

**Town of Northborough
Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting
February 2, 2010**

In attendance: David Rawlings, David Putnam, Sean McCann, Sean Durkin, Jim Wing, Kara Buzanoski, Allison Lane and Michelle Lyseth. Guest: David Robillard, DPW Foreman.

6:36pm—Meeting called to order.

6:37pm—January Minutes. Sean McCann (SM) made a motion to approve the January minutes, motion seconded by David Rawlings (DR), motion passed 4-0.

6:38pm—DPW Report by Kara Buzanoski (KB). Dave Putnam (DP) asked KB if Ellsworth-McAfee is always plowed in the winter; KB said yes, if there is time. David Robillard (Robo) said the park has a lot of activity in the winter with cross country skiers, people and their dogs, etc. No other news to report.

6:40pm—Recreation Report by Allison Lane (AL). AL said that Recreation has been doing well with advertising sales for the upcoming spring and summer brochure, with over \$5,000 pledged and/or received at the time of this meeting. Several individuals or businesses have requested ad space on the same ‘premium’ pages so a lottery will have to be held at a later date to determine ad placement.

AL said that she had met with Dick Perron and Michelle Gillespie regarding Applefest and the Applefest Parade earlier that day. Michelle Gillespie will be submitting an Applefest schedule of events for Recreation to include in the fall 2010 brochure. Applefest will pay the costs of the additional postage required.

AL told the Commission that field space regarding the youth leagues is ‘all fixed’. She and Jen Hom from Southborough’s Recreation Department had met with representatives from both girls and boys Lacrosse to determine field placement. LAX had asked for a ‘blanket’ of time from both Recreation Departments so Jen Hom and AL had met with them to determine adequate field space. LAX has been allocated some time at Ellsworth-McAfee. DP asked who’s lining their fields and AL said that Lacrosse is. Robo said that the line markings would hold up under 1-2 mowings. AL said she would like to coordinate mowing with Robo. AL went on to say that girls LAX will be using Fay school fields but not the high school fields, and boys LAX will be using the high school fields on Wednesdays and Thursdays. DP asked if they were going to use Melican Middle School (MMS); AL said no, they don’t want to line 2 separate fields. AL said that David Pierce (Boys LAX) had asked AL about field maintenance costs; AL told him that she would get back to him with the fees, to which David Pierce asked if it would alright to just communicate directly with John O’Reilly (NYSA) about that. Sean McCann said that AL should stay out of that conversation.

NYSA has been allocated fields at MMS. AL has been told that NYSA will now have additional costs resulting from the move, including the purchase of 6 new nets, and more.

AL went on to say that Ellsworth-McAfee would probably still be too wet when the fields are expected to be open in the spring, so fields at St. Marks have been allocated for use for LAX until Ellsworth-McAfee is drained and playable.

Regarding Baseball and Softball, AL said that fields have been allocated to them, and those groups are all set. John Farrell (Baseball) told AL that Baseball might try to fix upper Peaslee, but AL said they had no long-term plans for renovating that area.

Next, AL said that Recreation had been accepting applications for 2 part time summer camp counselor positions, and that she had received 37 applications. Interviews will be set for February 9.

Registration for winter programming is going well, and summer camp registration begins February 9. No other news to report.

6:55pm—Old Business.

- **Dog Park.** AL said she has seen an overwhelming amount of people at Ellsworth-McAfee with their dogs and she feels that a press release should be distributed right away so people will know that dogs are soon going to be banned from that park. KB said there is a process to follow. Tony Ziton, the person representation the Dog Park coalition, approached John Coderre, Town Administrator, about his thoughts on a dog park in town. Assabet Park is out of the question. Yellick is also not a possibility; the Department of Conservation and Recreation is the governing entity and will not allow the area to be fenced off for the purposes of one individual group. The State will not allow dogs to be unleashed. As far as other possibilities, none have made themselves known. DP said that if we ban dogs at Ellsworth-McAfee, who will enforce that? KB said the Commission can vote not to allow dogs at the park and the Dog Officer, Claudia McGuire, would enforce it, but during her working hours. DP said that people at the park would help to self-police. Sean Durkin said we have to decide if we are going to ban dogs and then move it up to the Board of Selectman, which will help publicize it to town residents. KB said the 'dog park group, has not been notified yet that their plan is falling through. DP said he anticipates 'one year of turmoil' at Ellsworth-McAfee and AL said she is sure some people will still visit the park with their dogs, but that the number should drop dramatically over time. DR said that if we are banning them from one park that it should be done at all parks. SD said this should be brought to the BOS; AL said she would ask to be put on the agenda for their next meeting.

7:15pm—New Business.

- **Community Gardens.** AL said she has a great idea for use of Recreation's property at Ellsworth-McAfee. She told the Commission that she is due to receive \$60K for an obesity grant. She said she is going into phase 2 of a yearlong project, with a strategic plan in place to help prevent obesity. The new Free Play program is one piece of that program. The next part of the plan is something she is working on with Sue Halpin, who works at Algonquin High School in the Culinary Arts and Nutrition building. AL is proposing having a community garden with raised garden beds, with the community able to rent space. DR asked about water costs, and AL said that would be included in the grant, initially. AL said she would like to have some gardens at the new senior center as well. AL said she contacted Rick Hagen, who has been active in the Boy Scout organization, to see if she could enlist some Eagle Scouts for help in prepping/building the garden beds. DP said he has a friend who has done something similar and would get more information. AL asked the group if the neighborhood at Valentine should be notified, and the group was in agreement that yes, they should be notified. AL said that the project meets the request of passive recreation at that property so it should be fine. DP said that there is a source of water, and with the Boy Scouts involved, it's a win-win project for the community.
- **JV Baseball Field Request.** Sean Durkin (SD) said he attended the Mass Baseball Coaches Convention and had a conversation with Neil Burke (NB). NB requested use of Memorial Field for his JV Baseball team. NB said they're on 3 teams on 2 fields at ARHS and it is not helping the Varsity program. He was not aware of the new rental fees at ARHS. A discussion amongst the commission, and the group agreed not to charge ARHS for use of Memorial, as this is not an appropriate source of revenue at this time.
- **Mowing.** Robo was invited to be part of this discussion. DP said he was surprised at how short staffed the DPW is with respect to mowing and how much does not get cut. Robo said the public was not aware until recently how short staffed the DPW is. When someone leaves the job of their own accord or is let go, the position is not filled. DP asked if mowing could be subcontracted out like plowing currently is. KB said that subcontracting out plowing is in the snow and ice budget and she can get more money from the reserve fund if necessary. DP asked how plowing is different from mowing in that regard and KB said it is handle differently legislatively under the statutes. There is no money available to hire subcontractors for mowing; and if she tried to hire part time staff she would lose full time staff under the current budget. DP asked to have figures for the costs of mowing for the whole season. AL said that some youth groups might be willing to help pay if that would mean the grass would be cut more often. DP commented that Baseball is already cutting Memorial themselves. Robo said that a lot of time is involved with cutting the grass at all the schools. KB said that that agreement was between the past superintendent (Bob Melican) and the former DPW Director, John Schunder. Ten years ago, the superintendent had wanted to purchase a wing mower but there were no funds for it. The Town was going to purchase one anyway, so Schunder agreed to mow the school fields for a year, but that arrangement didn't end after a year. SM said, 'and the precedent was set'. DP suggested privatization by the youth groups and added that he wants to know the cost to

adequately cut all the fields. DR asked KB/Robo if they had an estimate? SM said that Steiman's mowed for the town at a rate of \$800/week in the recent past. SD said the cost of outsourcing would be prohibitive. Robo suggested that someone call Earl Storey at Westboro's DPW, and that he has someone dedicated to 'babysitting' the outsourced groups. DP suggested just outsourcing what the town isn't able to get to. Robo said that if they could do away with mowing at the schools, they would only have 135 left to worry about, which would certainly help. AL asked if it would be less expensive to hire college students but Robo said the schedule is not conducive to hiring college students, as the most manpower is needed in spring and fall. AL asked if hiring could be done through the revolving account? DP asked KB to come back to the commission with numbers, and that there are a significant amount of people looking for work these days. Robo said that Tom Maedler (head custodian at MMS) has requested purchasing a mower but has been turned down. AL said that if the schools purchase a mower and do their own mowing then that charge will be passed on in the form of field charges. DP reiterated needing estimates and then bringing it Town Meeting potentially. KB said there will be even less money available in next year's DPW budget, and AL again suggested hiring through the revolving account.

Action Items

- KB: figures on mowing costs for the entire season

7:55—Meeting Adjourned.