**Town of Westborough Recreation Department**

**Recreation Commission**

**Meeting Minutes – August 11, 2020**

Members Present: Recreation Director Jenn Kirkland, Recreation Commission Chair Earl Storey, Beth Travis, Bill Clausen, Brian Kane, Colleen Dowd

The Recreation Commission Meeting opened with Recreation Director Jenn Kirkland reading the Governor Baker statement suspending certain provisions of the open meeting law.

**Discussion/Vote on Community Preservation Act Exploratory Committee Member**

Somebody from the Commission is needed to join the committee. Both Earl Storey and Beth Travis have served on the committee in the past, and do not want to be members again. Earl and Beth served a long time ago and do not remember the exact details from their time, but it’s a part of the town’s strategic plan. Colleen Dowd expressed that she is tentatively interested, but would like more information. Earl motioned to vote Colleen as a liaison to the Community Preservation Committee, Beth seconded it. The vote passed unanimously.

**Summer Update**

The Recreation Department was able to run a number of programs successfully with COVID-19 compliance including Archery, Outdoor Adventure, Outdoor Basketball, Golf at both Juniper Hill and Westborough Golf Course, Best soccer, Nature Discovery, and different craft programs. Creativity and the creativity of vendors have been key, and there haven’t been any issues or complaints to this point in the summer. Over the course of all of the programs, there have been 600+ registrations.

Colleen Dowd also noted the positive use at Recreation facilities such as the new pickleball courts, the tennis courts, and playgrounds across town. Jenn noted that the beach hasn’t been an issue with the closure, and the trash problem that was initially present subsided. There are signs noting that the beach is closed. Bacteria testing has been done, and there have been a couple of incidents of high tests that have subsided with the next test. Colleen noted that other towns have had this problem, and that it could be an issue with the rain. The Conservation Commission has been put in charge of the watershed study. The algae program has also begun, however there are no restrictions around water use with this program. Bill raised the question about the new development possibly contributing to issues, however Earl Storey noted that all of their runoff would be captured via retention basins. There are more expensive options available to deal with the algae on a long-term basis, but the price is currently prohibitive.

It was also noted that the work at the pickleball courts is now complete. Community member Nelson Ball donated the funds for converting the tennis courts to pickleball courts. There is a plan to name the courts after him and have a small ribbon cutting ceremony to honor his contribution.

**Program Update/Discussion on ideas for potential programs – Fall and beyond**

There is a plan to continue rolling forward with outdoor programs for the Fall. The department is not planning on using the schools for programs. Best soccer and basketball clinics are currently planned, with more vendor programs currently in the works. Rec Basketball was briefly discussed, with questions about its viability, possible lack of gym space in the schools, and additional costs in the form of custodial fees.

There was a brainstorming session about possible new program ideas, as people are looking for things to bring kids together, even if there is a physical distance of 6 feet between them. Ice fishing and curling were mentioned, however it was noted that there hasn’t been enough ice to run these sorts of things for the past few years. An outdoor skating rink was also mentioned, but Jenn noted the impact of the lack of true summer programming on the department’s funds. Things like speed skating and cross country skiing at the golf course. The delay in school opening also provides the opportunity to provide an additional week of programming.

A new program trying to connect kids with one another is currently in the works. There are privacy and bullying concerns in terms of protecting kids before it is implemented however.

**Fields Fees. Discussion/vote on reducing field fees for summer users**

Due to the shortening of the season the fields were available for use, Jenn recommended a reduction of the fields fees in order to account for this. Earl made a motion to vote for the reduction, and the vote was passed unanimously.

**Golf Course Update**

There is an ongoing process of hiring a new golf course manager for the course in Westborough. There is a lot of review of responsibilities the current manager Jack has, as well as input from the Golf Commission. The new manager will be under the “Recreation Portfolio”, and report to Jenn.

**Next Meeting; Staffing study discussion**

As a result of the Town’s staffing study, there will be some departmental changes made. These will be discussed at a future meeting.

The commission meeting was adjourned.