



Walpole Recreation Committee
Meeting Held on Wednesday, November 8th, 2023
Blackburn Hall - 6:00 p.m.

Recreation Committee Present

Regular Members

Present

- Joe Grant, *Chair*
- Rich McCarthy, *Vice-Chair*
- Michael McGrath
- Doug Shea

Not Present

Jeff Hutnick

Associate Members

Present

- Josh Walther
- Brad Hickey

Not Present

Bobby Boyda

Staff Present

- Brendan Croak, *Recreation Director*
- Lauren Antonetti, *Assistant Recreation Director*

Call to Order

- Chair Grant called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

New Business

Minutes

- On a motion made by Vice-Chair McCarthy, seconded by Mr. Shea, the Committee voted 2-0-2 to approve the September 20th, 2023 meeting minutes.

Director's Report

FY25 Budget

Director Croak provided the Committee with a brief overview of the Recreation Department's 2025 budget submission. Some noted requests were an increase in temporary part-time payroll to support lifeguard wages, an increase in electricity due to the new heating and cooling system at Blackburn Hall.

Fall Programming

The second session of fall programming concludes on December 17th. Director Croak has reported a relatively successful enrollment for the fall season, although departmental revenue is slightly lower than at this time last year. Notably, the department experienced a highly successful finish to the summer, contributing significantly to revenue. Director Croak speculates that a greater number of individuals enrolled in fall programs towards the end of the summer season rather than consistently throughout the fall. Overall, year-to-date, the department has seen a positive trend in revenue, currently standing approximately \$10,000 higher compared to 2022.

Winter Programming

Winter programming registration begins at 10 am on November 21st, and the programs kick off on December 18th. At this time, registration opens for our Saturday Basketball program, a significant contributor to our winter revenue. Additionally, Director Croak stated that the department is introducing several new programs this winter, including Kickboxing, Boxing, Card Trading, and Hair Braiding with Flair Hair Salon, among others.

Falloween / Halloween on Main

The recent Falloween/Halloween on Main event, a departure from the traditional Jarvis Harvest/Fall Fest, successfully combined with the Halloween parade, attracted 2000-2500 attendees. Weather played a crucial role in creating a pleasant atmosphere with various activities. Despite wanting to assess success independent of weather, Director Croak feels as though the overall outcome of the event was positive. This event is slated to become an annual tradition, with plans for the Department to enhance it each year. Next year's celebration, coinciding with the Town's 300th Anniversary, is expected to be larger, though budget constraints may pose challenges in subsequent years. This year's event received positive feedback, showcasing a well-coordinated staff and an enjoyable atmosphere, setting a positive tone for future events.

Miscellaneous

Director Croak mentioned that Studio East is set to be auctioned off on December 19th. The Department ceased using the facility around March, knowing that the town intended to surplus it. Approval from Town Meeting was obtained to proceed with the auctioning off of the building. All remaining items from the building were relocated back to Blackburn Hall.

The cornhole boards and concrete games mentioned at September's meeting were installed right before the Falloween event. Four cornhole boards and two picnic tables with chess board tops have been placed outside the parking lot and at the common, respectively. Further downtown improvements are under consideration following a grant secured by the Economic Development Office, with plans for two additional wheelchair-accessible picnic tables.

Old Business

Update - Athletic Fields

Chair Grant shared public comments, expressing appreciation for the S.M. Lorusso & Sons Athletic Field Complex, while noting past parking issues during specific events. He observed instances of parking along Route 1A, highlighting safety concerns related to people getting in and out of their cars and limited visibility for those pulling out onto the road. He further clarified that his concern was not specific to any particular group, but a challenge for large events, in general. Chair Grant suggested potentially presenting the matter to the Selectmen and mentioned discussions with Director Croak about short-term solutions, such as converting an oval area into additional parking.

Director Croak mentioned having conversations with Town Administration and expressing the need for action due to ongoing parking concerns. Director Croak identified the bus turnaround as a potential area for a solution, proposing to cut out the bus turnaround area. He further suggested periodically painting lines on the gravel as a short-term measure to alleviate the problem. After a more formal discussion was had with the Town Engineer and the Public Works Department, an email was sent to pertinent department heads, outlining the proposed solution. DPW Director Rick Mattson responded positively, stating that he saw no reason why the plan couldn't be implemented as it did not serve a stormwater management purpose on that side. Director Croak hopes that discussions will continue to further explore potential solutions prior to the start of the spring season.

Further talks centered around athletic field lights, focusing on a long-term projection for upgrading and replacing lights at different athletic fields in the town. Director Croak engaged in discussions with Musco Lighting to assess the costs and obtain an estimate for the replacement or upgrade of lights across various athletic fields. Recognizing the potential high expenses associated with athletic field lights, this exploration was solely aimed at gaining a preliminary understanding of the costs involved.

The fall field permits are concluding at the end of the month, with winter requests from club teams continuing, weather permitting, through March. The fields will have a break until April. Spring Field Permit Applications will be accepted starting in January. This provides some breathing room for field-related matters in the coming months.

Update - 300th Anniversary Committee

Assistant Director Antonetti and Director Croak are scheduled to meet with members of the 300th Anniversary Committee and members of Town Administration to discuss the logistics of the laser show scheduled for next month on December 16th. The event is set to take place on Stone Field and is coordinated by the 300th Anniversary Committee. In essence, the laser show is a night event that projects across Stone Field, lasting approximately 15 to 25 minutes per show. It features a holiday and 300th Anniversary-themed laser show for the town. The laser show itself will offer simple amenities like hot chocolate, but no elaborate additions such as food trucks are planned. The committee is set to convene for their monthly meeting next Tuesday. The 300th Anniversary website is now live, featuring a calendar of planned events and some other links. While currently basic, the website is expected to expand as more details emerge. Additionally, the apparel shop is operational on the website, as well.

Adjournment

- On a motion made by Vice-Chair McCarthy, seconded by Mr. McGrath, the Committee voted 4-0-0 to adjourn at 7:10 p.m.