



Newburyport City Hall 60 Pleasant Street, PO Box 550

Newburyport, MA 01950

978.465.4462

FAX 978.465.4452

[parks@cityofnewburyport.com](mailto:parks@cityofnewburyport.com)

## **Minutes of the Newburyport Parks Commission**

**January 23, 2023**

*Senior Community Center First Floor Room A & Zoom (Hybrid meeting)*

Call to order: 6:00 p.m.

A quorum was present

In attendance: Chair Ted Boretti, Charles Griffin, Nicole Whelan

Also in attendance: Mayor Sean Reardon, Chief of Staff Andrew Levine, Manager of Special Projects Kim Turner, Council President Heather Shand, Councillor McCauley, Councillor Wright, IT Director James Pope, Ben Iacono, Sheila Taintor, Rick Taintor, Joe Teixeira, Stacey MacMillan, Andrew Simpson, Leslie Eckholdt, Jean Costello, unspecified caller at (508) 878-7854

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### *Strategic Visioning Session 4—(Parks Commission)*

Chair Boretti opened the discussion by stating this was the 4<sup>th</sup> of a series of special meetings around the Parks Commission's long-term vision for parks. He stated that he had sent around a draft of the document. Asked if the Commission agreed to the organization of the document. Answer: yes. Asked if the Commission agreed to the vision statement as written. Answer: yes. Asked if the Commission agreed with the list and definition of the core values. Answer: yes. Chair Boretti stated that the 10-year vision does not have years assigned to each action item, but there are priorities listed under each action item. Others indicated their agreement with this format. Chair Boretti asked if the Commission agrees to the action steps. Answer: yes. Asked if the Commission believes this document fulfills the responsibility of the Commission for this exercise. Commissioner Whelan: believes the Commission has done the best they can. Commissioner Griffin: yes. Chair Boretti asked if the Commission thought anything was missing. Answer: no. Chair Boretti asked if the Commission felt future Commissions would find the document helpful. Answer: yes. Ben Iacono: excellent job, what is the role and responsibility of the commission on this? Commissioner Griffin: the Commission stays as it is, and any items that come before the Commission will be viewed through the lens of this document. Leslie Eckholt: under 'Community Engagement', add a goal of active summer programs. Ben Iacono: wants to know that the priorities from this document get communicated to other departments. MSP Turner: Administration intends to incorporate critical items from this document into the Reorganization Plan. **Motion to accept the 10-year Strategic Vision document with the addition of 'summer programs' to the Community Engagement section by Commissioner Griffin. Second by Commissioner Whelan. So voted on a unanimous voice vote.**

#### *Review of Mayor's revised Parks Reorganization Plan—(Kim Turner)*

Manager of Special Projects Turner presented the revised Reorganization Plan. It has been five months since the Mayor withdrew the plan. Held focused vision sessions with the Commission and the public

which has reshaped the plan. New non-profit Port Parks Alliance has emerged. Many departments involved in shaping the plan. Overall goal to strengthen Newburyport's Parks, improve efficiencies, and eliminate redundancies by better aligning the skill sets that currently exist within the City in order to support the needs of our parks, in a way that will continue to make our parks better. Reviewed the changes: operations under DPS, remove Director position, maintain all other people and positions as a fully intact division under DPS. Utilize Business Manager, expert in procurement, budget, contract management. DPS Admin will execute work orders, write agendas and minutes for the Commission, manage pro forma permits and reservations. Adult recreation brought under NYS, which has capacity and platforms to support. Advocacy, fundraising and volunteerism will be spearheaded by Port Parks Alliance. Planning Office's Planner will assist commission with coordinating City's Master Plan, Open Space and Recreation Plan and advancing Strategic Plan. Mayor's Office will assist Commission in setting and adopting policies that reduce time reviewing issues and permits ad hoc. Mayor's Office will also help Commission develop and execute annual reviews of priorities, grant opportunities, policies, orphaned properties, etc. Ben Iacono: who is the planner? Andrew Levine: Katelyn Sullivan, who already supports HC, CPC, ZBA and is well-versed in the planning documents mentioned. Administration is also looking into adding capacity in the Planning Office for another role to support this and other planning, arts & culture, and economic development initiatives for the city. Rick Taintor: is there enough slack in that position to take on this work? Andrew Levine: the Director indicated yes, and that this position is well-aligned to take on this responsibility because of her experience manning other boards such as HC, CPC, ZBA. Ben Iacono: does NYS have capacity? Andrew Levine: Yes, Associate Director of Recreation would take on this role and has capacity. Rick Taintor: What is the difference between the Park's Master Plan and the 10-year Strategic Plan? Kim Turner: Strategic Plan identifies broad goals of the Commission, mission statement, core values, etc. The Parks Master Plan is a list detailed needs and projects. Prioritization of the list can be accomplished through lens of the Strategic Plan. Chair Boretti: Who will put together the agenda and packet for the Commission? Kim Turner: DPS Admin will compile the packet based on requests received during the month, and input from Parks Manager, Chair, Project Manager(s) as required. The agenda will also include the scheduled annual reviews. Commissioner Griffin: This will help the Commission raise the bar to something more interesting, not just permits, but larger vision items. Andy Simpson: likes the strategic plan, will keep an open mind on the reorganization plan. What did you mean by 'broad authority' in the Code? Kim Turner: the City Ordinance gives broad authority to the Parks Commission to oversee the use and improvement of the City parks, per chapter 11, section 11-5 of the Code of Ordinances. Leslie Eckholt: this is a weak management system, no central leadership, a octopus without a head, fundraising group is all volunteers, which is weak. Chair Boretti: understands concern, but PPA is modeled upon NEF, utmost confidence in this group. If last 6 months are any indication, things are going just fine. Ben Iacono: going to be a learning curve for public to know who to go to. Commissioner Griffin: most of our money is coming from CPC and Morrill Foundation. PPA is strong, has long-running experience volunteering for parks. Leslie Eckholt: last 6 months is not a good example. What will happen in several years? Commissioner Griffin: we can change it if it doesn't work. Rick Taintor: a better way to communicate this plan is to list each position and show what they are responsible for. Include the percentage of time that they will do each task. Use a flow chart to communicate who to go to. Chair Boretti: Also, how do they communicate with each other? Ben Iacono: educate the public on who to go to. Commissioner Whelan: appreciates the feedback, puts a lot of credit and appreciation on what Kim has done over the years and what she is trying to do here. Supports the plan. Commissioner Griffin: wants to see this reorganization plan move forward. No good reason not to approve it as drafted. Are we concerned about voting with two members missing? Chair Boretti: Commission has had enough time to provide comments and has not. **Motion to accept the Parks Reorganizational Plan of January 24, 2023 with approval from the Parks Commission. Second by Commissioner Whelan. So voted on a roll call vote, 3 yes.**

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

*Adjourned 7:28 p.m.*