

PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

June 17, 2015

3:30 p.m.

Unity Park Field House

56 1st Street

Turners Falls, MA 01376

Present: Dennis Grader, Chairperson, Linda Ackerman, Vice Chairperson, Barbara Kuklewicz, Secretary, Jon Dobosz, Director of Parks & Recreation, Jennifer Peterson, Clerk/Bookkeeper

Guests: Christine Bates from the Unity Community Garden, Bryan Dolan, Barry Scott, and David Detmold from Skate Park Committee

Meeting Being Taped

Agenda:

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

2. Approval of May 27, 2015 Minutes: Linda Ackerman makes the motion of accepting minutes; Barbara Kuklewicz seconded the motion.

3. Unity Park Community Garden

Christine Bates, coordinator of the Unity Park Community Garden, discussed the funding, improvements and the future of the garden. The establishment of a Gift Account was one way Jon and Christine had agreed could be beneficial. This account would be used to purchase things such as rain barrels, mulch, compost and various other items. At some point a fence will need to be installed to separate the space from Eagle Automotive. Jon will make a request to the Board of Selectmen in regards to the Gift Account, as well as inform the Town Accountant. We have had similar accounts in the past such as the Skate Park and the Sway Fun Glider

Christine went on to talk about the benefits of a membership to American Community Garden Association. The annual fee is \$100, which will be paid by our department. She hopes to create a long range plan for the garden. Next year collaborations with Greenfield Community College and Turners Falls Women's Resource Center will provide great opportunities for the group. She did question if a Gift Account would be best, for in the future they want to utilize grant funding. She requested information on the company that supplied the garden beds; they have "migrated" some from their original spots and she would like to follow up with them on this issue. She is very excited about the future and is looking forward to the garden's success in the community. She would like to discuss composting specifically at a future commission meeting.

Motion: Linda Ackerman makes the motion to proceed with the Gift Account for the Community Garden as well as paying the annual membership of \$100 for the American Community Garden Association.

Vote: 3-0

4. Skate Park Project Update

The Skate Park Committee wanted to address the Commission with some issues before ground breaking begins later this summer. They discussed the following: BMX Bike Policy, how will the gathering of groups of young people and graffiti be handled, will there or could there be a celebration for ground breaking and lastly, somehow recognizing or memorializing some of the young people who were a big part of this project early on in the process. The Commission, Jon and the Skate Park Committee discussed the idea of a ground breaking ceremony; all agreed it would be a nice idea to have this ceremony as this skate park has been such a long time in coming to this community. Members of the commission felt that if the Skate Park Committee had ideas about what they wanted to see in the ceremony then they could put something together.

Another issue the Skate Park wanted to discuss was the BMX bikers using the park. The bikes have pegs that do cause damage to surfaces and to the ceramic copings on the edges of the bowls. They also worry about the safety of skateboarders when the bikes are using the park. A collision with a bike could cause serious damage to a skateboarder. They continued to discuss the potential damage to the surface of the park with the BMX bikes. It was Jon's understanding that this park was always going to be for skateboarders, BMX bikers and scooters, so to take away one or more of these groups would create a problem. He sees the vast majority of kids in this park on bikes and not only as a recreational item but as their mode of transportation. Financially these kids would not be able to afford something beyond what they already have - a bike or scooter. Personally, he feels this park should be open to all three groups. He read an email from a teacher (on-file) and BMX/Skateboard Club advisor at the Franklin County Technical School advocating for these BMX bikers. It had come to this teacher's attention that the Unity Park Skate Park may not allow BMX bikes. The discussion continued, referencing other local parks as examples. It was decided that these concerns regarding BMX bike damage should be given to the contractor.

Another issue to be address was how were the potentially large groups of youth and graffiti going to be handled. There was discussion about graffiti and how when done well can be a positive expression of this culture. The Skate Park committee said that they will continue to be an organized group and these issues can be addressed as they come up.

The last issue was how to memorialize individuals that have been a part of this project but are no longer alive. Jon suggested perhaps using granite; something that would be durable and attractive too.

At this point, no start date has been set for ground breaking as the contract is still being negotiated. Jon let the committee know that when he is given a start date he will let them know immediately.

5. FY16' Strategic Plan

Barbara pointed out that the volleyball net was not mentioned in the plan, and Jon noted the oversight.

Motion: Barbara Kuklewicz makes the motion to accept the FY 16' Strategic Plan once the correction regarding the volleyball net had been made. Linda Ackerman seconded the motion.

Vote: 3-0

6. Commission Summer Schedule

Jon asked the commission about not meeting in July, unless there is an emergency.

Motion: Barbara Kuklewicz makes the motion to not have a July commission meeting, unless necessary.

Vote: 3-0

7. Directors Report

There were no questions on the report.

8. Other Business

- Today we were notified that we were awarded Playful City for 2015.
- Summer Playground begins June 29. The numbers for the camp look good except for the Pre-School group; it may not run this summer.
- The whale water feature will open up June 22.
- Jon informed the commission about taking a summer vacation August 17-21.

9. Adjournment: 4:55 p.m.