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Minutes of the Newburyport Parks Commission

January 19, 2023

Senior Community Center First Floor Room A

Call to order: 6:00 p.m.

A quorum was present

In attendance: Chair Ted Boretti, Paul Swindlehurst, Charles Griffin, Matt Ellsworth, Nicole Whelan

Also in attendance: Manager of Special Projects Kim Turner, Councillor Jennie Donahue, Ben Iacono, Evan Jespersen, Andrea Eigerman, Stacey MacMillan, Joe DiBiase, Jim McCarthy, Jane Snow, Veronica Carleo, James Jones, Lisa Naas

MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL

Motion by Commissioner Swindlehurst to approve the minutes of the December 15 Parks Commission meeting, seconded by Commissioner Griffin. So voted on a unanimous voice vote.

NEW BUSINESS

Port Parks Alliance meet and greet—(Andrea Eigerman, Stacey MacMillan, Jim McCarthy)

Andrea Eigerman identified the group as a new non-profit for parks fundraising. She introduced Jim McCarthy as the treasurer and Stacy MacMillan as the assistant director. Their non-profit status will be cleared in a couple of months and they have a tax ID number. They have several goals, the primary one being capital fundraising, but others include advocacy, education and volunteering. They intend to align their services to the needs of the Parks Commission. In terms of education and advocacy, the group intends to communicate about projects that are ongoing, updating the public and educating residents on ways they can help. They also plan to identify opportunities and organize volunteer support around parks. Jim McCarthy specified that this is a separate 501(c)(3) that is not related to the Morrill Foundation, and will have full transparency on how donations come in and go out. Commissioner Swindlehurst: is pleased to know this group is getting organized. He believes that fundraising can be an important part of the group's work but indicated that volunteer management and managing communications and social media are tasks best left to the professional staff. Jim McCarthy: it is important not to have City labor working on fundraisers. Commissioner Whelan: using kids and teens sports programs in volunteer efforts is a strong idea, as well educating the public about our parks. Commissioner Griffin: delighted that this group is forming. Citizens have rediscovered our parks during the pandemic, there is a lot of money in this City, education is critical. Ben Iacono: Does the Alliance fundraise before a project is approved or only after the City approves a project? Andrea Eigerman: priorities of fundraising will be in concert with the Parks Commission. MSP Turner: the new iteration of

the Parks Reorganization Plan includes a process by which the Commission will have scheduled reviews of their priority projects, which will inform the CIP that is reviewed and approved by the City Council, and this will in turn help identify funding gaps that can be communicated to the Port Parks Alliance. This will be an effective way to communicate priorities across all approving bodies. Tail will not be wagging the dog. **No action was taken.**

Fencing at City playgrounds—(Jennie Donahue)

Jennie Donahue asked if we can do a better job of keeping dogs out of playgrounds. Currently, there are no restrictions aside from signage and dogs are defecating in play areas and waste gets into the structures and play surfaces. You cannot predict what a dog will do, and there are also safety concerns with small children if owners are not cooperating. Fencing is not always the best solution, but it should be considered in an effort to keep dogs off playgrounds. Looking for a discussion as a start. Moseley Woods and Cashman are of primary concern because of their proximity to off-leash areas. Chair Boretti: Moseley is a good place to start. Find discussions from past meetings about this. What is being done in other towns? Commissioner Whelan: Cashman could have a fence at the playground as it is more confined, but Moseley Woods is a different story. Commissioner Swindlehurst: signs are not a good solution. Let's discuss with ACO and DPS/Mike Hennessey. Interested in what kinds of issues other towns have had with this and success vs failures. **No action was taken.**

Edging at Bartlet Mall promenade—(Jennie Donahue)

Councillor Donahue explained that she had a difficult time navigating the promenade at Bartlet Mall with a cane, got turned around and became lost as a person with vision impairment. Lack of delineation of the pathway is a problem. She asked if something can be done to better delineate the stone pathway from the grass. Chair Boretti read a memo from Parks Manager Hennessey stating there is a granite edge, but it has become buried and flush with the lawn. Elevating it may create a tripping hazard and make mowing more challenging. Councillor Donahue: can you resurface the promenade with a hard material so it can be distinguished from the surrounding lawn? Commissioner Griffin: there is currently an edge on both sides but it is not consistent. Flexi-pave material is expensive. Commissioner Swindlehurst: ADA accessibility is something that should be considered as we continue to renovate the Bartlet Mall. Suggest talking with the design team and Mike Hennessey about this issue and hear their thoughts. **No action taken.**

Carbon sequestration tree tags at Clipper City Rail Trail—Resiliency Committee (Jane Healy)

Chair Healy was unable to attend due to a conflicting CPC meeting, so Chair Boretti described the project to install tree tags with information about the environmental impacts trees have, along the newly planted portion of the CCRT between Washington St and High St. Sample tags were provided to the Commissioners. Commissioner Ellsworth: how many tags? Answer: just those along the specific portion of the CCRT, perhaps 7-10? Unknown. Commissioner Ellsworth: who will pay for this? MSP Turner: Resiliency Committee wishes to educate the public about sustainability issues, has issued a letter of intent to MVP for a grant to support initiatives such as this. This is a low-cost proposal that will likely be paid for from the grant. Chair Healy has printed up a sample on the weatherproof paper she found and is hanging it in her backyard for the winter to see how it fares. No decision is expected on this issue tonight, only an introduction to the idea. Commissioner Swindlehurst: concerned by the size of the tags and the quantity. Doesn't think it will look good, but for the cost, is willing to give it a try. Commissioner Ellsworth: not sure many will read it, approves of this in concept, maybe not in execution. Commissioner Whelan: this is a taste issue, she likes it, but thinks maybe a sign with more information at the entrance to the area, with smaller dots or tags at the base of the trees that color-code the information back to the sign is better. This would be visual clutter if on every tree. Commissioner

Swindlehurst: agrees, this may not be the best solution. Maybe make use of the granite block walls to install interpretive panels instead, for a single season. Commissioner Whelan: suggests adding an image of the full tree on the sign and a QR code to link to information. Jane Snow: doesn't like the idea of tags on trees. A single sign would be better. **No action was taken.**

Newburyport Art rotating sculpture project—(Lisa Naas)

Lisa Naas, the executive director of the Newburyport Art Association, presented the project to utilize a section of the Clipper City Rail Trail behind the Wastewater Treatment Facility as a revolving sculpture gallery. The area is 100-200' in length and would not impede any views to any abutting residences. A plan and packet of information was provided to the Commission. Commissioner Swindlehurst: assuming we would approve this for a period of time, and the NAA would leave the site as they found it once the gallery is abandoned. Answer: yes. Commissioner Swindlehurst: Wants confidence there is a pipeline of artists. Lisa Naas: NAA has a 7-year track record in the sculpture garden behind their facility. Evan Jespersen: it is impossible to prepare for sculpture, each one is different, need to work with sculptors to prepare the site and the base for the specific needs of the art piece. MSP Turner: a public art policy is being drafted. This would be the first project to go through that process, once it is finalized by the Advisory Team and adopted by the City Council. In essence, the Commission would need to approve the use of the site, but the Public Art Team, once formulated, would approve the art pieces themselves, based upon set criteria. Commissioner Swindlehurst: would like to see the site, will vote no until has the opportunity to look at the site. **Motion by Commissioner Ellsworth to approve the installation of the rotating sculpture project as presented with final locations approved by Parks Manager Hennessey, seconded by Commissioner Whelan. 3 yes, 1 no. Motion passes.**

OLD BUSINESS

Cashman and Perkins Park rules for court play signage—(Anita Greenwood & Kim Turner)

Anita Greenwood was not present, so MSP Turner presented the agenda item, which is a continuation of the previous month's discussion around policies for use of the courts in Newburyport's parks. A sample sign was shown to the Commission, and a list of revised court rules, edited based on feedback from the prior month, was provided. Commissioner Swindlehurst: should we add 'police take notice' to the sign? Chair Boretti: have not seen that verbiage in other Towns. Commissioner Swindlehurst: assume we won't install signs until the new reservation website is live? MSP Turner: correct, the website should be live within the next week or so. Request that the Commission approve both the policies for the courts, to be posted to the Commission website, as well as the design of the sign, to be installed at the parks. Commissioner Ellsworth: would like two signs at Upper Atkinson, one for each entrance to the tennis courts. **Motion by Commissioner Swindlehurst to approve the policies and signage as presented. Amend and second by Commissioner Ellsworth to include two signs at Upper Atkinson. So voted on a unanimous voice vote.**

Cashman Park Multi-sport resurfacing donation—(Kim Turner)

MSP Turner presented the agenda item. The Commission has been discussing this \$15K private donation for some time as it deliberated about CPC requests and Parks Master Plan priorities, however, the Commission never formally accepted the gift. The Budget and Finance Committee met last week and is asking for minutes that show the Commission's formal acceptance, and so this item is a bit of housekeeping for the Commission. Commissioner Swindlehurst: does the Mayor issue a thank you to the donor? Answer: yes. Ben Iacono: Does the City need to approve the project? Answer: yes, if the

CPC approves the funding, the City Council will also need to approve it. **Motion by Commissioner Ellsworth to accept the \$15K donation for Cashman multi-sport court with gratitude, seconded by Commissioner Whelan. So voted on a unanimous voice vote.**

Motion to adjourn by Commissioner Ellsworth, seconded by Commissioner Whelan. So voted on a unanimous voice vote.

Adjourned 7:47 p.m.