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AYER PARKS DEPARTMENT

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Minutes of January 13, 2022 - Ayer Parks Commission

Location: Remote Participation via Zoom

Members Present: Jason Mayo, Chairman, Mr. Gerald Amenta and Mr. Chris Tavares (all participating remotely)

Also Present: Jeff Thomas, Ayer Parks Director

Absent: Sarah Gibbons

At 7:00 PM Chairman Mayo called the January 13th, 2022, Parks Commission meeting to order.

At 7:00 PM Chairman Mayo read aloud the COVID-19 Emergency Order from Governor Baker allowing for remote participation meetings.

Chairman Mayo went over the agenda items. Mr. Thomas corrected the agenda to be Beach Parking Stickers, not Beach Closing.

Beach Parking Stickers

Mr. Thomas mentioned that it is time to order the beach parking stickers and likes to wait till he can receive Parks Commission authorization. Mr. Thomas mentioned that the Commission discusses the policy for the upcoming year for the beach stickers, since the town started the resident and nonresident use of the beach the Commission allows for free parking for residents. The cost of the stickers and passes is around \$500 which is covered by the Commissions budget. The need to for early ordering is the parking stickers are also used as resident only parking stickers for the downtown area.

Mr. Chris Tavares asked if Mr. Thomas was just looking for the Commission to vote on to allow to spend up to \$600.00 for the cost of the stickers and passes.

Mr. Thomas mentioned that he has not even priced out the stickers yet, so it is hard to know the price what he is looking for is a policy issue to know if the Commission wants to charge for the sticker or not. In the past the Commission has not charged but it is reviewed on a regular basis.

Chairman Mayo stated that he feels that it should be changed to have free resident stickers as the policy and only revisit if the Commission decides to change the policy.

At 7:06 PM Mr. Chris Tavares made a motion to not charge Ayer residents for the Sandy Pond Beach stickers and make that the policy of the Parks Commission. Mr. Gerald Amenta seconded. Vote to approve by roll call vote: Mr. Chris Tavares, aye; Mr. Gerald Amenta, aye and Chairman Mayo, aye

Project Updates

New Building Sign

Mr. Thomas stated that he had priced it out a while back, unfortunately the funding for the sign was used for another project. Mr. Thomas stated that to move forward with the new building sign the funding will need to come from another source. Mr. Thomas asked if the Board wanted to discuss the matter this evening or table it for another meeting.

Mr. Tavares stated that he did not mind placing the item on a future agenda.

Staking Rink

Mr. Thomas mentioned that the rink finally froze over and there have been people using it and it is in good shape.

Trees/Snowmen

Mr. Thomas stated that it was the second year of decorating the perimeter path with trees and snowmen with the cutouts. The plan will be to leave them in for another week or two now that there is a bit of snow cover.

Both Chairman Mayo and Mr. Tavares stated that they have no issue with allowing the cutout to stay up for a few more weeks.

FY2023 Budget

Mr. Thomas that this is the time of year that the town puts together the next fiscal year budget. One item that the Commission is looking at is creating a new 10-hour administrative assistant position to help in the office. The other major addition to the budget would be to get a substantial raise for the lifeguards and maintenance staff. Mr. Thomas stated that he has placed a place holder on budget request to increase both lifeguard and maintenance personal as well as the addition of the 10-hour a week assistant.

Chairman Mayo asked when the budget needed to be submitted.

Mr. Thomas stated that it has already been submitted and was approved by the Chairman outside of a meeting since the Commission did not meet before the budget request was due. Mr. Thomas stated that the next step in the budget approval process was the Finance Committee would review the budget request and call the Parks Department in for a meeting if they have any questions then will go to town meeting.

Chairman Mayo asked if the 10-hour assistant position would be shared with another department.

Mr. Thomas stated that his vision for the position would be that it was be with only the Parks Department and possibly grown into an assistant director position to fit all the needs of the Parks Department.

Chairman Mayo questioned the type of person that would apply for a 10 hour a week position.

Mr. Thomas stated that there have been positions in the Town Hall that have been similar hours that have been filled to qualified people.

Mr. Tavares asked what the schedule would look like with only 10 hours.

Mr. Thomas stated that they have not looked at that yet and figures the hours could change from week to week like that of the maintenance staff. Mr. Thomas mentioned that the workload would vary from week to week depending on payroll and warrants due as well as additional projects in the summer.

Chairman Mayo asked Mr. Thomas to resend the budget information to the Commission again so that they may review it.

Playground Rehab Project

Updated from BETA, MassDEP

Mr. Thomas stated that he has heard from BETA that they are close to getting an estimate to the Department. The good news is that the estimate maybe lower than originally thought. Mr. Thomas stated that when the Parks Department first found out about the arsenic in the soil at the park the cost to remediate the issue were as high as \$300,000 in 2006. BETA's thought is that only 6 inches of soil would need to be removed when original thought to be 1 to 3 feet of soil that would also affect the trees. If BETA is correct, it would save the Department a lot of money as well as trees in the area. The structure removal is another area where they are looking to try and save money. There will need to hire a professional company to remove the structure at around \$50,000. Mr. Thomas stated that the estimate total cost of the remediation and soil removal is looking to be around \$200,000.

Chairman Mayo stated that with the structural removal that they looked at doing it in house but with the possible contamination of the structure it would be best to use a professional company to remove the old structure. Chairman Mayo mentioned that volunteers could still be used for the reconstruction of a new structure to help with costs.

Mr. Thomas stated that they are now moving into the next phase of the project with knowing the cost of the remediation the process and now begin to investigate what type of structure they want to install. Mr. Thomas stated that they are trying to stay under \$300,000 to stay away from a town meeting vote. The next phase is to get a design together with a working group as well as a survey and a form for residents to weigh in on the design of the new project.

Mr. Thomas stated that with holding the public forms sets them up to help with grants for the project and have been working with the Community Development Department in trying to find grants for the project. Mr. Thomas stated that the Commission can also try to raise the money as well for the project as well as other ways to pay for the project. Mr. Thomas mentioned that the working group is going to try and meet more often to keep the project moving.

Capital Planning

Mr. Thomas stated that he will be meeting with the Capital Planning Committee in a week to discuss where the project stands. Mr. Thomas mentioned that he is hoping BETA will have more information for him so that he may share it with the Committee and with that can make the request for the \$300,000 from Capital Planning.

CPC (Community Preservation Committee)

Chairman Mayo mentioned that they will be looking for around \$300,000 from CPC and will need to fill out an application for them before there next meeting. Chairman Mayo mentioned that CPC will want to hold public forms for the request and asked Mr. Thomas if they can maybe combine them with working

group and the Community Development Office. Chairman Mayo stated that the good thing with CPC money is that it is already there and with Capital Planning is extra out of the budget.

Mr. Thomas mentioned that the other benefit from CPC funds is matching with the state.

Chairman Mayo mentioned that with the extra funds will allow the project to be done right trying to get as much funding as possible.

Mr. Thomas asked Mr. Tavares and Mr. Amenta to send any information to the working group that they may find. Mr. Thomas mentioned that they are trying to get as much information for the project as possible.

Mr. Tavares mentioned that he has been looking more at the 21E DEP side for the group to help with the remediation.

Mr. Amenta mentioned to look at the new playground at the elementary school in Harvard.

Chairman Mayo paused for any public input.

Ms. Pauline Connelly mentioned that she is at the meeting just to get information on the process to share with the public and also volunteered to help the Commission with any questions they may have when they are preparing to request funds from the CPC.

Incidents

ASYB (Ayer Shirley Youth Basketball)

Mr. Tavares asked Mr. Thomas to explain the incident that occurred in basketball to the Commission.

Mr. Thomas stated that there was an incident in the ASYB program which is for the 5th through 8th graders involving a Shirley resident that was quite vocal during a game. The person was removed from a game by a referee and was yelling as he was yelling. The ASYB Board met to discuss how to handle the situation. Mr. Thomas stated that the Shirley Recreation Committee voted to have the person suspended for the season. There were issues with how the matter was handled since the individual was not notified of the meeting to state their side. Mr. Thomas stated that the ASYB Board has also voted to keep in line with the Shirley Recreation Committee to keep the individual suspended for the season, the individual has since appealed the decision and requested that the suspension be lessened. The ASYB voted to lessen the suspension to 3 games.

Mr. Tavares stated that it will be 2 games at the middle school and one with TAP.

Mr. Thomas mentioned that both the ASYB Board and Shirley Recreation Committee both agreed on the lesser suspension the only matter now is to come up with a way to handle items like this in the future.

Mr. Tavares stated that in the off season he will be working on a guidance sheet to handle situations like when a parent is removed from a game for upcoming seasons as well as other situations that may come up.

The Commission had a discussion on the guidelines and how to draft them to ensure that they are not too specific or strict and possibly having soccer involved with the process as well.

Snowmen Removal

Mr. Thomas stated that a snowman was removed and was found in another town but has since been returned. The matter was from a previous agenda and has been resolved.

Basketball, ASYB

Mr. Tavares mentioned that the season is going well, only have had two games canceled on the Ayer Shirley league both due to lack of coaches or players. All players are masked during practice and games. There was one incident of kids not wearing masks correctly during practice an email was sent to remind all players and coaches. Mr. Tavares brought up one issue with the loss of practice time due to Parker School using the middle school for their games, but they have been able to make up some time at the Page Hill Top School.

Chairman Mayo asked if anyone asked if we could use Parker's gym for practice or the Laura White School.

Mr. Thomas stated that Parker's gym is small, and Laura White is used by the Shirley Recreation for their grade 1-4 program.

Mr. Tavares stated that the lack of time is not a huge issue as the teams are smaller than past years but next year there may be more players and the lack of gym space will become a larger issue.

Ayer Youth Basketball

Mr. Thomas mentioned that there have been several incidents with players being mean to each other. Mr. Thomas stated that over all it has been a great season and will work on getting the kids to be nicer to each other.

Soccer

Mr. Amenta does not have much with soccer, they have not started working on the spring season yet. Mr. Amenta that the only item would be to work on the Ayer Shirley relationship and mentioned that the conversation on that should start soon.

Chairman Mayo asked if Mr. Amenta wanted him to reach out to Shirley Recreation on the matter to set up a meeting.

Mr. Amenta asked if Chairman Mayo could reach out to them to set up a meeting as he is more familiar with the group and has a longer relationship.

Next Meeting

Chairman Mayo suggested if Thursdays are an issue maybe we can change to Wednesday February 16th.

Adjourn

At 7:57 PM Mr. Gerald Amenta made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Chris Tavares seconded. No discussion. Unanimous vote to approve.