



Commissioners in Attendance: Chair Steve Nelson, Kevin Sullivan, Bill Gaffney, and Carl Foss.

Staff in Attendance: Parks and Recreation Director Brendan Egan and Assistant Director 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 Sullivan moved to approve the Recreation Commission meeting minutes of February 27, 2022, as amended.

VOTE: 4-0-0

Public Participation

None.

Director of Parks and Recreation Report

Parks and Recreation Director Egan presented the following report:

Therapeutic Recreation – Emma Jones

Emma Jones, Therapeutic Recreation Specialist, was recently named one of National Recreation and Park Associate Top 30 Under 30 in the United States. She was selected from over 100 nominees across 28 states. NRPA's 30 Under 30 honors top young Park and Recreation Professionals who serve as everyday superheroes in their communities. The department is honored to have Emma Jones as part of the team and are excited for her professionally. Emma Jones joined the commission at the meeting as they wanted to recognize her for her hard work and dedication to her profession and to the Burlington Parks and Recreation Department. Her work goes beyond TR, she is a complete team player and is always looking to help in any way. Emma is very talented with the computer, social media, advertising, brochures and more.

Commissioner Sullivan noted Emma Jones has done amazing. She started out with the department when she was in high school and has evolved so much. Every meeting her name is mentioned to give credit and thanks and now she is honored nationally as well. He extended a thank you and congratulations as it is well earned. He also mentioned the department and town is extremely lucky to have Emma Jones and they are very proud of her success.

Emma Jones thanked the Commission and noted she is very fortunate to work for a community that truly values community inclusion, programming for those with disabilities, working with Director Egan and Assistant Director Lehman as well as the rest of the programming team is an honor.

Commissioner Gaffney noted how proud everyone is of all Emma Jones' accomplishments and extended a congratulations as well.

Commissioner Foss also extended a congratulations and thanked Emma Jones for all the work and good name that she brings to Burlington. He noted the award is very well deserved.

Commissioner Nelson noted all they hear is great things about Emma Jones. He noted that they are very fortunate to have her as part of the team and is very proud of her accomplishments. The award is amazing and very well deserved. He noted that it helps Burlington stand out showing all that is being done, providing universal access to children in programming. He extended a thank you for all the hard work and bringing the honor to the Commission.

Emma Jones thanked the Commission for all the kind comments and is looking forward to continuing to work in the TR Division and make more of the award in terms of programming and inclusion services for the town.

Director Egan presented a plaque commemorating Emma Jones' national award. The plaque is the Parks and Recreation magazine cover with Emma's picture on it as well as her article commemorating her name and all that she has done.

Maintenance Staff

Staff has been busy getting things ready for spring. They were busy clearing snow last week. They have been working on replacing some broken benches, painting the barrels, working on equipment and more. Some staff have gone to pool school to become certified pool operations and to obtain/renew their license. Other staff members attended a class hosted by Toro learning some techniques on repairing the equipment. They have been working on cleaning up some tree limbs after the storm as well as keeping up with trash around town.

Treehouse Graffiti

There has been another incident of graffiti at the Simonds Park Treehouse. It happened over March 4th & 5th and was the same group as last time. Another police report was filed, and they have been reviewing footage in hopes to identify a similar figure. Nothing has been confirmed just yet. The same thing was written in the same area and silver paint was used this time which is a bit easier to clean up. In the meantime, Director Egan purchased some motion sensing LED lights that have been placed in the trees on the ramp and should help with the camera clarity. This is a temporary measure as Director Egan met with the company who helped with a similar situation at Rahanis Park to get a quote for two motion sensing light fixtures.

Commissioner Nelson noted the potential of using an infrared camera that doesn't need a light fixture and would work at night. He also noted that the Maintenance staff is doing a great job removing the graffiti, but it might get to the point where the graffiti is very difficult to remove.

Capital Budget

On March 7th the department met with Capital Budget and discussed the Capital Requests for the year. The discussion went well, and all the requests were approved unanimously. Gary Mercier, a Capital Budget member, is planning to present an article at Town Meeting to renovate the High School baseball field at Francis Wyman. He is looking to demonstrate the warrant process for those who may be interested in the future. The project being proposed would level the infield and improve drainage, replace some of the damaged fencing as well as putting roofs on the dugouts. If approved, the project would be overseen by the department. Gary Mercier would like to attend a future meeting to get the support of the Commission. Director Egan noted he had a quote prepared for the renovation of the infield to help raise the level and direct water from running across the infield as much. The fencing is old and damaged and overall needs to be upgraded. Some of these items could be brought up in the Master Field Plan that the School Department is working on as well. The goal is to have the improvements done for the 2024 baseball season.

Commissioner Gaffney asked for clarification on the addition of roofs for the dugouts. Director Egan noted it would not enclose the dugouts, instead a cantilevered roof would be installed creating an open-air dugout.

Commissioner Nelson asked if this effort should wait until the Master Plan is finalized. Director Egan noted he does not see anything coming from the Master Plan in time for Town Meeting this year as it is still in progress. He also noted this would not be counted towards the Department's Capital request. Commissioner Nelson also asked if there was an estimate of the cost. Director Egan noted the current estimate for the dugouts & fieldwork is around \$140,000 range. Commissioner Nelson asked if the Recreation Department is doing any of the work. Director Egan noted the sponsor, Gary Mercier, is just looking for the department to oversee the project.

Commissioner Foss added that using the Master Field Plan to make a 5–10-year improvement plan is an exciting way to get some of the needed improvements at the baseball field. He agrees that the field needs help and might not be worth waiting until the Master Plan is complete.

Dog Park Improvement

The Dog Park Improvement Project was put out to bid on March 15th and there is a site walk on March 23rd at 10am. Bids are due on March 30th at 10am. They are also working with the Conservation department for a determination of applicability since the renovated area is within 60ft of the wetlands. They are hoping for positive bids that fit within the budget and get the project completed before June.

Ways and Means

On March 15th the FY 24 budget was presented to the Ways and Means Committee. The Committee had a few questions, mainly on the occupancy and materials & supplies lines. Overall, they supported the budget unanimously.

Assistant Director of Parks & Recreation

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Lehman presented the following report:

Mental Health First Aid

On March 7th, Program Coordinator Jessie Hampson & Emma Jones attended a full day Mental Health First Aid training offered by the National Council for Well-Being. Mental Health First Aid teaches participants how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders. They are grateful for the Board of Health for the invitation to send some staff to the training. Both Jessie Hampson and Emma Jones reported they learned a lot from the session and are in conversation with the National Council for Well-Being on how they may be able to modify the training for summer staff during orientation.

Summer Hiring Events

Applications have been opened for the summer positions across department. Program staff has attended hiring events at UNH and Burlington High School. On March 22nd they will attend the career fair at Gordon College. There are currently 25 applications across and are still hearing back from summer staff.

Programing

Spring Registration

Spring Registration began on March 9th at 6pm. The office was open from 6pm-8pm to answer any questions residents might have. A thank you is extended to the Office and Programing staff for being available to support residents during this time. They appreciate that staff is always willing to go the extra mile and make sure registration goes smoothly.

Adult Softball

Adult softball has begun. They started reaching out to teams who have participated previously. They have until March 27th to let staff know their intentions. After that, it is open to new teams. The season begins in early May with practices starting in late April.

Winter Programs

Basketball and Skiing seasons wrapped up in the past few weeks, with the remainder of the programs ending in the next week or so. Staff is getting excited for spring programing and the ability to be outside and do more work.

Therapeutic Recreation

Therapeutic Recreation Program Director

The department is looking for a Part-Time Therapeutic Recreation Program Director. There are currently two candidates and are excited for the opportunities. Emma Jones is currently interviewing, and they are hoping to have someone join soon.

Special Events

Easter Events

The Egg-scursion begins next week where eggs are hidden throughout parks and families search the parks. This event involves a point system through QR codes. This event is generally successful with over 50 families registered so far. The Egg Hunt will be at Simonds Park on April 6th. This is a traditional egg hunt with age divided hunting areas. The bunny is available for photos along with some arts and crafts for participants. In past years, there has been a virtual bunny hop where our dance instructor & the bunny host an event online and do different dances with participants. This year will be in-person on April 7th.

NRPA's Parks Report

The report highlights how people engage with parks across the country and identifies several key points including nearly 3 of 4 U.S. residents have at least one park or facility within walking distance of their home. This is something that Burlington is very close to and should be proud of.

Commissioner Gaffney noted when his family was determining to move or add to their home, they really liked the Town of Burlington due to the Recreation programs. He noted the article really validated this and extended a thank you.

Commissioner Sullivan noted that at the TR program over the weekend, a resident asked if the participants could have a ride back to the Rec Department after the event. Assistant Director Lehman noted she would discuss the possibility with Emma Jones.

Chairman's Report

Commissioner Nelson noted he and Commissioner Sullivan attended the March 15th presentation at Ways & Means. He added Director Egan did an excellent job presenting the budget and answering questions. It was a 12-0 vote in favor of the budget. Commissioner Nelson extended appreciation to the Ways & Means committee as they work very hard reviewing everyone's budget. He extended a thank you for the support and hard work they do for the town.

Commissioner Nelson also noted he went by the new basketball courts at Simonds Park a there was a good attendance, and all four courts were being used. He asked if the courts were being painted in April. Director Egan noted once the temperature reaches 50 degrees on a regular basis they will be painted.

Commissioner Nelson he was at the Simonds Park Treehouse and noted all the graffiti was cleaned up and extended a thank you to the Maintenance Department for keeping the area cleaned up.

Subcommittee Report

None.

New Business

Parks & Outdoor Facility Master Plan- \$62,000

Director Egan noted at the last meeting, the Parks & Outdoor Facility Master Plan was voted on, however, there was never a motion made for the request. He noted nothing has changed, but a motion and vote needs to be recorded for approval.

Commissioner Sullivan made a motion to approve the expenditure of \$62,000 for the Parks & Outdoor Facility Master Plan. Commissioner Gaffney seconded the motion.

Vote 4-0-0

Massachusetts Recreation Park Association Conference

Director Egan noted the department will be honored at the MRPA Conference next week. Emma Jones will receive a special citation for her work as the TR Specialist for the town based on her being named one of NRPA's Top 30 Under 30. She will be honored at the awards dinner on March 28th. The department is also being honored for an Agency of the Year award for Design of Facility for the Treehouse at Simonds Park. The nomination came from outside departments. Overall we are excited and glad to see that others see all the hard work the staff puts in.

Commissioner Sullivan extended a congratulations. He also asked for the official award title. Director Egan noted it was Agency of the Year based on Design of Facility. He added everyone involved was notified and Joshua Simonds will be attending the ceremony.

Town Participation Policy

Director Egan noted that Town Counsel provided information on the recent ruling from March 7th from the Supreme Judicial Court regarding Town's Public Participation Policies for open meetings violates the Commonwealth's Constitution. This was a case involving the Town of Southborough. Director Egan emailed out a copy of Town Counsel's recommendation that the Town Boards & Committees take on as a Public Participation Policy. There is potential for a time frame limitation for public participation. This allows the public to still participate but keep on topic and within a time frame. Director Egan asked if there were any other suggestions before adding the changes to the agenda for the next meeting for a reading.

Commissioner Nelson mentioned the School Committee has a policy during public participation to limit the discussion to two minutes. He noted at the next meeting a time frame should be discussed.

Commissioner Sullivan noted the Recreation Department is much more informal than other meetings. He added he hopes it is not too short of a time limit. Commissioner Nelson noted he doesn't think two minutes is appropriate for this Commission, but there needs to be some time limit to ensure the conversation stays on topic. Commissioner Foss added the time limit is helpful.

Old Business

Renovate Street Hockey area at Simonds Park into Pickleball - \$84,000

After discussion on Capital Projects and discussions with Town Administration as well as input with the neighbors, there still is not an identified area where the pickleball courts could go. After taking another look at the current street hockey area, Director Egan noted the potential of just re-surfacing the courts with Laytexite surface paint, coring the pickleball net posts and bringing up the sound dampening panels. Director Egan is working with the company who provided the original quote for a new quote for just a new latex surface, coring for the net posts as well as some fencing repair. He noted he will be looking for the possibility to save some funds with this new quote. There is still the issue of whether this is just a temporary solution for the courts.

Commissioner Gaffney noted the District came before the Planning Board to add four more buildings and two parking garages. This is under the existing PDD; however, a park will be added between two buildings. He noted he mentioned the possibility of adding a pickleball court in this area. As far as the current option of moving the courts to the street hockey area, he likes the idea and with the sound dampening panels the sound should be moving towards the woods instead of the neighbors. This hopefully would provide some relief for the neighbors. Director Egan noted the current set of rules would remain in place.

Commissioner Foss added he agreed it is a great idea, especially if money can be saved. He also noted with the School Field Master Plan as well as the Parks & Outdoor Facility Master Plan coming in, there has been some discussion of a Field Improvement Committee and the pickleball courts should be an agenda item.

Commissioner Sullivan asked if we were asked to reduce warrant articles. Director Egan noted we were not, however, there are no other options to move the courts anywhere else currently. Commissioner Sullivan asked if this option would be as safe as a full replacement. Director Egan noted there aren't many cracks, just small variations where you can see where the water remains after rain.

Commissioner Gaffney added it might be a benefit to have the court slightly irregular and not a pro surface as it may push some of the more serious players out of town players to play at different courts. Director Egan noted with a fresh coat of latex and being marked out, most won't be able to tell it is not a completely re-done surface. He added this will be looked at as an improvement to the park going forward and not a temporary fix.

Commissioner Nelson added he thinks it is a good idea and approach. He noted there was an article in the Boston Globe that there is a lawsuit filed on the South Shore and the judge issued an injunction, stopping all use of the courts. Cutting the funding in half is a good idea and there is potential for other uses at the court. Director Egan noted in the meantime, if something comes up, the article can be pulled and re-organized for fall Town Meeting.

Executive Session

Not Required.

Agenda for Next Meeting

Adjourn

VOTE:

4-0-0

Meeting adjourned at

Next meeting will be March 30th.

Respectfully submitted,
Emily O'Donoghue
Recording Clerk