

**PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING**

September 28, 2016

3:30 p.m.

Unity Park Fieldhouse

56 First Street

Turners Falls, MA 01376

**Present:** Dennis Grader, Chairperson, Barbara Kuklewicz, Vice Chairperson, Albert Cummings, Secretary, Jon Dobosz, Director of Parks & Recreation

**Meeting Being Taped**

**Agenda:**

**1. Meeting Called to Order: 3:35 p.m.**

**2. Approval of May 24 and July 26, 2016 Meeting Minutes:** Barbara Kuklewicz makes a motion of approving minutes; seconded by Albert Cummings.

**3. Skate Park Update**

It was a very busy first summer for the Skate Park. Litter does seem to be an issue from time to time, with last week being especially frustrating. Members of the Skate Park Committee as well as members of the community are trying to help with this issue, which is greatly appreciated, but Jon wishes that park users would pick up after themselves. Initially, there were concerns about the wearing down of the tile coping but the tiles seem to be holding their own. Jon does feel it is in our best interest to purchase extra tile to have on hand for this reason. The cracks in the bowl are being monitored and may need addressing in the near future. Berkshire Design has been contacted in regard to this issue. As a reminder, the park does have a two year warranty on the cracks in the bowl; areas outside the bowl have a one year warranty. There are also cracks in areas outside the bowl. Jon would like these issues dealt with in the spring rather than the busy summer months; as he's not sure if sealing these areas or would jack hammering out the cracks out and re-pouring be necessary. He also would like to meet with the Skate Park Committee members and find out what they think, as they have experience with what is typical wear and tear in skate parks. Jon contacted Morretti & Son's about the landscaping around the park and they will be looking at the site, possibly planting juniper on the eastern facing side of the park where there seems to be an issue with growing grass. There are plans to plant 2 or 3 more trees along the 2<sup>nd</sup> Street entrance, near the memorials. Barb had heard that one of the memorials had been chipped; Jon looked into this and did not find any damage.

**4. Rutter's Park Project Update**

A second public hearing was held last Wednesday, GZA mistakenly brought the wrong computer and they had to rely on the artist rendering on a small laptop. The price tag on this project is high; over \$500,000. The committee will be meeting to go over the budget and community needs once again. This plan includes community gardens, a playground area, open space, and a gazebo. Jon likes the plan so far, he would like to see more parking spaces available. The committee will get together and submit their recommendations. The next public hearing date is November 5. The application for design has to be submitted before the end of the year. Barb did speak about her disappointment in GZA's preparation for this hearing and how the design did not reflect what the committee asked for with respect to specific equipment.

**5. Spring Programs FY16 Profit/Loss Statements**

It looks like we took on a loss for Senior, Nipper softball, and Rookie baseball but Jon wants to talk with Jen about the fundraising before submitting the statements. The fundraising participation rate was low this year with those teams. He will check on this and get back to the commission at the next meeting about these profit/

loss statements. The spring programs went well; Senior girl's softball made it to the semi-finals in the Greenfield Girls Softball League. The Nippers numbers were low but were able to field a team in the same league. Tee Ball as always is a popular program with 50 children on four teams. Spring Tennis had 8 participants. The EGGstravaganza took on a loss as we lost Hillside Plastics as a sponsor this year, their new parent company does participate in these events.

## 6. **Summer Programs Profit/Loss Statements**

●**Summer Playground** had a solid summer. There was a slight decrease from summer 15' which had a 77% registration fill rate; to this summer which was 74%. Participation weeks 1-3 were very strong with a decrease in later weeks; this seems to happen every summer. The Unity 5-8 year old group had a 83% participation rate,, Sheffield 9-12 year old was 47%, and 9-12 years old at TFHS had an 88% participation rate. We did not run a Pre-School program due to lack participation. Participation rates for the past 5 years average out to 70%. The price of transportation with F.M. Kuzmeskus was substantial. We did take a two fieldtrips that were out of the area which increases costs but it is very difficult to find new and interesting trips in the Pioneer Valley. As a cost cutting measure Jon has considered only having lake days every other week with a pool and movie day at the high school on the off weeks. To keep this playground program affordable we must come up with solutions to the ever-increasing costs of operating this program. This includes the increase in minimum wage. Massachusetts does not require municipalities pay minimum wage to summer camp counselors. Due to sensitivity of this subject, Jon wants to meet with the Finance Committee and get their opinion on the issue. January, 2017 the minimum wage increases to \$11/hour. The Commission shared their concerns over the loss of returning staff if we didn't follow the minimum wage increase and Jon agreed. We seem to be able to keep many of our veteran staff year to year.

●**Adult Softball** did well this year as we were able to reduce the financial loss that we have experienced in the last few seasons. We can further reduce the loss and possibly make a profit if we consider having concessions over the tournament weekend. On October 7 Jon will be taking the Serve Safe course so the department can sell concessions.

●**Snack Shack** took another big loss. Jon is considering stopping this serve as it costs the department too much money. One of the reasons we opened the Snack Shack was bathroom accessibility for the public while at the same time possibly bring in revenue for the department. However, this did not happen. Jon is recommending we rent a handicapped accessible portable toilet for the summer months at the park. He did price the toilets from Bostly and it would cost around \$500 for the summer and it would be maintained on a weekly basis. If there is damage to the toilet then we would have to pay for that damage.

Dennis asked about how the revolving fund balance looked after these summer expenses, and Jon explained that the F.M. Kuzmeskus bill is being paid in three installments so it would not deplete the balance of the account. Bluefish registrations are coming in and this helps our balance; as of September 1 the balance was \$7500. At the next commission meeting Jon will have our FY16' financial evaluation.

## 7. **Fall Programs**

The fall edition of the Fun Times was given to the Commission in their packet. There will be a Squirt Soccer (K-2 grade) and a Senior Co-Ed (5 & 6 grade) travel team. There is no Junior (3 & 4 grade) travel team this fall; the first time that this has ever happened. Fall Tennis lessons will be offered, and the Winter Blue Fish team will begin practicing in the next few weeks. This coming weekend, October 1, is our Scarecrow Stuffing Party and bake sale. The Pumpkin Carving booth will be at the Pumpkifest on October 29. The Rag Shag Parade on Halloween is listed our brochure to help promote the event for the Turners Falls V.F. W.

**8. Montague Center Improvements**

Jon received a letter from Maya Tkachenko Coggeshall-Burr, a young Montague resident regarding the playground structure that was dismantled at the old Montague Center School. She was hoping the structure could be reassembled. At some point the department does plan to begin a master plan improvement process for this park. It will be challenging to do this with Rutter’s Park and Highland Park all needing improvements. We do plan on putting the playground structure back up, but when we do we anticipate having to make other changes to the park as well. Montague Center may not qualify for many grants because of the higher income level of its residents.

**9. Directors Report**

There were no questions.

**10. Other Business**

Dennis asked how the Tuesdays in the Park and the River Valley Ice Cream Ride events went this past July. Jon reported that the Tuesdays in the Park went fine, not large numbers of families but those that did play had fun. The River Valley Ice Cream Ride went very well, and will mostly like run again next year.

In regard to the Field house energy assessment, Jon met with Berkshire Gas last week and they conducted an audit. Friday he will meet with someone from the Center for Eco Technologies. He’s very interested in what they both recommend.

Jon did inform the commission that he is working on a new department logo; some variation of the current logo but more colorful. He also wants to create a logo for the Sawmill Run.

Jon’s evaluation will be placed on the next meetings agenda.

**11. Adjournment: 4:40 p.m.**

X \_\_\_\_\_  
Albert Cummings, Secretary

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

or

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Name & Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
Print

Date: \_\_\_\_\_