



**Parks & Recreation Commission
Athletic Field Planning Subcommittee
Meeting Minutes for July 10, 2019 @ 7:30 PM
Volunteers Room, Town Hall**

Minutes

Members in attendance: Stu Sklar, Select Board representative; Joe Reynolds, Parks & Recreation Commission representative; Sharlene Cronin, School Committee representative; Ed Frackiewicz, Harvard Athletic Association board representative; Keith Bilafer, Harvard Athletic Association board representative; Abigail Besse, At-Large resident representative; and Dan Daly, At-Large resident representative. Others in attendance (who signed-in): Don Phillips; Eva Kennedy; Susan Voute.

Dan Daly called the meeting to order at 7:32 PM. Subcommittee members introduced themselves, as did several residents in attendance from the general public.

Joe Reynolds announced that the Parks & Recreation Commission had authorized the subcommittee to vote in its own members. He recommended that those who had submitted volunteer forms and had attended the subcommittee's meetings should be voted in. Sharlene Cronin and Stu Sklar agreed that this approach made sense. Sharlene Cronin moved to nominate Abigail Besse as the second of two at-large members and Keith Bilafer was nominated as the second of two designated HAA members. The vote was 4-0 (Ed Frackiewicz was absent at the time of the vote and arrived later).

Minutes for the meeting of June 19th were not yet available and will be voted on at the July 23rd meeting.

Public communication was delivered throughout the meeting.

Sharlene Cronin presented an on-line tool for centrally tracking the status of the subcommittee's progress and suggested that workgroups get together between Subcommittee meetings in order to get this process going. Joe Reynolds said the Town's new CivicRec software will provide additional capabilities to the Subcommittee's work as well as field resources management tools.

Old Business - Workgroup Updates

Report – (Stu, Dan, Sharlene): Dan Daly asked for input and feedback on the Report Outline.

Users – (Sharlene, Ed, Joe): Ed Frackiewicz has gathered several sports' participation data and formatted it for the period 2013-2018; Dan Daly shared the format and a brief look at what has been collected thus far. The data collected thus far includes Fall Soccer; Baseball; Softball; Tee-Ball; and Lacrosse; gaps remain for Ultimate and Spring Soccer.

Field Inventory – (Don, Keith, Dan): Keith Bilafer said he'd look to see what Joe Reynolds had collected before going out to repeat measuring the fields. Dan Daly said he'd provide a spreadsheet from the 2016 Open Space & Recreation Plan that included some pre-existing information, and Sharlene Cronin said she'd share data from the schools she received from Dr Dwight.

Field Management – (Karen, Abby, Sharlene): Abby Besse put together a document whose objective is to address how the fields are currently being managed and maintained, as well as to understand how Harvard can achieve a thoughtful and equitable maintenance plan rooted in best practices. An initial list of maintenance activities and conditions was provided and discussed in draft form, including frequency, maintenance staff resources applied, equipment used, weed and pest control, fertilization, watering/irrigation, over-seeding, aeration, field conditions, characteristics, and record-keeping. Abby Besse emphasized the importance of aeration on the town's fields based on the compaction issues on most of them. It was suggested that the group identify the difference between maintenance and renovations, and which characteristics are part of the field management/maintenance assessments and which should be part of the field inventory.

Joe Reynolds was asked to obtain field maintenance plans that are in the possession of Parks & Rec. It was agreed that UMass Extension school be contacted to explore the prospects of consulting on our maintenance/management needs. Dan Daly said he'd facilitate a discussion with DPW director Tim Kilhart to coordinate support this workgroup's efforts with the DPW's work. A discussion ensued as to what should be the Town's responsibility for maintenance versus what should be the teams' or volunteers' respective roles; these responsibilities should be analyzed including the costs borne by each party. What is the Town going to commit to --- or what should it commit to --- for athletic field maintenance versus booster clubs or the teams themselves?

Sharlene Cronin said she believes there is a greater role that the schools should play in terms of governance and oversight of where funding is allocated, using the softball field situation as an example, and pointing to booster clubs fundraising and expenditures. Ed Frackiewicz explained how the Ryan Lands field improvements were governed and funded.

Usage/Capacity – (Joe): Joe Reynolds explained how scheduling of fields is established, as well as how and when fields are opened or closed due to weather. HAA's leagues did a great job managing the use of fields allocated to them, but the schools' needs and usage is unclear. The subcommittee's data on usage, capacity, scheduling and maintenance – analyzed together for the first time – should allow the field liaison to streamline and improve the availability and conditions on the fields. But the how's and why's of why things are the way they are can only be pursued once we have all the current usage data, Joe pointed out.

Comparisons/Benchmarks – (Dan, Joe): Dan Daly provided a table of comparable towns by population as prospective municipalities to be benchmarked. *What* should be benchmarked will be determined as each workgroup obtains its respective data sets – expenditures, assets, dedicated Parks & Rec / maintenance staff, # leagues, participation data, etc. Stu Sklar suggested looking at these issues through the lens of school district data, too.

Stu Sklar explained his role in developing the charge for the open space committee that the Select Board is aiming to establish, and asked if the subcommittee had any initial input on specific field requirements. Stu described the funding mechanism he's been tasked to come up with for conservation lands and recreational fields, and asked whether there will be an ongoing need to acquire recreational fields, as there is with conservation lands. The consensus was that answering that question will be an important outcome of the subcommittee's work. Stu said he'd propose that recreational fields will be a long-term issue of the new committee.

Workflow/Web Site – (Joe, Dan): Joe Reynolds explained how the new CivicRec software will enable the subcommittee's workflow to be managed right within the new web page. Training will be on delivered July 12th to Parks & Rec. Joe will confirm. The subcommittee's web site remains under construction, and will now await implementation of CivicRec.

New business

Inter-board communications – Stu Sklar (Select Board), Sharlene Cronin (School Committee) and Joe Reynolds (Parks & Rec) will keep their respective board apprised of the subcommittee's work. There may be a future need for a committee presentation.

Roles & Responsibilities – Joe Reynolds pointed out that we need to coordinate who is communicating with whom to avoid redundancy and overlap.

Stakeholder engagement / Survey – Sharlene Cronin explained that a survey instrument is being developed with a surveying expert, and that questions are being drafted with community input focused on qualitative issues about athletic fields. Student and parent input will be sought with age-appropriate inquiries.

A discussion about the status of the Ann Lees ballfield project ensued. It is understood that DPW director Tim Kilhart will sign off when the work is completed. It is not clear whether the completed project meets the expectations and needs of the softball community.

Next Steps

Further scoping, research and outreach will be pursued under each workgroup category until next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:31

NEXT MEETING: AUGUST 14, 2019