**

Chairman Sullivan requested a motion for Commissioner Nelson to be appointed as Vice Chair. Commissioner Norden made the motion; seconded by Commissioner Murphy.

#### **ROLL CALL VOTE:**

Commissioner Norden aye

Commissioner Gaffney - aye

Commissioner Murphy - aye

Commissioner Nelson - aye

Commissioner Sullivan - aye

**VOTE 5-0-0**

Commissioner Norden and Director Egan will attend Town Meeting tonight and hope to get the Wildwood Playground sunshade approved. A discussion ensued about the benefits of the shade structure and Director Egan reiterated that the sunshade structure is a direct response to community requests and resident feedback.

Commissioner Gaffney left the meeting at 4:58 p.m.

Director Egan announced that the town is starting to return employees to their home offices while maintaining social distancing.

### **OldBusiness**

The Noise cancelling wind screen for the pickle ball court is scheduled to arrive on Friday.

### **Next meeting**

Director Egan and Chair Sullivan will update the Commission as to the next meeting date.

**ExecutiveSession**

No need for Executive Session

Chairman Sullivan entertained a motion to close.

Commissioner Nelson made the motion; seconded by Commissioner Murphy.

**ROLL      CALL      VOTE:**

Commissioner Norden - aye

Commissioner Nelson - aye

Commissioner Murphy - aye

Commissioner Sullivan - aye

**VOTE 4-0-0**

Meeting adjourned at 5:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Terese Castellano