

**Town of Chester
Recreation Commission Meeting
Monday, February 8, 2021
Municipal Complex
Approved Minutes**

I. Preliminaries

1.1 Call to Order

Chairperson Dircks called the hybrid (in-person and Zoom teleconference) meeting to order for the Town of Chester Recreation Commission (RC) at 7:03 PM.

1.2 Roll Call

RC members present:

Marie Davies
Kathryn Dircks, Chairperson
David Webster, Vice Chairperson

RC members absent:

Jeremy Owens, BOS Liaison

Staff present:

Corinna Reishus, Recreation Director

II. Approval of Minutes

The RC reviewed the minutes from the November 9, 2020 meeting. Ms. Davies moved to accept the November 9, 2020 minutes as written; Ms. Dircks seconded. The motion was approved 3-0-0.

III. Reports

3.1 Recreation Budget / Revolving Account

Budget for fiscal year 2020-21. Half of the year is over, with under 50% used (44.02%).

The Revolving Account Balance as of January 31, 2021 is \$60,021. It has stayed steady for a few months.

3.2 Spring Hill Farm Advisory Committee (SHFAC)

Director Reishus said the Trustees of Spring Hill Farm are applying for a New Hampshire Historical Preservation Matching Grant through the 1722 Foundation for barn restoration. The Spring Hill Farm Trust are applying because the grant isn't for municipally-owned buildings, so the Town and/or the Advisory Committee cannot apply directly. If approved, they will match up \$10,000.00 for the preservation project. The Trust has been taking donations for barn restoration.

The commission discussed holding a Winter Carnival on the Spring Hill Farm property with activities such as sledding, skating, sleigh rides, bonfire, etc. Director Reishus isn't sure if this is the right year for it. The Spring Hill Farm Advisory Committee has lost a few volunteers, so she doesn't know how much manpower will be available to run it. Maybe something can be done in March. She will talk to the Fire Department before the next meeting to see if they have any interest. Ms. Dircks asked how many people would be needed and Director Reishus said it depends on the type and number of events. If they keep it simple, they won't need many people. But if they want to have games, ice skating or a bonfire, the Fire Department would be needed.

3.3 Wason Pond Conservation and Recreation Commission (WPC&RC)

The BOS has heard from the company about the ADA Compliance Ramp at the community center. They are installing a new one, but unfortunately it cannot be powder-coated as requested. It will be an aluminum ramp. The Board of Selectmen will move forward on this.

There have been concerns regarding hunting on the property. Mr. Hadik is putting vinyl stickers on the main Wason Pond rules signs that say No Hunting – Discharge of Firearms Prohibited. The property is not legally posted. The Wason Pond Committee and Recreation Commission did not want to add an abundance of signs, and thought adding the wording to the rules sign was sufficient.

Recreation Committee: The winter scavenger hunt went well. It remained up through Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. Mr. Webster said he saw people enjoying it. He will retrieve the lost penguin, which is still hanging near the beach.

Conservation Commission: The commission reached out to the Chester Rod & Gun Club and asked them to support receptacles for discarded fishing line, instead of it being thrown into the pond. The Club also offered to help build them. The commission is erecting a sign regarding the beaver lodges/dams, providing information about the beavers and asking people not to touch them. Kristina Snyder is heading this project.

Eagle Scout project: Scout Alex Brillhart is proposing to build a 4' x 150' type 3 puncheon bridge to replace the current bog bridge that is rotting and is no longer suitable for foot traffic. He will work on the Wason Pond Committee and Recreation Commission's recommendations (narrowing to 3' to allow horses and emergency access, etc.) and bring it back to the Wason Pond Commission, after speaking with the Building Inspector and the Fire Department. It will be constructed in June, and installed in June and July. He will rope it off on the weekends, since that is a busy time on the trails. Mr. Webster asked why it is 150' long, and said the materials will be expensive. He thought the plans might be adjusted, after review.

IV. Old Business

4.1 CIP/Impact Fees Pending Projects

There is nothing on CIP going in this year, also nothing outstanding from prior years.

\$1,955.44 Impact Fees Balance remaining – 10/24/17 Ballfields – Finish Grading & Reseeding. This project has ended. The groundskeeper can use some of these funds to finish up since it's already set aside for recreation.

\$1,153.20 Impact Fees Balance Remaining – 09/09/19 MPR – Water Filling Station. This project has ended. They replaced the bubbler with a water filler, which cost less than was quoted. Director Reishus planned to use part of the remaining balance to buy filters, but it hasn't been used in a year, so she hasn't had to change them. She can't buy them now due to the expiration dates.

\$5,150.00 Impact Fees Balance Remaining – 08/19/19 Beach Area Pavilion (Plans). This project is pending. The Board of Selectmen has allowed funds to be taken out of impact fees to have plans drawn up. Selectman Myette has been following up with the engineer responsible for creating the plans, but hasn't been able to contact her. The fees have been released to pay for the plans, but haven't been spent.

Director Reishus asked the commission if they want to put in a pavilion at Wason Pond now, or wait for a few years. In the past, they've voted to wait until a park ranger is there. A pavilion will draw more attention and people, which means more problems. It will be available via reservation. Ms. Dircks said there are pros and cons. It would be better if it was just for town residents, but the area is open to everyone. Director Reishus said the plan is to do a pre-fab pavilion, but the Wason Pond Committee would like it to be timber framed to match the bridge. Since the Recreation Commission controls the funds, they will have to decide if they want to move forward with the project.

The CIP Project for Table 10 will be due again this fall, so Director Reishus will keep this item on the agenda for upcoming meetings for review and brainstorming. She said it would be nice to have another fitness trail behind the town fields on the Gladys Nichols Trail, which is now conservation land. Originally the Boy Scouts started the project, but it was never completed. Rockingham Conservation put an easement on the property, so they will have to give permission to proceed with this project.

There are a couple of new developments going in, including a large one near the Jenkins Farm area that will attach to Sandown. Sandown has already started their part and has built a few houses. Director Reishus spoke with Town Planner Andrew Hadik about the need to request that large developments put in recreational use as a condition, as there is currently only one public playground in town, at Wason Pond. The Planning Board has the authorization to mandate that a playground be included in a large project such as this, but they don't typically do it. So, the Recreation Commission has to provide recreation outlets. It would be nice to have something on that side of town. The fitness trail would be a good solution.

4.2 COVID-19 Impact on Events/Programming

The Recreation Department has continued to run hybrid fitness programs both virtually and (limited) in person. Senior Fitness is being held on Tuesdays and Thursdays, mostly virtual since the spring. The seniors have been on board with using Zoom. Boot Camp is being on held on Tuesdays

and Thursdays (hybrid – up to 6 people in person). Participants wear a mask except when in their boxes. Yoga is being held on Mondays and Wednesdays (up to 12 people in person). It is a low risk fitness program, maxing out at 12 people, so they can spread out. They are allowed to take off their masks when on their mats, and are bringing their own equipment. The material can be checked out, as long as they have time to clean it properly after use.

Youth programming has been hit this winter. Basketball season for the league was canceled. They are looking into possibly doing a March Madness Skills/Drills. Director Reishus reached out to a few coaches. Since basketball is a high risk activity, especially the games, the guidelines recommend only doing drills right now. Coaches don't believe it will happen this year; they aren't comfortable coming indoors. Many have gone to independent groups like SportsZone, the Rim, etc.

Winter Futsal is also still up in the air. Although it's not as high risk, people are still staying away. Director Reishus believes children need something to do, but she has to consider the welfare of the community as a whole. She isn't sure if they can safely run the programs in person. The main issue is that the MPR is attached to the town offices, which are not fully open. If they run any youth programs, they will have to be on a Saturday or Sunday, to allow time for sanitizing.

Mr. Webster said the state of Massachusetts is still relatively locked down, so nothing is being done at this point. Possibly within 60-90 days, as vaccines come into play, things will begin to open up.

V. New Business

5.1 Upcoming Events / Programming

Fishing Derby. This is scheduled for the first Saturday in June. There are ways to do it safely, such as using preregistration and a couple of waystations to avoid participants lining up. Ms. Dircks suggested doing it in shifts. Director Reishus said they brought in the Police Department five or six years ago, as they were looking for community service projects. She will talk to the chief.

Summer Program. Perhaps if the Recreation Department can't offer the traditional summer programs, maybe they can offer weekly camps. The state posted new guidelines on February 3rd, which are identical to last year's. With the current guidelines in place, it is almost impossible to run the traditional program at Wason Pond. The store used to have a sink, but now the well is contaminated, so there is no running water for hand-washing. Last July, for the mobile Summer Squad, Director Reishus drove four counselors to each house and did socially distanced activities for 20 minutes. Camp could be held for part of the day, such as field hockey, basketball, soccer, maybe offer pickup games at Wason Pond in July. They would have to preregister, per the guidelines. The next NHRPA summer camp Zoom meeting is scheduled for February 19th and hopefully the new guidance will be out by then.

Mr. Webster said he believes the rules will change dramatically as more vaccines become available. By July, the situation might be completely different. He suggested moving ahead with the planning, but warn that it might change. Ms. Davies said if there are no plans put into place, it cannot happen. Director Reishus will reach out to last year's staff. She needs to hire at least two certified lifeguards. She will begin planning, with the caveat that they can pull back if they have to.

Town Fair. Director Reishus will contact the Town Fair Committee and start setting up Zoom meetings. Ms. Davies said they can separate the vendors, and use a number of locations.

5.2 Any other new business

The Town Election / Meeting has been postponed. Tuesday, May 11th is the Town Election and Saturday, May 15th is the Town Meeting (most likely a virtual event, like last year).

Director Reishus has submitted Town Reports for both Recreation and the Town Fair Committee.

Mr. Webster offered to help with the fishing derby. Director Reishus said she will contact the Chester Rod & Gun Club and ask if they would like to be involved. She would like to add archery to the summer programs for older children.

VI. Adjournment

The next meeting will be on Monday, May 10, 2021.

A motion was made to adjourn and seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 7:53 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Haggeli

Recording Secretary