



## **Parks & Recreation Commission Athletic Field Planning Subcommittee Meeting Minutes for July 23, 2019 @ 7:30 PM Town Hall Meeting Room, Town Hall**

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### **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; and Dan Daly, At-Large resident representative. Members absent, Abigail Besse, At-Large resident representative. Non-voting member in attendance: Don Phillips.

Dan D called the meeting to order at 7:32 PM. Minutes for the meeting of July 10<sup>th</sup> were reviewed and approved, 6-0. There was no Public Communication/Comment, however questions and input from the attending public were encouraged throughout the meeting. Workgroup updates were discussed as follows.

Report – Dan D noted that since each workgroup is in the process of scoping its own findings and developing lists of what they can and cannot gather, the full report will be scoped according to what each respective workgroup can come up with. We will defer to the various work-groups' findings, while the subcommittee's overall charges define what it is supposed to be in a final report. Sharlene C suggested that as the data comes in, we keep in mind how it will connect to the desired report outline.

Usage/Scheduling – Joe Reynolds reported on the impressive presentation from software vendor CivicRec, which will come with 100 hours of training bundled in to get the client user (Parks & Rec) up to speed. He and P&R chair Doug Thornton are going to pursue it, and explore how to get access rights for additional users. Right now, managing scheduling and reserving fields remains through the town's website and the Parks & Rec (P&R) web page. P&R is looking to have a draft outline of fall scheduling by the beginning of the school year in late August, and for it to go live on CivicRec prospectively in November. Joe R is checking on financial integration issues using the beach permit purchasing process in a trial. Dan D asked about how the schools can use the new scheduling system; Joe R said he doesn't want to burden the Athletic Director with another workflow until we've figured out it all out. It will be a frustratingly slow roll-out, he warned, due to the amount of training needed, but it's exciting to get it up and running.

Keith B asked about coordinating youth soccer schedules with the school soccer schedule; it will make the system far more useful, esp. as the school makes scheduling changes. He noted that the only time HAA makes changes is when a field is closed. Dan D asked whether CivicRec is a tool that other schools are using. Joe R explained that it depends on the town and its park & rec interactions with schools, but thinks Harvard will be able to leverage it for school sports scheduling. He will run a trial using scenarios from youth soccer with Keith B. Sharlene C proposed that Dave Boisvert be kept apprised and that we make sure it will work for Bromfield. Dan D noted that Bromfield and its coaches already have tools in place, like TeamSnap and a comm's app off the website. Agreed that anything that could integrate the school's scheduling and/or communications would be a win; but it has to be helpful to them.

Ed F noted that, historically, there are a finite # of practice days and games, and that slotting them in should be easy. The challenge is how many teams are there going to be, and how to fit them all. This is typically not known until the last week in August. There should be minimal impact to HAA since their use is primarily on weekends. It's the communications that occur when there is a change that's key. Keith B asked whether sports leaders will honor field closures. Teams and coaches are not abiding by field closures – compliance depends on the specific coaches involved. Linda Dwight said that the AD manages the field closures by communicating to the coaches. Joe R said a lack of knowledge and communication is what causes the non-compliance. Once the coaches understand the adverse impact that their behavior has on fields, they'll comply. Keith B will help Joe R on the subcommittee's interests in the CivicRec rollout.

Users – Dan D noted that the spreadsheet he received from Athletic Director Dave Boisvert contains both the numbers of participating student athletes as well as the number of games and practices for each sport. This information is from the 2017-2018 school year, not current; and we still need the MIAA-reported Bromfield participation data for the last two school years. He wants to follow-up with Linda Dwight and Sharlene C on the financial funding deck from 2015. Ed F reported that he is in the process of adding the missing HAA data and that other user groups will be included in the data collection; e.g. adult soccer; ultimate; adult softball. He anticipates having it for next meeting.

Linda Dwight noted that some data might not be captured correctly if it involved a co-op activity with another school district, and that numbers can be misleading due to the population decline. She noted that Bromfield has had the same number of teams for

about eight years. It was agreed that the raw participation numbers were still needed to do an analysis of the current field usage and relative sport popularity. Dan D asked that Linda Dwight and Sharlene C assess the MIAA data and see how it helps to define Bromfield's needs. Ed F is looking at both the HAA and Bromfield data in context to track trends in children's/student athletes' participation over time; we should be able to spot shifts, which will help with planning. Keith B asked whether we can track students who play multiple sports, noting that there's been a decline in that. Ed F noted that when kids migrate from one level to another, there is a notable decline; the gap seems to occur most prominently at the middle school level for a number of sports. Identifying all of the symptoms and understanding what drives this decline --- is it social, coaching, parent direction, sport popularity/preferences? --- is imperative for field planning.

Sharlene C reported that she had received information from Judy Cavanaugh which included which fields are used by the Spectrum program, as well as historical info like the numbers of kids, their ages/grades, and other summary data by activity/program. She said the Spectrum data is to be added to the field usage summary being developed. Joe R reminded the group that, with the elementary fields gone, such activities impact on the Mass Av. Field should be scrutinized --- heavy usage will require additional maintenance. Dan D asked how other uses of the fields – e.g., “field day”; the 4<sup>th</sup> of July; VolksFest, physical education classes etc. --- are being captured in the analysis. Joe R. explained that with the new system, we can add all of that in but if we want that, we need to add it at the end.

Field Inventory – Don Phillips reported that inventorying the fields is proceeding, and Keith B said that having exact plot plans and/or measurements would be helpful. Until then he will pursue the non-measurement basics and field attributes, and colorize the inventory spreadsheet's columns to focus on what we can and need to fill in without the plot lines. He emphasized that we will need exact measurements to accommodate all possible field configurations. Don said that capturing the user info will be helpful for the inventory. Dan D reported that the distinction between Owner and Managing the fields still needed to be documented. Stu S explained that only 4 entities --- Town of Harvard, the school, Bromfield Trustees, or cemetery commission ---- actually owns property that the town uses. One of the issues that the group should clarify is how to have better control over the various town lands under management, whether they are managed by P&R or another group. P&R doesn't possess a feeling of authority to manage its properties. The importance of documenting the origins of the athletic fields was agreed to, including the history of how projects were initiated, funded, and decided; how property was acquired; what the original usage intent or vision was.

Management – Workgroup members were not available for an update. Stu S noted that there wasn't a building maintenance plan in place until 2017, so now this subcommittee could help put a property maintenance plan in place. He will approach P&R in September to propose a full-time P&R employee to better manage the fields; it would be P&R's employee, focused on maintenance and operations. Meanwhile, this subcommittee is going to drive what the Select Board recommends to the Open Space Committee in terms of active recreational lands and capital investment. Identifying what is needed will drive the Select Board's conversation.

Dan D reported that he met with Tim Kilhart to ensure that what the subcommittee does is helpful to DPW and to solicit his input. Kilhart said he would be in favor of getting a consultant from UMass Extension to advise on maintenance needs. Dan D requested that the subcommittee document pre-existing private contractor maintenance proposals and statements-of-work to discern what maintenance has been performed or recommended previously. Joe R said he would gather what P&R has. As an example, Dan D referred the group to the maintenance plan that accompanied the CPIC application for the Ann Lees ballfield renovation, which was funded via Special Town Meeting warrant in October, 2018. It is a very detailed plan with recommendations for seasonal maintenance of the Ann Lee facility. Whether this plan was supposed to be implemented by DPW was not clear. Stu S reported that he is the DPW liaison, and that the group needs to know what their [DPW's] capacity is. DPW may have a staffing issue related to any increase in maintenance work, and that not having someone riding herd on this is another reason for a full-time P&R director.

Comparison/Benchmarks – school participation data will be compared to the other MIAA schools identified as like Bromfield.

Workflow – Next actions are dependent on the CivicRec deployment. Joe R is exploring log-ins for users and admins on the web site.

Other – Dan D advocated for a dedicated finance section in the final report, and requested input. Distinctions between maintenance (operating budget) and renovations, capital improvements or land acquisitions were discussed. Stu S agreed that we should inform the priorities through a finance view, whether they are maintenance or capital expenditures. Joe R doesn't want to steer attention away from the other important sections of the report; Sharlene C said the report needs to be holistic; Ed F said we have to create the standard, and then define the finances that will be needed to get there.

The next meetings were scheduled for August 14<sup>th</sup> and August 28<sup>th</sup>.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:31.