

Recreation Commission Regular Meeting
Wednesday, January 6, 2021
DRAFT

- 2 The regular Recreation Commission meeting was held Wednesday, January 6, 2021 via Zoom starting at 5:02 P.M.
- 3 Members present: Lynn Altadonna, Dave Rogers, Adam Rice, Ed Sthal, Ryan Thibault, Art Shinnars, Brett Loomis, Matt Frazee. In audience: Kelli Millick
- 4 **5:02pm called to order. Agenda Approved.**
- 5 **12.2 minutes approved.**
- 6 **Town Plan Review**
- 7 Matt presented the recreation section of the Town Plan and discussed the tasks listed in this section. The focus at tonight's meeting was the Recreation Tasks list in the Town Plan to determine if the items listed were still relevant. Matt added that the Recreation Commission is tasked with creating a 10 year plan for recreation, the Town Plan outlines ongoing goals, and we are reviewing this list to determine what we want to specifically focus on in the next 10 years. First to be discussed was the goal of extending the Recreation Path. Matt explained that this objective has been considered and most extensions have been ruled out for one reason or another. Ed asked if the proposal to extend to Morrisville was irrelevant. Matt said that the short answer was yes, the Lamoille Rail Trail has since taken another direction. Brett recalled that as the town plan was being developed one of the main goals was the Gables underpass and the Recreation Commission was not interested in extending the path to the school. Matt said all extensions have been ruled out and the discussion has since focused on creating bike friendly roads instead. Dave commented if the Recreation Commission was concerned about attainable, less expensive goals they should shift their focus. For example, instead of replacing facilities, maybe they consider upgrading and renovating existing structures. Lynn agreed.
- 8 Next on the list in the Town Plan is to explore options for improving existing athletic fields and creation of future additional fields. Matt explained the history of what the Recreation Commission and the Recreation Department has done to investigate these options, but that process would have to be done through the Mayo Farm easement set to expire in 2028.
- 9 Enhance and expand recreation programs including senior, adult, teen, youth, and preschool centered activities. Priority for these goals is ongoing and the Recreation Commission will focus on programming at a later meeting.
- 10 Matt said the fourth goal; consider further development of the Memorial Park Master Plan has not been discussed during his time at the Recreation Department. Lynn said there was discussion about adding a second access to the Arena in the event of an emergency. With the protections around wetlands this goal does not seem achievable.
- 11 Matt explained that number five; enhance recreational trails on town-owned land. Lynn added Cady Hill as an example of this and offered the focus might be on expanding parking in natural areas.
- 12 For the 8th goal; explore the possibility of building restrooms at Town parks, Matt explained there is significant challenges and restrictions to building infrastructure.
- 13 Matt reviewed the other items listed on the Town Plan. As the Recreation Commission moves forward with the 10 year plan Matt said there are some things on the list that are certainly still relevant and more of a priority than others. He wanted to present this list so the Recreation Commission was aware of it.
- 14 Lynn asked if anyone had recognized a recreation need in town that wasn't addressed that should be

added. Ed agreed with Lynn's earlier statement about creating adequate parking at trailheads and natural areas. Art thinks the priority should be creating a headquarters for the Recreation Department, the facility that the Recreation Department is working out of is dated. Brett and Lynn agreed, Brett mentioned looking at the future of what the Recreation Department looks like in order to understand what that facility would include. Ryan suggested working towards connecting the bike path to other community trails.

15 Matt reminded the Recreation Commission that there will be a time to look at specifics of each goal, tonight the Recreation Commission needs to just agree that this is a need and there will be a more in depth evaluation later. Dave asked if we were looking at this list from a viewpoint of giving a list of similar things that are wants or channel the discussion toward what are the real needs such as a teen/senior center and focus on goals that are doable by budget and those items go to the top of the list instead of expensive, large goals. Brett suggested that looking at the existing list and identify some immediate items that are possible and pick one big ticket item. Lynn agreed with both members.

16 Matt summed up the Recreation Commission's discussions by outlining the goals mentioned. This included replacement of the Gale Recreation Center, goals for the Recreation Path: increasing parking at trailheads, exploring bike friendly roads, connecting local bike trails, tennis court replacement. Matt stated that when looking at the Mayo fields the needs of the fields has changed, the overuse of the fields has leveled out, so we do not have the same level of issues we had at one time. But one issue that we continue to have is drainage since the fields are at water level they remain really wet. Spring sports continue to face a challenge of wet field conditions. Brett asked if the topic of the town acquiring more land for recreation has been approached recently. Matt explained that the process with the easement really determines whether the Town will continue with that arrangement or go in a different direction. Brett expressed concern about setting large goals such as a new recreation center when the land use has presented challenges in accomplishing the goals. Matt explained that for the purpose of tonight we are setting the goals and the how will be discussed in a broader view later. Brett said that maybe one more item is trying to acquire useable land.

17 10 year Recreation Plan Review

18 Matt presented the last 10 year Recreation plan and mentioned that the Selectboard chose not to formally adopt the plan because they felt the scope of the projects suggested were out of the realm of what they felt was attainable. Matt reviewed what was listed and the status of each item listed in the Recreation Plan.

19 Gables Bridge Underpass/Crossing Relocation

20 Lynn presented an email correspondence between Matt, Lynn, and Harry Shepard regarding the relocation/underpass of the path. The Recreation Path crossing at Cape Cod road presents challenges in vehicles and pedestrians knowing who has the right of way. At this point the Recreation Commission has stated that the underpass is the desire and, at the time, the number one priority for recreation going forward. As we've since learned, as Lynn mentioned and according to Harry's email, there are several challenges facing that project including budgetary, land acquisition issues, etc. At this point the Recreation Commission can choose to shift the focus from the underpass to changing the crosswalk location. There would be an additional process to determine viability of a relocation, but the Recreation Commission has an opportunity to weight in on shifting the focus. Lynn suggested making a motion to support the relocation of the crosswalk. Matt mentioned that the underpass could always be revisited in the future. Art asked for clarification on the crossing location, his primary concern is the growing usage of the path crossing the road will always be a problem. Brett added that at the time of the bridge construction, there was not enough bandwidth with the State to add the underpass. Ed mentioned that moving the crosswalk is still going to cause a backup on Mountain Road. Lynn pointed out that there would not be a conflict with Cape Cod road if it were moved. Brett brought up the fact that at the intersection vehicles can anticipate pedestrians and

make sure that's a relatively safe interaction. Art added that at the current crosswalks the intersection vehicles slows or stops on mountain road whereas cars would be moving full speed at the alternative crosswalk location. Lynn said there would need to be a traffic flow observation to determine how many cars turn right out of Cape Cod vs left. Art asked what the cost comparison would be between the underpass and crosswalk relocation. Lynn said the underpass is pegged at \$1 million whereas relocation Harry estimated at \$50-100k. Art asked if this project would be funded by the Town, Lynn said yes. Matt asked if the Recreation Commission would support the concept, there will be another process to gather the numbers. The Recreation Commission isn't committing to anything other than exploring it. Lynn asked if there were any other views or insights if this is an improvement for the Town or not. Ed said he thinks it only solves part of the problem. Art said it's worth exploring but he would push for the underpass for safety reasons. Lynn asked if anyone would make a motion. No one came forward to make a motion. Lynn suggested tabling the idea for the time being and the Recreation Commission members think about it.

6:23 Ed motioned to adjourn meeting. Art second.

Respectfully Submitted

Kelli Millick