

**Burlington Recreation Commission  
Meeting October 17, 2022**

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

Staff in Attendance: Parks and Recreation Director Brendan Egan, and Assistant Director Parks and Recreation 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 Norden moved to approve the Recreation Commission meeting minutes of September 14, 2022, as amended.

**VOTE: 5-0-0**

**Public Participation**

None.

**Director of Parks and Recreation Report**

Parks and Recreation Director Egan presented the following report:

**Simonds Park Tree House Project**

The Tree House Project is moving along nicely. The ramps and upper deck have been installed and the team is currently working on the railings and connection from the bottom of the first ramp to the pavement. They will also be adding railings and lower railings on the ramps, as required by ADA. Due to the weather, progress has been great, and the department is looking to plan a community grand opening event in November. Staff is working on plans for the event now and will be sending out the official date and information once more information is defined.

Commissioner Sullivan noted he visited the project over the weekend and noticed the treehouse company was working hard, cleaning up and doing an overall great job with the project. Director Egan added the company is doing a great job keeping the site maintained, clean, safe, and blocked off.

**Simonds Park Basketball Court Renovation**

At the last meeting, the Commission voted to approve a contract not to exceed \$190,000 and we have come to an agreement with Cella Construction to complete the basketball court renovation for \$190,000. The entire basketball court surface has been removed and they are currently waiting on Eversource to disconnect the previous electrical, which comes from the road continuing to three poles down the middle of the courts. Once the electrical has been disconnected, the poles will be removed. The previous basketball systems have been removed and disposed of as well. The new support systems have been delivered and are on site. There was space in the current Musco Lighting panel, located at the upper little league field, to connect into and all new conduit for the new electricity has been installed. There is a good amount of ledge at Simonds Park, but they were able to get down the parking lot side of the court and across the middle without hitting anything. The footing for the center pole did need to be re-engineered to a spread footing as they could only get down 6ft but needed to get to 10ft. The light poles and lighting systems are due to be delivered on October 20<sup>th</sup>. The contractor is confident they will be able to get the pavement done this fall and the final painting projected for spring 2023.

Commissioner Sullivan asked if there was going to be a retaining wall put in on the baseball field side. Director Egan noted there would not be a retaining wall. He added that some Cape Cod berms will be added to that side of the court. The courts will all be centered leaving 2.5ft from the edge of court to the edge of the pavement on either side with 10ft between the court and 6-8ft on the ends. The final dimensions will be 48x90ft, making the courts more on par with high school regulation courts with a full 3pt line.

Commissioner Nelson asked if they were still on budget for the project despite the ledge that was found. Director Egan noted they are still on budget and are hoping to not hit any more ledge issues. They did expect some ledge, but they were able to get down deeper than anticipated in the spread footing and Musco was able to take care of the engineering. Commissioner Nelson added the light poles used to be located in the middle of the court and asked if they would still be located in the middle or on the sides of the court. Director Egan noted there will be a light pole on the grass on the Bedford St. side, another on the edge of the parking lot fences out of the way and a third across center court in the ledge.

#### Francis Wyman Baseball Field

Director Egan met with a group of parents, known as The Friends of Burlington Baseball, to discuss some possible improvements at Francis Wyman baseball field. The group has raised some money and are looking to install a batting cage. The group will need to decide on which batting cage they would like to add and see if the model fits within their budget. The Athletic Director was unable to attend the meeting. Director Egan met with Superintendent Baker as well as the Athletic Director at the field to ensure they are all on the same page. Once a model is chosen, the department will try to assist with as much of the site preparation as possible potentially digging up the area with the group paying for materials. The installation depends on the model that is chosen and if it can be in place year-round or just seasonally.

Commissioner Gaffney asked if the batting cages will be properly maintained and repaired. Director Egan added this was a topic that was discussed and are working on an agreement on the matter as it depends on if the batting cage will be in place year-round or just seasonally.

Commissioner Nelson asked what location was agreed upon for the batting cage. Director Egan noted it would be located on the third-base side, about 20 yards off the path and about 30 yards off the edge of the field behind the bleachers. The irrigation lines have been marked in the area.

Commissioner Gaffney asked if the location is ideal for neighbors from a noise standpoint. He added he is concerned about putting a batting cage up near neighbors located on the path and then having to move the cage or install some sound blockers due to the constant 'bat to ball' sound being a potential nuisance. Director Egan added he doesn't see the constant sound being an issue like it is for the pickleball court. The group is looking for a location to warm-up a pitcher and practice during games and practices. He is unsure if there will be a pitching machine, but if there is, it will be a machine that will require physically feeding a ball in. Director Egan added there is some natural sound barrier from the pine trees in the area but can bring the concerns to the group of parents and Athletic Director to present to the School Committee for a vote if needed. Commissioner Nelson added it may be helpful to add hours of operation to the batting cage.

#### Program Coordinator

Director Egan noted Kelly Lehman has officially accepted the position of Assistant Director of Parks & Recreation and will be transitioning to the new position over the next few weeks. The Program Coordinator position is in the Burlington Municipal Employees Association and Director Egan is working with Human Resources to post the position. Director Egan asked if any of the Commissioners would like to serve on the interview committee and to let him know if interested.

Commissioner Nelson added he was going to put this in front of the Commission and asked if anyone would like to serve on the interview committee. Commissioner Norden and Commissioner Sullivan expressed interest. Commissioner Nelson also asked how many interviews they are anticipating. Director Egan noted the job posting would be internal first and depending on the number of candidates, they would then open the posting externally. He added in the past one Commissioner was in attendance. It was decided that Commissioner Norden would be the primary option and Commissioner Sullivan would be the secondary option depending on schedules.

Commissioner Sullivan asked if there was a need for the Program Coordinator & Superintendent of Recreation Maintenance to attend future meetings if the Assistance Director will be in attendance. Director Egan noted this is a conversation they have discussed. There might not be a need if reports are provided; Director Egan could present Department & Maintenance reports while Assistant Director Lehman could present office & Program reports. If there are specific questions the week before a meeting, additional staff members could be asked to attend. Director Egan added this would be for an upcoming discussion. Commission Nelson asked if the topic could be added to the agenda for the next meeting.

#### Miscellaneous

Director Egan added a retirement party for Paul Raymond will be hosted on October 25<sup>th</sup> from 6-8pm at the Café Escadrille.

### **Parks Superintendent Report**

Superintendent Baker was not in attendance. Director Egan presented the following report on his behalf:

Director Egan noted the report was emailed out.

Commissioner Nelson noted the staff is doing a wonderful job and the fields look great. Director Egan agreed and noted the rain, along with seeding and fertilizing is working well. Memorial School field was added to the maintenance program this year and the staff was able to aerate, slice seed and fertilize, making a notable difference. Getting the seed established in the fall will allow the seed to acclimate to the weather come spring instead of sitting in a climate-controlled area. Director Egan also noted that with the help of the rain and all the efforts from the staff, the fields are showing improvements.

Commissioner Gaffney asked about the Cricket Pitch. Director Egan noted the cricket mat is in. He added he is planning to roll out the mat to get a measurement in order to find a storage option. There is hope to get a few cricket matches played this year. The storage unit would have a combination lock and teams would receive the combination upon receipt of permit. Director Egan was able to meet with the gentleman who helped encourage the efforts and noted he was excited for all the advancement and efforts.

### **Programming Report**

Assistant Director Lehman presented the following report:

#### **Programming**

With fall programming in full swing, it is time to start planning winter programs. The program staff is hard at work preparing the activities for winter. They are looking to get back to full capacity and are in conversation with an instructor for ceramics and working to get swim lessons back as well. Adding these two programs would bring capacity back to pre-COVID number. They are targeting to get the winter brochure out just before thanksgiving.

#### **Special Events**

Truck Day was hosted on September 18<sup>th</sup> and was very well attended. There were some great sponsors including CN Wood, who was able to donate shirts that the staff could sell and make a profit. Stride Fitness, Wegman's and Quinn Builders were also sponsors for the event. Stride Fitness and Wegman's are title sponsors with Burlington and will be in attendance to many events in the future. Director Egan was able to work with Karma to provide lunch for the onsite truck vendors allowing them to get inside for some lunch, sit down and enjoy some quiet from the event.

The Fall Fitness Festival was hosted on September 24<sup>th</sup> at the town common from 10am-1pm. Park & Recreation instructors as well as local businesses were in attendance. Fitness Coordinator Kristen Gonzalez was able to fill in with some businesses to supplement services that the town does not provide. The event was well attended by the businesses and instructors and Kristen Gonzalez worked extremely hard to put a schedule together. They are looking at changing the date, time, and potentially season for the next festival as the event was not as well attended as the staff hoped. There was still a good number of attendees who tried new programming and had a great time.

The Trucktober event was hosted on Saturday, October 15<sup>th</sup> and was well attended. There were five food trucks available, axe throwing, bobbing for apples, back yard games and more. Staff was able to shut down Center St. to host the first power wheels derby which was very well received. Chase and Sky from Paw Patrol were able to attend and engage with the children. A big 'thank you' to Assistant Program Coordinator Jessie Hampson for all her efforts and work put in for the event.

#### **Therapeutic Recreation**

The sensory friendly Truck Day was hosted on September 16<sup>th</sup>. Staff was able to coordinate with some of the vehicles to arrive a day early. This event included no sirens, horns, or lights. The children are still able to look at the vehicles, climb on them and sit inside, just without all the noises. This event was well attended with about 250 attendees at the common. Many families thanked the staff for hosting the event.

At this event, staff were able to bring out their mobile communication boards. These are double-sided boards that use augmented and alternate communication for anyone who is non-verbal. The boards have pictures to help describe activities as well as letters to spell out words and even sign language to help with communication. Bringing the boards to the event helps normalize the everyday use of the communication boards. This is an initiative the Commission supported a year ago and staff was able to bring these boards out for the first time at the sensory friendly event. Simonds, Regan, and Wildwood Park are all going to receive large communication boards on the playgrounds to help children communicate with peers. Staff is also looking for ways to add communication within the playground structures themselves. A big 'thank you' to Emma Jones for all her efforts.

#### Miscellaneous

After the success with the staffing initiatives this summer, Emma Jones and Assistant Director Lehman will be presenting at Northern New England's Recreation & Park Conference, which is held in New Hampshire. Emma Jones and Assistant Director Lehman will be presenting on the track system for training staff, the type of training itself and the coin incentive plan.

Commissioner Nelson extended a 'congratulations' on being able to present at the conference as it is an honor. Assistant Director Lehman noted they are excited and thanked the Commissioner.

#### **Chairman's Report**

None.

#### **Subcommittee Report**

None.

#### **New Business**

##### Revolving Account Expenditures

Director Egan noted they are finalizing the Revolving Account Report for the third quarter which ended September 30<sup>th</sup> and should have the report completed for the next meeting. At the July meeting, the Recreation Commission voted to reserve \$10,000 to be used for Celebrate Burlington, if needed. The department did not have to utilize the funds as enough donations were received to cover the costs of the event and the funds have been returned to the Revolving Account.

Prior to COVID, the department had been working the Facilities Department about replacing the office carpets. The funds that were going to be use went to COVID efforts such as PPE and other necessary materials. Recently, they have revisited the discussion of replacing the carpets and they are going to pay to replace the carpets in the entire office space as well as paint the main office. The desks in the offices are about 20 years old and the laminate is starting to peel as well as some drawers malfunctioning. They would like to work on re-organizing the office and with some of the funds that are being returned from Celebrate Burlington, the department would like to request that the Commission approve \$5,000 to be used to upgrade the office furniture and workspaces for the front-line staff.

Commissioner Norden made a motion to approve \$5,000 from the Revolving Account to be used for Office Improvements. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Foss.

Commissioner Gaffney asked if it was usual for funds from a particular department to be used for improvements to an office effort versus the Facilities budget. Director Egan noted the Recreation Commission funded the effort in the early 2000's. It wasn't put in as a budget item for FY23 from the town, but it is something that could be funded from the Revolving Account. This is for front-line staff who are taking in program registrations and are customer facing. If not approved, Director Egan will submit to the Facilities Department to fund for next year, pushing the effort out. He added last year when the budget was being put together it wasn't something that was considered.

Commissioner Nelson added he would like to support the effort and as Director Egan noted, it would have been added in the budget last year. Now that there is a bit of extra money available that wasn't expected in the account, otherwise the money would have to been in the operating budget last year and the town would have had to raise appropriate tax money to do so. In a way, it would help save the taxpayers money as they will be able to utilize funds that they didn't expect to have. Director Egan noted they are looking to do the improvements as one big project.

Vote

**Vote 5-0-0**

#### Miscellaneous

Commissioner Nelson asked if Director Egan was in the process of updating the 10-year Capital Plan. Director Egan noted they are in the process. In early November, the department sits down with the Programming and Maintenance divisions to discuss ideas and find any needs that are urgent or new and figure out some pricing. They try to get everything ready to discuss at the December meeting. Commissioner Nelson asked if it was possible to have a conversation on their current thoughts at the November meeting and asked if it could be added to the agenda for the meeting.

#### Old Business

##### Varsity Field Update

The field upgrade is complete, and they were able to host and play a home game in early October. Staff worked to prepare and then break down the field, as they closed right after the home game so the track could be resurfaced in the upcoming week. They are hoping to have everything complete and re-open the field for a home game on Friday October 28<sup>th</sup> and remain open for the entirety of the season. The renovations are looking great, and they are hoping to get the field fully open and have other teams start to utilize it as well.

##### New DPW Facility

The new DPW facility officially opened on September 23<sup>rd</sup>. The effort to move out of 10 Great Meadow Rd. has been finalized and most of the equipment and materials have been moved out. There is some equipment at the old facility on Edgemere Ave. The Animal Control Officer quarters will remain at Edgemere Ave until the renovations at the previous Water & Sewer building on Great Meadow Rd. are finished. The demolition of the previous buildings will begin when renovations are complete. A possible Capital item could be to look into funding plans for the future of the facility. There has been a discussion around applying for another Park Grant and / or Land & Water Conservation Funds, but before applying, consider what is the best use of the property going forward. Considering the location is in a neighborhood, increasing usage & traffic might not be the best. It might be a good idea to have an additional meeting to discuss ideas and potential plans regarding the future of the site.

Commissioner Norden noted this is going to be a big project and asked if the Recreation Commission was totally in control of the decision or if others would be involved. Director Egan noted he believed the Commission is in control as it was left to the town for recreational purposes. He noted the theater building as well as the storage building on the left side will remain. There is also a small workshop and small storage for smaller equipment during the off-season. He also added the potential of expanding the storage as they need more space. Commissioner Norden suggested having the Commissioners do a walk-through of the site to get the lay of the land and see the potential for the future. Director Egan noted it was a great idea and suggested choosing a Saturday to coordinate a site visit.

##### Mary Cummings Property

Director Egan spoke with Town Council at Town Meeting in September regarding the property. The City of Boston has not responded regarding the conservation easement and restriction. There has been follow up messages sent, and they will continue to try to communicate with the city.

##### National Recreation and Park Association Conference

Director Egan extended a 'thank you' to the Commission for approving the department to attend the National Recreation & Park Association Conference. Director Egan was the only department member who was able to attend. He noted it was one of the best national conferences he has attended. Dr. Sanjay Gupta was a keynote speaker and spoke about what was learned during the pandemic and how they could potentially prevent the experience and about living healthy lifestyles. Other sessions included work-life balance, customer service, battling burnout with staff and yourself and inclusive playground design. They also discussed some top trends in Parks & Recreations such as utilizing human composting, introducing a Chief Heat Officer to deal with climate changes in communities, the use of drones/bots for mowers and other equipment as well as succession planning. Director Egan noted the most inspiring session was Inclusion for All Types of Minds and Body's presented by Dr. Temple Grandin.

**Executive Session**

Not Required.

**Adjourn**

**VOTE: 5-0-0**

Meeting adjourned at 6:59pm

**Next meeting is TBD**

Respectfully submitted,  
Emily O'Donoghue  
Recording Clerk