

Recreation Commission Regular Meeting
Wednesday, April 7, 2021
DRAFT

- 2 The regular Recreation Commission meeting was held Wednesday, April 7, 2021 via Zoom starting at 5:04 P.M.
- 3 Members present: Lynn Altadonna, Ed Sthal, Ryan Thibault, Art Shinnars, Brett Loomis, Matt Frazee. In audience: Kelli Millick
- 4 **5:04pm called to order. Agenda Approved.**
- 5 **2.3 minutes approved.**
- 6 **David Gale Recreation Center Replacement**
- 7 Lynn stated the meeting by reviewing the Rec Center Project Development document and reminded the Rec Commission that the pace of building replacement can realistically take 4-10 years. Matt clarified that the Purpose & Need step is where the Recreation Commission is currently at in terms of discussion tonight. The first thing it says is “Why should the community replace the Rec Center and what should it accommodate?” Lynn touched on a lot of this in the email he sent, that document is also included in the packet. The second question is “Is it a priority of the Recreation Commission, Town Plan and/or is it required by law?” Those two questions are what we are primarily here to discuss.
- 8 Lynn shared that in thinking about what are the requirements, he sees two distinct levels; 1. only replacing the building as it is and only doing those functions that are in the building and 2. if it was to be replace what should it contain? Lynn asked Matt to talk about the current building and what the requirements would be to replace it as is. Matt said it is a two-part question: Why should it be replaced? It is an aged building; it was not constructed to stand the test of time. There are several things out of date and not necessarily up to code. As far as the building itself, it presents various issues including rodent, wiring and continuous maintenance issues. He states that the Recreation Department has spent at least \$15,000 in the past few years just keeping the place together. But it is a building that has seen better days. In terms of that end of it there is a need and a desire to replace, or update, or improve the structure out of need. The second part to of the question is what should it accommodate? What should it accommodate is a matter of opinion and desire from the Town, community, and Rec Commission. Compared to other communities of similar size there is a broad spectrum out there. There are similar communities in size to Stowe who have office space in the municipal building, and they primarily use schools and outdoor spaces to run programming. There are also communities, like Cambridge for example, that has a couple indoor multipurpose courts, an exercise room, offices, and storage space. There are similar facilities like that throughout the state. As far as what should it accommodate, we certainly need office and storage space at a bare minimum. As a recreation department it really comes down to what the community wants from us. Ed Stahl asked if there were things the Recreation Commission cannot do based on our mission due to this building. Matt responded by saying we are limited to what we have, if we had an indoor basketball court, we could do more programs than we can without one. We are limited but it does not prevent us from being able to fulfill our mission. Ed added that he asked that question as a place to start, if we can identify certain items that the Recreation Department cannot do with the present facility then those are thing, we’d want to accommodate first in a new one.
- 9 Brett Loomis brought up that he sees the immediate need is office space for the Recreation Department

staff. He asked if it would make more sense to address the need for office space first, while congruently work towards a larger rec center. Brett spoke with Harry and Chris with the Public Works Department about the option to rework the Stowe Arena to accommodate office space, there will be some challenges to address, but the bottom line is to address the immediate need of better office space and interfacing with the public. Brett brought up the challenges the tennis court project has faced and feels a new complex would be a large challenge. Brett suggests that with the offices being located at the Arena, the current rec center would be adequate for the summer camp. Lynn asked for Kelli's opinion on office space at the Arena. Kelli said it is certainly an option to look into and it could work.

- 10 Lynn asked Matt if access to the school for summer camp is an ongoing issue or COVID related. Matt said last summer was the most access we have had to the school for our summer camp program. Matt also mentioned that office space at the Arena is a possibility. Matt added that he spoke with Harry Shepard about replacing the current rec center as it stands and renovating around the existing structures with expanded office space offering better flow, better office space and better access. In the perfect world we would have a facility similar to Cambridge with multipurpose courts, office space, and storage space but whether or not that is what the community wants and is willing to pay for is another question. Office space above the Arena is certainly doable. One of the things that would make that possible or feasible is an agreement with the school to provide access to that space for the summer camp 100%. One of the main issues with the school is their maintenance schedule limits our summer camp to 4-6 weeks out of our 10 week program. Brett stated that prior to COVID the Rec Department has not historically used the school for summer camp and clarified that his thought process was that moving the office spaces out of the Rec Center it would create more indoor space for summer use with the addition of outdoor tent areas. Matt said we have always used the school for camp in some capacity, mostly rainy day activities, but there have been years where we had limited access throughout the summer. It is ideal to have access to that space.
- 11 Dave Rogers asked what the capacity of expanding the footprint of the existing building. Matt said that will have to be determined formally with the stormwater treatment act and requirements that have held up the tennis courts. We should have more information in the next year or so. Unofficially it was looked at a number of years ago, and it was determined at that time you could fit a facility up to 5,000 sq. ft., a lot of that capacity would depend on what would happen to the basketball and tennis courts.
- 12 Lynn asked if Matt foresaw a need to have at least one more office, would the department grow within a 5 year plan? Matt said it would be possible, historically we have had three full time employees and summer camp staff in addition to that. At least in the summer months we would need to accommodate office space for four employees. Matt does not anticipate the Recreation Department going back to three full time staff in the near future, but it could be a possibility down the road. Lynn acknowledged that the idea of moving the offices up to the Arena has merit and should continued to be discussed and using the existing Recreation Center for running programs for the time being. Matt added that to go to the Selectboard and the process of the Town the Rec Commission would directly need to answer the two Purpose & Need questions. From the discussion tonight the why is because of the current state of the building, as we discussed, and Brett mentioned that he felt the largest glaring need is improved office space that is more functional and welcoming to the public and staff. To answer, "what should it accommodate", the priority is to accommodate what we currently do. Matt recapped the Rec Center would need to accommodate the summer camp, after school programming. Matt addressed the second Purpose & Need question: "Is it a priority of the Recreation Commission, Town Plan and/or is it required by law?". He said we are getting close to "the required by law part" due to code issues but we are not there yet. It is also clear that the Recreation Commission feels this is a priority.
- 13 Art Shinnars expressed concern with this "band-aid" solution of putting the offices up at the Arena. He asked Matt to take a look at the needs or wish list of what he thinks the Rec Center should have and the

Rec Commission can plan from there. Art feels as though Stowe should have an outstanding Rec Center; we are a recreational community. Lynn asked Art what he would like to see, and Art said Matt has a better handle on what should be included in an indoor facility. Art questioned the tennis courts. Brett agreed with Art, but he asked what the counter argument is to the fact that the Recreation Commission speaks on behalf of the townsfolks and gets behind rec driven initiatives that have no movement, the tennis courts for example. He asked what the Rec Commission can get to functional office space in a timely manner? Matt said we would be looking at a facility that had a function room large enough to accommodate a multipurpose basketball court suitable for tennis, programs, fitness classes, etc. and adequate office space, food prep space and storage space. The other option would be office space at the Arena and renovating and updating the existing building.

- 14 Lynn asked if there was a way to supply voters with options, a proposal for each, and solicit feedback. Lynn asked for Ryan's option on the need for rec center options. Ryan stated that he agrees with Art about the "band-aid" solution but saw memorial park as a sort of interconnected campus. He also asked Matt to supply feedback about what an updated or new rec center would include. Brett asked if Matt could look into office space need for other Town Departments, determine whether it would be feasible to expand the footprint of the existing building to accommodate new office space, or do a field study of useable Town owned land or if the Town would have to acquire land for use. Matt said he would look into all of those options. Lynn added that it would make sense to keep the building where it is and incorporate courts into it. Matt said Public Works is in the process of working through all of the permitting requirements and stormwater treatments. We will have more information in the short term, from Matt's understanding that the State is going to start fining towns that are not in compliance of the stormwater requirements. That will provide us with more specific information about what is permissible and possible in the existing space.
- 15 Lynn asked Matt to summarize what he is going to put together before the Recreation Commission's May meeting. Matt will work on coming back with specific information about other potential needs now or in the future for office space for Town departments. He will put together more information about the facility wish list items that the Rec Commission has asked for. Matt says one of the next big steps would be getting a survey out to the community. There is a broad scope of possibilities for the facility, and it is essential to get a feel from the community what they really want, desire, and need and it gets some information about what these different scenarios will a. look like and b. potentially cost.
- 16 Brett asked Matt if there were renderings of what the Rec Center square footage would be without the stormwater restrictions. Matt said he believes there were some renderings in the old 10 year master plan and there are some in the Memorial Park master plan as well. He will look for those and share them.

6:11 Lynn adjourned meeting.

Respectfully Submitted
Kelli Millick