

Recreation Committee
February 23, 2021
4:00PM, Virtual Meeting

Members in Attendance: Erin Carson (EC), Cindy Forgit (CF), Jeff Shapiro (JS), Annie Roscioli (AR) MaryLou Volpe (MV) and Kadion Phillips (KP) joined at 4:25 PM

Members Absent:

Others in Attendance: Robyn Chrabascz Facilities Coordinator, Alex McConnon BOS Administrative Assistant

OPENING OF MEETING: Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting law, G.L. c. 30A Section 18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Sturbridge Recreation Committee will be conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. Specific information and the general guidelines for remote participation can be found on the Town's website at <https://www.sturbridge.gov/town-administrator/pages/how-access-virtual-meeting>. For this meeting, members of the public who wish to listen and or watch the meeting either online via the Town's on demand video broadcast, on cable television on channel 191, or dial into the meeting at 774-304-1455, enter 1428# for the meeting number and 12345 for the access code. (This phone number is only active for the public during public meetings). No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings in real time, via technological means. In the event that we are unable to do so, despite best efforts, we will post of the Town's website an audio or video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of the proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting.

The meeting was opened at 4:02 PM.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

11-24-20, EC made a motion to approve the November meeting minutes, seconded by KP. Vote 4-0.

12-15-20, KP made a motion to approve the December meeting minutes, seconded by JS. Vote 3-0.

NEW BUSINESS

- 1. 60 Cedar Street Discussions.** AR provided the Committee with an overview of the current field project, as the design of the a new multipurpose soccer field is almost complete. The multipurpose artificial turf field is 200 x 320 and includes 52 parking spaces. The site plan includes the addition of sidewalks, cross walks, and pathways. As previously discussed, due to State requirements, ADA updates must be completed at the time of construction. This field plan also includes ADA compliant poured flooring for the playground and updated fencing. Recreation and Facilities had preliminary discussions with Conservation and Planning. There are several issues that make it challenging to execute this project as stand-alone, site plan being one of them and accessibility the other. Based on those discussions and the need to show full intent of the Cedar Rec Area to Site Plan Review, a quote was obtained from McClure to complete a full site plan of 60 Cedar St. This quote was approximately \$17,250. AR shared that after meeting with the Town Administrator to discuss the 60 Cedar St project, a recommendation was given to consider the capital planning of both sites, 60 and 70 Cedar St, and the future of Recreation. AR continued to review Recreation Committee's 2019 request for proposal of services on both 60 and 70 Cedar St, listing multipurpose fields, parking, dog park, Rec building, and outdoor fitness area. At that time, the Senior Center Study Committee also wanted to view 70 Cedar St. Recreation separated 60 Cedar St to begin working on fields plans while we waited for information on 70 Cedar St. The Senior Center Study is now complete and does show 70 Cedar St as a viable building location. AR made a recommendation to the Recreation Committee to complete a master site plan for both 60 and 70 Cedar St, for long term capital planning. Staff estimates a Master Recreation Plan (60 and 70 Cedar St) to be approximately \$75,000.00. This figure does include the \$17,250 needed to complete 60 Cedar St. We are able to utilize the Site Survey completed by the Senior Center Study. AR stated that given the complications of Covid, this might be the timing to complete the master site plan without intentionally delaying our field project. AR stated that while the Committee still needs to determine the best location for the Sturbridge Dog Park, the field decisions can be narrowed down to three options; Move forward to Town Meeting with existing field plans (million dollar project), Complete Site Plan for 60 Cedar St (approx. \$17k), or Complete Master Site Plan for 60 and 70 Cedar St (approx. \$75k).

EC expressed concern of losing progress on 60 Cedar St, and the effort and money that would go into 70 Cedar St while the Senior Center may still be potentially viewing this location. JS asked for clarification on the funding process for these projects. AR explained the process to obtain funding, including debt exclusion and CPC overview, by vote at the Town Meetings. EC stated that it may not be the most fiscally responsible to bring a project of this size to the Town during the pandemic, CF also expressed concern on poor timing for a large scale project. R. Chrabaszcz stated that an additional advantage to delaying the funding or implementation of the field project would also be to allow the Town to peruse Grants. By having a completed design, we are considered shovel ready, meaning we are ready to apply for State grants. R. Chrabaszcz also shared that the most important take away from the Senior Center Study, was it proved that 70 Cedar St is a viable building lot, which we have very few of amongst our open space and conservation properties. EC emphasized the need to keep 60 Cedar St as a phased project, as the Committee was directed to do so in 2019 conversations. AR stated that she believes the intent would be to keep phase 1 separate, and any additional information obtained and site planning will help to move phase one forward while potentially developing additional plans. R. Chrabaszcz clarified that after taking a year hiatus to develop master site plans and seek grant funding, when ready to move forward with phase one plans for funding, the Committee would at that time also have concept renderings developed by an engineer. These renderings would show the full intent of both sites beyond Phase 1, and the ability to show the long-term plan in a pretty visual for the public. EC stated that she is open to this proposal after hearing R. Chrabaszcz's clarification, CF agreed.

- 2. Dog Park Discussions.** AR stated that a goal of the meeting is to identify Recreation Committee's ideal placement of a Sturbridge Dog Park. The Committee has previously been sent information to review on staff research of Town owned property and current recommendations on top locations. At this time, both 70 Cedar St and 3 New Boston Road Extension (Town Barn) are great prospects. AR continued on to review the pros and cons of both proposed locations.

a. Town Barn:

- i. Pros: Location appears feasible, can host larger than Gardner Dog Park, 245' x 315', or 78,000 sq. feet. The Town Barn could potentially hold up to 160,000 sq. feet. Ample room for design, parking, potential to add agility or a third enclosed area. We have extensive information on this location from prior field project. Not a residential location, central, great access. Can utilize ledge area, create a flat social area but also develop the dog park with the natural landscape. Town Property in Recreation control. Knowledge of Natural Heritage boundaries.
- ii. Cons: Natural Heritage is involved in this location and may require buffer from their protected zone. NH approved prior ball fields.

b. 70 Cedar St:

- i. Pros: Build into our existing recreation area, enhancement for all. Central location, assist with pedestrian traffic on local streets.
- ii. Cons: The Senior Center Study does show that this is a viable building location. This is the only possible location for indoor Recreation Amenities, in regards to long term or capital planning.

MV asked if AR has heard back from the Board of Health on rules or regulations on the dog park in regards to contagious diseases, AR has not heard back at this time. MV asked for a clarification on how the park will operate. AR explained that rules and regulations would be placed at the entry, with Town Dog Licenses required for entry. MA is a very strict state in regards to dog laws and liability. All dogs in the State of MA are required to be both rabies vaccinated and registered with their Town of residence. AR explained that this is how Dog Parks are able to be open to the public and not Town exclusive. AR explained that dog monitors could look for dog licensing tags if there were any issues or if they were just looking to monitor, but any further issues with animals would result in asking one to leave the park or involvement with the Police Dept if needed. AR stated that public dog parks are placing a lot of trust and responsibility onto the public and users. After speaking with surrounding Towns on their policies, AR does not believe a registration process is needed as we are implementing this by the Town and not a Friends Group, meaning we have direct access to the Town Clerk and Animal Control Officer. AR believes the Town has the resources to place this, and recommends a volunteer group for the dog park, perhaps a sub-committee. These volunteers would be very

helpful to park during peak times. MV asked on the timeline for this process. R. Chrabascz stated she thinks it is reasonable to include the review work needed for Town Barn property with the requested master site plan. Hypothetically, receive funding at Town Meeting this upcoming June, review and have information needed by winter Special Town Meeting. AR asked what the price increase would be to add this work to the master site plan; R. Chrabascz stated her intent would be to keep all the work for the price previously discussed which was up to \$75,000. The Committee provided positive feedback on this. EC stated that would be a great way to show phase 2 and full intent. KP suggested amending the prior motion to put forth a master plan for 60 and 70 Cedar.

EC made a motion to put forth a master plan for 60 and 70 Cedar St, including viewing the Town Barn parcel for a Dog Park, for the next Town Meeting. Seconded by MV. Vote 5-0.

- 3. Spring 2021 Programming overview, cancelations and new programs.** AR reviewed what programs would unfortunately need to be canceled due to COVID; March 9th Annual Ham Toss, April NYC Bus Trip Canceled, Easter Egg Hunt is TBD, April Bonfire with SEC is most likely Canceled. AR was happy to share that Softball and Baseball Registrations now open.

In lieu of program cancelations, Recreation has worked to offer additional social-distancing programming. During February break, the Conservation Dept and Recreation offered *Discover Sturbridge, Hike and Seek*. This was a scavenger hunt event to promote our local trails. An *Outdoor Explorers Checklist* was also provided and was full of unique outdoor activities.

New this year, Staff works to introduce *Free Fun Fridays*. This will be a new event each Friday, various time frames, from Friday April 2 through May 28th. Programs will vary, focused on promoting both Town property and local businesses or organizations. AR is waiting to confirm dates for the following; Guided Trail Walks with FROST and Trails, Outdoor Fitness Classes with Alice's Dance Studio, Demo Class with MJA Martial Arts, Demo Class Mass Motion Dance (May 28 at 3:00 PM), Community Garden Day with Community Food Collaborative, Trail Walks with Recreation Director and other interested Departments. At this time, we have unfortunately not heard back from the Bird Store on a guided bird watching morning. **MV made a motion to accept the new spring program, Free Fun Fridays. Seconded by JS. Vote 5-0.**

- 4. Concerts on the Common 2021 Series and Summer Programming.** AR reviewed the copy of 2021 Concert Schedule sent to the Committee. The 2021 Season is expected to be Thursdays June 10-August 26th, pending State regulations. **EC made a motion to accept the 2021 schedule as presented, seconded by MV. Vote 5-0.**

Additional Summer Programming, the Young Adults Outdoor Competitive Basketball League will run for its second year, Thursdays June 3-July 15, 4v4 or 6v6 pending registrations. AR extends a big thank you for Drew Darger for volunteering to run this league once again, Drew has declined pay in order to keep the program as low cost as possible. No information on Summer Recreation Program at this time.

- 5. 2021 Recreation Director Goals.** AR asked the Committee to send Goal requests for 2021 work year by the March meeting.
- 6. Merchandise Shack placement at Turners Field for SGSL.** Requested received from Sturbridge Girls Softball League for the placement of a merchandise shack at the Turners Field Softball Field. AR shared that the League is still working on specifics with the High School, who will be building the shed, but expect a similar size of the storage shed in existence there. **KP made a motion to accept the SGSL Merchandise Shack at the Town Barn Field, seconded by MV. Vote 5-0.**
- 7. Surveillance Camera at Recreation Area.** AR requested use of the Revolving Account Funds to place a surveillance camera at Cedar Rec Area (allowable expenditure under property enhancement). Total cost including a contingency and several months of internet payment is \$5,790.00. **MV made a motion to allocate \$6,000.00 to the purchase of surveillance cameras at the Cedar Rec Area, seconded by KP. Vote 5-0.**

OLD BUSINESS

PROPERTY USAGE REQUESTS.

Farmers Market, Sundays on Town Common, 6/6-10/10, requested by Special Events Committee. **MV made a motion to accept the usage request as presented, seconded by JS. Vote 5-0.**

Property Usage Reservations remain closed at this time to all external organizations.

ADJOURNMENT: EC made motion to adjourn meeting at 5:26 PM. Seconded by MV. Vote 5-0.

Tentative Next Meeting: TBD pending 60 Cedar St Discussions

Respectfully submitted,
Annie Roscioli
Recreation Director