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**Minutes of the Newburyport Parks Commission
Special Meeting regarding Strategic Visioning: Session 1
November 1, 2022**

Mayor's Conference Room, City Hall

Call to order: 6:00 p.m.

A quorum was present

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

Also in attendance: Parks Manager Mike Hennessey, Manager of Special Projects Kim Turner, Chief of Staff Andrew Levine, Ben Iacono, Andrea Eigerman, Andrew Simpson, Christina Bellinger, Leslie Eckholdt, Judy Mouradian, Bob Watts

NEW BUSINESS

Strategic Visioning Session—(Full Parks Commission & Kim Turner)

Ted Boretti introduced the Visioning Session. Asked three questions:

1. Why did you join the Parks Commission?
2. What kind of contribution did you hope to make to Newburyport Parks?
3. In what ways is the job different from what you imagined?

Commissioner Swindlehurst: Can we do a survey and/or focus groups?

Commissioner Griffin: Joined in order to help push the effort to restore the Bartlet Mall. Wanted to get real money into the mall and into parks, as he thought they were underfunded. Learned more about other parks and impressed by what the Mayor has done and is doing to get funding. Wishes there were more time to talk about big issues.

Commissioner Ellsworth: Joined in order to better Atkinson Common, wanted to impact that park and loves watching it improve, thinks it has come a long way. Wants to improve and preserve what we have. Was surprised by how slowly things move.

Commissioner Whelan: Newburyport is a privileged place to live. Interested in preserving and growing Newburyport for its beauty. Has a multi-generational perspective and wants to find ways to connect older and younger generations together in our parks as a place for community. Brings a female perspective, believes there is a need for balance and civic involvement.

Commissioner Swindlehurst: Joined because he was asked. Has worked for and with non-profits and the best ones have long-range vision. Wants to do that here. Parks in Newburyport is a complex ecosystem that deserves having people lean in. Wishes there were time for more big-picture conversations, this experience has been much more transactional.

Parks Manager Hennessey: Took the job because has a love for Atkinson Common and likes a challenge. Wants to bring excellence in landscape service. Believes there is a lack of funding.

Chair Boretti: Joined because was asked. Believes in nature and open space for recreation and mental health. Wants to do more high-level fundamental stuff, this has been more of a public relations job.

Bob Watts: History is important.

What is the purpose of our parks? Can we identify 5-6 core functions/roles of our parks?

Who uses our parks? Gardeners, dog walkers, runners, athletes, walkers, pickleball players, people seeking exercise, kids, photographers, weddings, birders, history enthusiasts, artists, people of all abilities, homeless, bikers, car parkers, tourists, residents, musicians

How do they use our parks? Exercise, special events, exercise classes, picnics, to take photos, performances, visit historic landmarks, public art, memorials, socialization, chess, to enjoy the outdoors, fundraisers, road races, traditions, outdoor dining

What do visitors expect when they visit? Cleanliness, green, clean and free, enjoyment, relief, restorative, restrooms, universal accessibility, every park is unique, map, monument/tribute

What kinds of parks does Newburyport offer? All parks are unique, playgrounds, courts, fields, vistas, forests, passive and active spaces, historic, formal and informal spaces, wild areas, bike paths

Bob Watts: there is a lack of maps/lists, suggests a 'know your parks' initiative

5-6 core functions or roles of parks: use the way they want, get people into parks to do what they want to do, everything for everyone, perform function, athletics, passive/escape, historic

Mission statement: 15 words? Preserve, enhance, athletics, passive, community

5-6 focus areas/goals/themes:

1. Historic assets
2. Environmental management
3. Adult programming
4. Children's programming
5. Recreation
6. Access (places to sit, park, usability)
7. Sustainability
8. Maintenance
9. Public expectations
10. Education
11. Community
12. Funding

What do I think works well? Views/vistas, Atkinson improvements, Bartlet improvements, community pitches in, rail trail, incredible real estate, kids play at Cushing Park, variety of uses/types, Mike Hennessey

What do I think does not work well? Cushing park is a big tar pit, funding, need a map/communications and education, advocacy, sculptures need attributes.

No action was taken.

Adjourned 6:56 p.m.