

  
**Burlington Recreation Commission**  
**Meeting July 11, 2022**

**RECEIVED**

By Town Clerk's Office at 10:17 am, Aug 16, 2022

Commissioners in Attendance: Chair Steve Nelson, Vice Chair David Norden, Kevin Sullivan, and Carl Foss.

Staff in Attendance: Parks and Recreation Director Brendan Egan, Superintendent of Park Maintenance Bill Baker, and Program Coordinator Kelly Lehman

Commissioner Nelson called the meeting to order at 6pm in the School Committee Meeting Room at the Burlington High School, 123 Cambridge Street.

**Approval of Minutes**

Commissioner Norden moved to approve the Recreation Commission meeting minutes of June 15, 2022, as amended.

**VOTE: 4-0-0**

**Public Participation**

Diane Leva and Donna O'Brien from Church Lane in Burlington joined the Commission to discuss the Pickleball Courts at Simonds Park. Diane thanked the Commission for listening to the neighbors' concerns regarding the noise and nuisances that they have been experiencing. She noted she loves Simonds Park and commends all that the Commission and staff do for the town. Diane asked that the Commission put themselves in the neighbors' position and imagine the noise throughout the entire day indoors and outdoors. She presented two recordings: the first from April, recorded on the second story of her home and the second from July 11<sup>th</sup>, recorded from her front porch. After listening to the recordings, she requested the Commission move the courts as the sport is louder than tennis, the players are competitive, noisy, bring their own music and park on the street. She also added that she believes the Acoustiblock panels are not working, and they are very unattractive to look at. Diane reached out to Acoustiblock directly asking if adding more panels will solve the issue. The Acoustiblock representative noted that the sound will still travel from the top but won't be as intense. Diane also shared some written responses from additional neighbors who could not attend, noting the noise and the speed of some of the players driving in the neighborhood.

Donna thanked the Commission as well as Director Egan and Commissioner Sullivan for meeting with the neighbors and listening to their concerns. She added the noise is getting to be too much and the courts can hold up to sixteen players that can be loud and have foul language that can be heard through the neighborhood.

Commissioner Nelson thanked Donna and Diane for joining and expressing their concerns.

Director Egan added the current plan is to put up the remainder of the Acoustiblock panels. Sound will still find its way out, but the panels will dampen the noise. When the court was originally placed at Simonds Park, the noise of the sport was not a known factor. He added they are looking for new locations to move the courts, where there are no neighbors. As mentioned previously, there is some work that needs to be done to the upper courts in order to make them safe to become a pickleball court and the Commission has looked into this option.

Donna asked if a new location was approved, what would happen to the court at Simonds Park. Director Egan added it is a work in progress, but the court could potentially be transformed into a tennis court.

Director Egan noted he has also been looking into a new material to use on the upper court to help level it. The way to see if it would work would be to have the company look at the courts when they are wet, to see the location of and how deep the puddles are. Currently, there has not been rain to examine where the puddles form.

Donna added she appreciated all the efforts. She also asked if there was a possibility to close the court until a solution was found. Director Egan noted there are pickleball programs and classes going on through the department and a large population of pickleball players locally as well as the surrounding towns. Director Egan noted he added a sign and some wording on the website to note the court is not open until 8am. He added that looking at some hours is a possibility to help with the current issue.

Commissioner Sullivan added that he sat with both the neighbors and the players to see the situation from both sides. He noted there is a noise issue, and it can sometimes go up to 70dB, while normal talking is around 50dB. He also added they have investigated more solutions and locations for courts. At the time, the warrant articles were already picked, so they are unable to bring up the issue to Town Meeting. They were hoping to have the panels complete soon to see if there was a noticeable difference. Superintendent Baker added that 24 panels, about 2400 pounds, have been hung. They are getting uncomfortable adding more panels/weight without adding extra support to the fence. He added that he thinks someone should be brought in to check the rating of the fence and potentially add more support. Commissioner Sullivan added that since the product has already been purchased, the panels should be fully added to see if they make a difference.

Commissioner Norden thanked the neighbors for their presentation and recordings. He noted that he visited the court during a tournament and the noise does travel. He agreed that adding hours is great idea. Since the Acoustiblock were purchase, it is in the interest to put them up to see if they can be a solution. They will work hard to find a solution to make everyone happy.

Commissioner Foss also thanked the neighbors for sharing their concerns as well. He added that he did visit the court and noticed the noise. Limiting the hours or finding a solution that can strike a balance between the neighbors and the players is needed. He noted they will have to ask for more patience as they do attempt some additional solutions.

Director Egan suggested looking at adjusting hours and he will reach out to a company to test the load of the top rail of the fence. If the load is alright, they will complete the paneling. He will also connect with the seal coating company to check to see if there is an option to level the current street hockey courts. He suggested changing the hours to have a 9 AM start time and to have staff, when available, make sure players don't start early. Diane and Donna agreed it was reasonable for the hours to be 9 AM-9 PM, when the court lights turn off.

Commissioner Nelson noted he is in favor of a long-term solution, which is to move the court. There has been some discussion regarding Mary Cummings Park and the potential to move the courts there as well. He agreed there is a need for a short-term solution now to ease the nuisance to the neighbors. He noted it would be a good idea to add this subject to the next meeting (August 15<sup>th</sup>) for an update on the situation.

### **Director of Parks and Recreation Report**

Parks and Recreation Director Egan presented the following report:

#### **Little League Tournament**

The BBSA sponsored Cal Ripken Eastern MA tournament went very smoothly. There was good weather with only a minor adjustment in schedules on July 2<sup>nd</sup>. There was an opening ceremony on July 1 followed by a skills competition in the evening. The Burlington team made it to the finals but wound up losing. Director Egan wanted to thank the Maintenance Staff for all the hard work and time they put in preparing the fields and facility. BBSA has been asked to host the New England Regional Tournament this weekend (July 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup>), hosting six teams with four games each day. Representatives from BBSA asked if we could host again, and agreed to compensate the staff for the overtime worked. BBSA appreciated all the work the staff put in and how smoothly the tournament had run. Economically, these tournaments bring a lot of people into Burlington, some staying the night and some just spending the day and attending different businesses around town.

#### **Francis Wyman Elementary School Playground**

They have been working on plans for a while and have received funding from Town Meeting. Director Egan had a meeting with the Vice Principal, School Operations Manager, and a playground vendor at the school to discuss the project and to look at the conceptual design. After the design from April, there had been some questions from the committee members regarding adding some more accessible features. They wanted to meet and see the layout to make some edits to the existing plan. The updated plan was sent out and they are currently awaiting feedback. The group has asked the Department to help remove some of the wooden structures prior to the start of school. They are targeting the playground to be replaced in the fall.

#### **Dog Park Committee**

Director Egan recently met with the Dog Park Committee to discuss improvements to the park. More shade in the park and installing K9 turf to the front entrance of the park are the two biggest requests. They are working on obtaining an updated quote for the 'canine grass' as a solution to the front entrance issue. We are looking at a cantilevered shade



structure on the soccer field side of the park to add more shade in the park. There is \$23,000 in the Dog Park Account currently and are eligible for another \$26,000 or so in grants through the Stanton Foundation. They are hoping to meet again in August with hopes to have an update for the Commission in the fall.

#### Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee

Recently members of the department met with the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee for an introduction and a chance to share initiatives and receive feedback from the committee and their hopes for the town. Director Egan, Commissioner Nelson, Program Coordinator Lehman and Therapeutic Recreation Specialist Emma Jones attended and represented the Department while Commissioner Foss attended as a member of the DEI Committee. If the DEI committee continues for another year, Director Egan suggested that Therapeutic Recreation Specialist Emma Jones would be a great addition to the committee. Emma has been leading the department's initiatives for Inclusion and Equity.

Commissioner Foss added that they are reaching out to all the Boards to introduce themselves. He noted he sent the Core Values that Program Coordinator Lehman presented at the last meeting to the committee and asked about the possibility of updating some language in the mission statement.

Program Coordinator Lehman mentioned that there have been internal conversations over the past several years to develop a strategic plan for the Department which would ultimately lead to the development of a new mission statement along with vision and values statements.

#### Misc.

Commissioner Sullivan noted that the job description for the Assistant Director of Parks & Recreation needs to be voted on by the Commission. Director Egan noted they are working on finalizing the description with HR to present to the Commission for approval. Commissioner Nelson asked if it could be put on the agenda for the next meeting.

#### **Programming Report**

Program Coordinator Lehman presented the following report:

##### Programming

Summer has begun and over the last couple of weeks there have been about 500 children in their care with 14 different program locations across the community. The summer staff had been thoroughly trained during the orientation process and has been responding extremely well. She noted she is very impressed by the staff and is proud as it shows how much pride they are taking in their jobs. The annual mid-summer director's meeting was July 11<sup>th</sup> and many of the directors noted the same and noticed the staff is much more enthusiastic and responsive.

Summer Concerts have begun and are seeing a bounce back with a 200-250 attendance rate. In the past, the attendance was around 150-200. More residents are getting out and taking advantage of the programming.

##### Celebrate Burlington

Staff is still working on collecting sponsors and non-profits to attend the event. Currently, there are 18 sponsors and 18 non-profits as well as two food vendors for the event. They are still reaching out for some additional food vendors and sponsors. Staff is working on finalizing the schedule and activities for the day with hopes to have the information available around July 25<sup>th</sup> to help promote the event.

Commissioner Sullivan noted he enjoyed the Facebook posting that highlights the directors and their efforts. Director Egan added that the orientation program the program staff put together was unbelievable. He stated that the care and thought put into the sessions and the goals the program staff set last year were met through the orientation program. Director Egan commented that summer staff members who have worked for us for a number of years said this was the best orientation they have been a part of.

#### **Parks Superintendent Report**

Superintendent Baker presented the following report:

The staff spent about two and a half weeks working on the upper and lower Simonds Park Little League fields for the Cal Ripken Tournament. The tournament started on July 1<sup>st</sup> and finished up on Friday the 8<sup>th</sup>. They brought in a lot of infield

mix for low areas and replaced quite a bit of sod. The DPW assisted by helping spread clay with their Bobcat. The full time and seasonal workers all did great getting the job done and worked well together. There was a large crowd each day and the largest crowd on the last night. Staff did a great job of keeping up with all the maintenance and cleaning up. The trim crew has been very busy getting the parks ready for the camps to start, and now are going through and trimming each school. Another fertilizer treatment was applied to Francis Wyman, Marvin, Rotary, Wildwood and Memorial fields on June 22nd. Staff has continued to groom and line the ballfields for all of the adult softball and BBSA games. They have continued to paint the fields for Soccer, as well as painting foul lines for the ballfields and painting parking lot lines at Simonds for tournament and events. They have also been keeping up with our trash and recycling around town.

Commissioner Norden noted that the fields came out very good. He asked if the BBSA has paid for all the efforts. Director Egan noted that BBSA paid for the materials.

Commissioner Nelson added it was nice to see everyone enjoying all the hard work that is put into the fields. They appreciate all the efforts. He also noted the ballfields at Wildwood looked great and the grass program is working very well.

### **Chairman's Report**

Commissioner Nelson noted it was nice to meet with the Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) committee and that Therapeutic Recreation Specialist Emma Jones would be an exceptional addition to the committee. Therapeutic Recreation Specialist Jones and Program Coordinator Lehman will work on finalizing an updated mission statement.

Commissioner Nelson also noted they had a zoom meeting with Town Council regarding the conservation restriction at Mary Cummings Park. There have been some edits in the restrictions, and they suggested some additions to be added. He noted he was looking at some of the background information in preparation and came across a letter written by Mary Cummings to Mayor Curley from the 1920's. He noted Mary Cummings wasn't speaking in regard to passive activities but instead was talking about tennis courts and other fun activities for children to enjoy. The restriction is currently on the areas that are being used by the Town. They are hoping to have some updates for the Commission at the next meeting.

### **Subcommittee Report**

Commissioner Norden noted Sculpture Park had a meeting and going forward, they are planning to move some sculptures to the Town Common. He noted they will be keeping Director Egan and Superintendent Baker in the loop. The committee received \$20,000 from Town Meeting to purchase permanent sculptures.

Director Egan noted that both Maintenance and Programming Divisions use the common and that they should be consulted as to the placement of new sculptures.

### **New Business**

#### Revolving account expenditures

Planning for Celebrate Burlington is ongoing and the cost to run Celebrate Burlington relies heavily on sponsorships from the local business community. There are currently 18 sponsors; this is below the number in the past years. In order to ensure that all expenses are covered for Celebrate Burlington Director Egan would like to request the Commission approve up to \$10,000 from the Revolving Account to be used for Celebrate Burlington.

Commissioner Sullivan made a motion to approve up to \$10,000 from the Revolving Account to be used for Celebrate Burlington; Commissioner Foss seconded the motion.

Commissioner Nelson asked what the date of the event was and if there are fireworks scheduled. Program Coordinator Lehman added the event will be held on Saturday, August 6<sup>th</sup> and fireworks will be held at 9 PM. The event will take place 11AM-4 PM on the common, followed by a car show from 5 PM-7 PM, followed with a concert starting 7 PM-9 PM with Mo Bounce, ending with fireworks at 9 PM.

Commissioner Nelson also asked if anyone wanted to make contributions how do they do so. Program Coordinator Lehman added checks can be made out to Town of Burlington and can be dropped off at the Parks & Rec office. You can also fill out a sponsorship form on the website. Depending on the level of sponsorship your name could be represented on an activity and all sponsors will receive a VIP lunch package.

**Vote 4-0-0**

**Old Business**

**Simonds Park Tree House**

During the month of June, Senior Town Engineer Tim Mazzone performed a survey of the existing area, locating trees and marking elevations. The survey will be used by the Treehouse Guys engineer to complete the drawing for the project. An updated sketch was received there was not much changed from the original, but heights and elevations have been added. They are working on structural drawings and are planning on a late August start. Director Egan spoke with BCAT regarding a documented series on the construction of the treehouse.

Director Egan also noted that the bucket truck is back with a new computer. A thank you was extended to Central Maintenance for picking up the cost. The breaks are currently being worked on. The warrant request for the pickup truck is targeted for early 2023 and the van is targeted for mid to late 2023.

Commissioner Sullivan asked when the construction of the basketball court at Simons Park was targeted to start. Director Egan targeted September. They are working to find an electrical engineer to assist with locating and moving the electricity safely.

**Executive Session**

Not Required.

**Adjourn**

**VOTE: 4-0-0**

Meeting adjourned at 7:27pm

**Next meeting is August 15<sup>th</sup>**

Respectfully submitted,  
Emily O'Donoghue  
Recording Clerk