

BELCHERTOWN PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

March 9, 2016

Present: Chris Daley, Nancy Kwiatkowski, Wilbur Quirk, Bill Vosburgh, Tilo Schiffer,
Rob Opalenik, and Linda Racicot
Absent: Nick O'Connor,

Meeting was called to order by Bill at 6:17 p.m.

REVIEW MINUTES

Minutes from January 13 meeting were reviewed. An amendment was made to add Chris Daley as present. Tilo made a motion to accept the minutes from the January meeting, *Wilbur seconded, and motion passed 4-0-0.*

Minutes from February 17 meeting were reviewed. Nancy made a motion to accept the minutes from the January meeting, *Wilbur seconded, and motion passed 4-0-0.*

GUEST: Donna Spraggon

OLD BUSINESS

- >Everyone conveyed a thank you to Donna for all the time she put into the results of the survey.
- >Donna asked if she could place a thank you in the Sentinel to everyone who participated.
- >Everyone said yes
- >Wilbur said he focused on certain aspects of the results and wanted to share his opinion. He said the results showed good and what needs improvement. He understands how hard it is to be everything for everyone He felt over all the responses to Rec programs was great. He said he thought after reviewing the results; it would be worth looking into on-line registration.
- >Rob said as he stated at the last meeting John has been following up on that. Lisa Banner is helping to gathering information from the town depts.
- >Nancy asked what town dept. use on line banking.
- >Rob said the town now offers the option of payment on line for dog licenses and tax payments however each department is set up with a different system and he believes two separate banks. He said John is also looking into what other town Rec Departments are offering.
- >Tilo said there is a fee if you pay for property tax on line with a credit card.
- >Chris said he didn't believe there was a fee when paying with a debit card.
- >Rob stated taxes are deposited into one account, dog licenses are deposited into one account however the Rec Dept. has a separate acct. for each program and that is a challenge John is also working on.
- >Wilbur addressed Donna and asked what she thought about the results.
- >Donna stated there were results that surprised her and results that she expected. She said she thought an improvement to Foley field would be higher but it was obvious people are just looking for bathroom facilities. She expressed looking into bathrooms that don't require electricity. She was not surprised in the split regarding the tennis courts. She explained if the survey was taken in the summer, the splash park would have had higher results and with the survey being taken in the winter, the ice skating rink results were high. She reminded the committee that the survey only offer one choice.
- >Rob asked why wasn't there two choices offered.
- >Donna stated that it was not logical. She continued that she felt one option was a multi-purpose field and she felt that the community may not realize exactly what that is. She stated that there was no interest in basketball.
- >Bill asked if a rink could be placed on top of a splash park.
- >Rob said no.
- >Wilbur stated a splash park could be expensive.
- >Rob said it would require fundraising.
- >Nancy asked Donna what else was flagged.

- >Donna stated that the comments showed consistent responses. She felt the community responses were well thought out.
- >Nancy suggested looking into when adult programs were offered. She asked if programs could be run during the day.
- >Rob stated it's hard to get instructors during the day.
- >Linda added that questions are posted on the Rec web-site asking what would be the most convenient days and times to run adult programming.
- >Chris asked if we currently send texts to the community.
- >Linda responded that the Rec dept. does not have text set up. For the past year, we have a weekly newsletter sent by email to anyone who is interested. Unfortunately, there are many customers who come to the office and do not want to sign up to receive emails. We currently have approximately 450 families receiving the newsletter.
- >Donna suggested that the Rec Dept. web-site consider a domain name, for example belchertownrecreation.org or something similar, then you can link your current web address to the domain name.
- >Linda replied goggling Belchertown Recreation Dept. or going to the Town web-site will bring you to the Recreation web site.
- >Donna explained unfortunately people are often unwilling to take the solution that has several steps.
- >Chris said looking over the results; he felt the Rec Dept. offered a lot to the community.
- >Rob asked everyone to refer to the list of other organizations/area used in the last 12 months (page 17 in the survey results). He said he liked the amount of activities offered.
- >Wilbur stated he was also impressed with the number of activities offered in this area.
- >Rob said there are many activities offered that the Rec Dept. has offered in the past and was not successful. Example: Mom and baby pool time.
- >Nancy said it's reasonable that the success of a program is the day and time the instructor offers it.
- >Linda commented that is certainly the case with volleyball clinics.
- >Wilbur stated that the survey did not have a lot of comments regarding cost.
- >Nancy said there were comments regarding access to sign up. She asked if the Rec Dept. should consider changing the office hours.
- >Rob said he would consider that.
- >Tilo suggested Tuesday and Thursday evenings.
- >Rob had said years ago Thursday evenings the office was open until 9:00 p.m., with no traffic flow it was moved to 6:30 p.m. and found there was no reason to keep the office open after 6:00 p.m. The office hours were changed to 6:00 p.m. about three years ago.
- >Nancy asked to consider keeping the office open later again and see what happens.
- >Wilbur said he was surprised that 73% of the people filling out the survey were female.
- >Rob agreed.
- >Donna commented that that number didn't surprise her. It is common that more women fill out surveys.
- >Chris said he saw the comment regarding bringing back the Teen Center.
- >Rob said it's not possible, the town took that money and allocated it to someone else. Rob said he was initially looking for input at Foley field and the tennis courts however the results gave him so much more information.
- >Nancy said as we've discussed previously, her suggestion would be to form a sub committee to review the survey results.
- >Bill asked how many people should be formed for a sub committee.
- >Rob said no more than three committee members can be on the sub committee.
- >Tilo asked what the sub committee's goal is.
- >Rob said using the survey; determine what the community's needs and improvements are along with suggestions for a five year plan for the Rec. Dept. He suggests five people. He asked that Linda be placed on the sub committee As the Rec program coordinator; he felt she could be of assistance.
- >Donna expressed she would like to be considered for the sub committee as a private citizen.

- >Nancy and Tilo offered to co-chair the sub committee.
- >Bill suggested the sub committee schedule a meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

- >Rob stated as previously discussed Selectmen Nick O'Connor put in a warrant for the town meeting, article 15, to see if the Town will vote to appropriate from free cash in the treasury a sum of money to be used toward the design and construction of soccer fields and/or hiking trails at Foley Field and all costs incidental and related thereto. At the meeting a women from CPC stood up and expressed that this is ridiculous, there is no design and no plan and was against approving this. Rob expressed his disappointment in the manor of which this happened. Nick did not consult the Recreation Committee or the Recreation Dept. before submitting this warrant. Nick spoke with someone from the DPW Dept. regarding Foley field and then asked for \$30K. The amount was reduced to \$10K. Rob said he did not want to interject at the town meeting and express his disapproval in the way Nick went about this procedure because he didn't want to jeopardize receiving \$10K. At the town meeting, it was denied verbally and with a re-vote taken by hand count and approved. He does not want this to be a reflection on the Rec Dept. and would like that conveyed to CPC.
- >Nancy stated people are unaware the Rec did not ask for this money.
- >Bill asked Wilbur if he could inform CPC that this money was not requested by the Rec committee
- >Wilbur said he would make CPC aware.
- >Bill asked if the \$10K could be used for the hiking trail.
- >Rob had said to improve on the hiking trail would take a lot more than \$10K. It would also be very complicated and involve conservation. Rob said the funds needs to be spent by June. Nick sent an email that he will be attending the April Rec Committee meeting to discuss the \$10K. Rob's concern is that rumors are already developing. Rob met with Little League who had concerns about there field being taken away to construct more soccer fields at Foley. Rob said Nick is new in his position and didn't go through the proper channels but had the right intentions. Rob said he spoke with DPW and what they are proposing would destroy the fields. Robs opinion is that DPW's intention is to bulldoze and has not taken into consideration drainage problems that will occur. Rob said DPW also did not consider that the fields need irrigation after seeding.
- >Nancy asked if siphoning from the lake is a possibility.
- >Rob stated no, conservation would not allow that.
- >Rob said he spoke with Steve Williams and he is unaware of anything being done on Foley field.
- >Nancy said we need to get the word out to private organizations that there will be no bulldozing.
- >Tilo said the baseball field can not be moved without a written article.
- >Rob said he spoke with Gary and Ron and suggested the first step should be a design.

>Bill asked for an update on the Patrick Center

- >Chris informed the committee the development could be a sports complex, family center, superintendence office, however tearing it down looks to be the most economical.
- >Rob said a sports complex was suggested but doesn't know if it's indoors or outdoor. Rob feels it would be too costly to develop a sports complex; there are so many trees that would need to be removed and a lot of work to flatten the area.
- >Chris stated HAP wants land. Chris asked if there is a cost to tear down.
- Rob said no, there are several different groups involved but nothing has been decided.

NEW BUSINESS

- >Rob stated BARC had asked for \$125K and received \$90 at the town meeting for a new facility. BARC continues to fundraise and DPW will be constructing the facility.

>Rob stated Belchertown Beyond Community Meeting was held Feb. 22. Approximately 85 people attended. Rob stated he feel 85 was a very low attendance number considering the size of the project and the effect it will have on Belchertown. Rob said several things were brought up. They may consider putting the sidewalk on the outside of the bridge because the bridge is actually owned by the state. Rob added a group was paid to do a study which was provided with a grant and Steve Williams is working with Mass. Robs stated in his opinion, there is a lot going on with no money to do it.

>Nancy asked Wilbur what groups received CPC money

>Wilbur said the Rec did get a CPC grant for reconditioning the basketball court. Out of the \$175K available for projects, some had to go for bonding and bills. All the historical windows are almost complete. The Grantham group received money and the cemetery received money. DPW submitted a project to fix the wall at Parson Field, which is falling apart. It was built in 1939. CPC wants to put in handicap parking and wants to keep the wall historical.

>Rob said he looked at a few design proposals from Steve Williams. Driving into the field off of Johnson St., following the wall they would create 4 spaces beyond the center outfield. A walkway will follow the stone wall leading to the bathroom facilities.

Rob stated there are two Selectmen positions that are up for re-election.

DIRECTORS REPORT

>Linda stated Belchertown sponsored a very successful 3/4 grade jamboree. The 5-8 grades have begun play-offs. Registrations are now available for Stingrays, baseball, softball, swim clinic and soccer.

>Tilo said he believes Cold Spring Soccer cut some players.

>Rob stated Little League's numbers are down this year. He added, the Town Beach will be opening June 25. He informed the committee an ad was placed in the Sentinel for a swim coach, the current coach, Nick, has accepted another position.

Next meeting is Wednesday, April 6, 2016 at 6:15 p.m. in the Recreation Conference Room.
Nancy made a motion to adjourn. *Wilbur seconded, motion passed 4-0-0.*

Meeting was adjourned at 7:47 p.m.