

RECREATION COMMISSION MINUTES

December 15, 2022

7:00 PM

Remote Zoom Meeting

Present: Hema Santhanakrishnan, Commissioner; Joe Will, Chair; Steve Trimble, Clerk; Nancy Corcoran, Commissioner; Melissa Settipani-Rufo, Recreation Director.

Public Attendees: Adam Smith, Dave Sheppard, Heidi Porten, John Eppling, Kaushik Nanavati, Mike Whidden, Steven Rubner, Jimi Two Feathers, Rohit Saini, Jim Salem, Ken Blade, John Warner

I. Regular Business

1. Review of meeting minutes from November 2022
 - i. Joe sent a small meeting-date change to Melissa. No other amendments were raised by the Commission.
 - ii. Steve motioned to approve the November 2022 minutes with the clarifications noted; seconded by Hema. Approved by Steve, Joe, Nancy, and Hema.
2. Residents' Concerns
None
3. School Street Field scheduling:
 - i. Primary users: Regional usage including a cricket league and the Charles River Remote Control (CR RC) Flying Club (toward end of meeting a member of a local rocket club spoke, unaligned with CR RC). The Lions Club uses the area for its annual fair (late June) and the Boy Scouts use it April 19th weekends for one weekend to observe Revolutionary War remembrances.
 - ii. Configuration: 3 cricket pitches or 1 RC area which is FAA approved for flying.
 - iii. Issue: It is unclear whether the cricket team or the RC club submitted their field request first. The cricket league claims to have officially booked it and paid the field permit dues prior. Melissa should clarify which group requested the fields first under the Recreation Division's "First come, first served" process. A meeting between Melissa and the involved parties failed to reach a compromise so it has been brought to this commission for discussion. (Editor's note: At no point was the RC submitting and thus holding the permit definitively defined as the issue in the meeting, so I am adding for clarity).
 - iv. Kaushik and Rohit presented the Cricket League concerns (notes summarized):
 - A. They noted that there were 800 members playing in shorter format games on the three fields, so 9 games per day taking up 7 hours.
 - B. The cricket league has invested in turf fields.
 - C. They noted the CR RC club can only accommodate a few people at a time due to aerial space size, so it is an ineffective use of the fields.
 - D. They would like the CR RC to use the fields after 4 PM or before 12 noon on one weekend day and one day per week. The cricket league would pay the RC field permit cost for that accommodation.
 - E. It was noted that there are very few cricket pitches in MetroWest Boston, and this represented half of them.
 - F. They contend priority should be conferred to the group with the most participants at a given time.

- v. Several RC members then discussed issue with the proposal (John Eppling, Acton Resident, Mike Whidden, President from Concord, Jimi Two Feathers, Concord, Dave Sheppard, Concord, Adam Smith, Acton, John Warner, former member from Maynard)
 - A. The RC community stated that they submitted the permit as directed by the Town for their 100+ members.
 - B. It was noted that this field was one of very few that met the FAA regulated airspace requirements due to the airfields in Stow and Concord. It was used by electric powered. Other fields include Medfield (gas powered), Sudbury (gliders) and Concord.
 - C. They noted that it has been challenging to get the cricket league members off the field in a timely manner.
 - D. The airspace and safety requirements permit only a handful of fliers at a time, and they schedule use.
 - E. Weather and time of day also determine use.
 - F. Usage after 4 PM will not work, especially as the sun sets earlier in the Spring and fall.
 - G. They noted that a weekday allotment was not useful to them for the same reason that the cricket league would not want one, as they worked.
 - H. They noted that they do several community contests and demos to encourage interest in the activity.
 - I. Hema asked about the other locations. Citing the Sudbury Davis field, the CR RC has used it for 20+ years in the weekend afternoon times. It was noted soccer has no longer used the fields for the last 4-5 years. That said, dog walkers do use the field and pose a safety concern.
 - J. Jimi Two Feathers mentioned that he has served as a de facto field steward attending to trash, and has flown there 18 years. The CR RC has owned any field issues (e.g., driving on the field damage) and fixed. He noted that the cricket league has been lax in these duties leaving the field strewn with bottles and not taking responsibility for driving on the field and resulting ruts.
 - K. An abutter, Heidi Porten, with a vegetable field noted that the cricket league often parks in her access road resulting in field access issues.
 - L. Joe asked if the CR RC club determined if any other fields were suitable for this use. He also asked if the field could be split 8 AM – 2 PM and 2 PM – 8 PM. (Per the cricket league, the long-match format takes 7 hours, so no).
 - M. Steve Rubner noted that the Acton Lions Club intended to resume its annual fair and would have the date shortly. He noted that the Lions fence off the field, thereby preventing damage to the pitches.
 - N. Ken Blade noted a rocketry interest in using the field one day per month, representing a 3rd use of the field.
 - O. Melissa took an action item to review current policies with the Recreation Commission which is just hearing these concerns for the first time.
 - P. Joe requested we continue this item on the next Commission meeting agenda and volunteered to attend any further meetings between the groups if desired.
- 4. Open Space and Recreation Plan
 - i. All committees and commissions are to look at the goals provided from the staff to see if they reflect appropriately for each group. There is a meeting in January with liaisons.
- 5. Reports
 - i. Human Services Committee
 - A. Hema asked this Commission how the Human Services Committee can assist it. Joe suggested the need for event help.
 - ii. Community Preservation Committee, CPA Projects

- A. Gardner Playground Renovation: As noted last month, the Friends of Gardner Field selected the engineering design plan that moves the parking lot to the rear. Corey York sent out a notice to bid for the new design.
- B. Elm Street Court Reconstruction: Bids due January 11th; Melissa contacted approximately 20 firms, with an eye toward construction in the spring.
- C. NARA Bridge Boardwalk. Submitting for the amount revised down by state funding earmark for \$200k. (~\$155k). Should start in the Fall when water level is lowest. Next summer there will be standard repairs on the current bridge.

II. New/Special Business

2023 Independence Day Celebration: The Select Board and the Town Manager placed \$25k in the budget for 7/1/23. July 4th typically costs \$50k so this is scaled down and must be approved at Town Meeting. If not approved, vendors are canceled with no penalty. Melissa is planning a smaller fireworks production. Rec is looking at banning parking at Nagog Park due to new ownership and safety concerns in the Town Forest. She is thinking of leveraging other large lots (e.g., Kmart, Train Station) and bus attendees. VIP parking in consideration at the NARA upper lot.

III. Consent Items

Steve moved to adjourn; seconded by Joe. All approved. Meeting adjourned at 9:05 pm.

Next Meetings:

Date	Time	Location
Jan 3	7:00 PM	TBD
February – No Meeting		