

# **SOMERS RECREATION COMMISSION**

## **Regular Meeting**

**June 1, 2009**

Kibbe Fuller Community Center

**Present: J.J. Wassmuth, Karen McGuane, Troy LaMontagne, Alicia Albert, Karen Murdoch, Anna Gagnon, Michelle Tingley**

**Non-Members present: Mike Provencher, Jennifer Charette, Dave Pinney**

**Audience:** Jim McFeat, Somers School Maintenance Director

### **I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:38pm

### **II. Minutes of Last Meeting**

The Minutes from May 4, 2009 were read and accepted with the following changes:

Corrected spelling of Diane Childs' name.

JJ Wassmuth met with Superintendent Suffredini; Anna Gagnon was not present.

### **III. Audience**

Jim McFeat was present at the meeting as the Director of Grounds Maintenance for Somers Schools. JJ asked Jim to come to the meeting to explain how school maintenance was managed.

Jim explained that first priority was given to school functions for which sport was in season. They have maintained fields at MBA weather permitting. There have been some years when weather has not permitted mowing on MBA fields. There is currently one grounds keeper to care for 75 acres of grass. One custodian and one maintenance position have been eliminated for next year. The mower has needed maintenance this year.

The committee discussed wet conditions of the fields. Dave reminded everyone that there was a plan to tile the MBA field as part of the school expansion project, but that it was cut for budget reasons. The town engineer has suggested less expensive technologies for improving the fields. Mike has discussed the issue with Bob Cafarelli and the problem is the level of the ground water being too high in that area. If the fields are dry, they can be maintained as long as the equipment is working. Mike and Jim lend each other help as needed. Mike has an additional 45 acres of grass to maintain. The company that repairs the town mowers can lend a smaller mower when ours is not working, however the small size is not adequate to take care of the amount of grass. Other towns do not have equipment to lend.

We should consider cost associated with hiring out mowing in instances when equipment and labor are behind.

Plan for going forward for maintenance:

First priority is to maintain school functions, next is to cut playing areas of fields, next is maintenance of Recreation fields.

The Rec Commission questioned what the forward plan is and how priority is established, If the plan shows that there is not enough manpower and equipment, then the Rec Commission has to go to the BOS to get resources that are needed. Rec Commission needs to know what the maintenance plan is to work with the BOS. What impact has the reduction of middle school sports had? Maintenance budget was reduced. One maintenance person has retired and the position has not been filled. Jim's department is one man down going forward. How is everything going to get done that needs to get done? Bottom line is Jim does not have the resources he needs to do what needs to get done.

Mike's maintenance plan is different than Jim's. Mike is an advocate of fertilizer, which makes the grass grow faster. In the spring they have 5-7 baseball fields/day to put in. Fields take 45 minutes if dry and over an hour if wet. Mowing of fields gets done, but not the weed whacking. Most fields should be mowed 2 times/week, but Mike can only do 1 time/week. It is too difficult to schedule mowing around game times. Trash collection has to be done on Thursdays, which cuts into mowing time. All playing fields that have games are done once a week. He can't let anything go more than two weeks. It is mostly the month of May that the mowing gets behind. Mike usually works an extra 1 ½ hour, 3 days a week and some Saturdays. First priority is to get the mowing done, lower priority is the painting. Baseball fields have to be groomed every day to prevent injuries.

Bottom line is Mike does not have enough resources to get his job done as it needs to be done. Rec Commission would like to get Mike help during the month of May, either college students, inmates or contracted work.

Mike feels the Rec Commission needs to push back on the associations regarding the number of teams/games scheduled for a season. A new softball program has been added to the current programs this year. Jen needs to let the Rec Commission know when new associations make requests for facilities.

Rec Commissions role is to evaluate level of demand and capacity, constraints that impact level of use. Rec Commission establishes policies, staff implements policies. Mike has been given authority in the past to determine appropriate level of use of fields. Mike and Jen will still work together on weather related issues. Some organizations have high requirements for number of games played in a season. Two tournament requests were rejected because of the excess wear and tear that would happen to the fields. Practices are harder on the fields than games.

Baseball has raised fees and are getting complaints about the fees. Does the Rec Commission need to consider charging the associations/participants to defray the cost of maintenance? Mike and Bruce are the only park maintenance staff. They should consider using inmates working with park staff for the tasks that take more than one person, ie lining fields.

Painting of the bathrooms at the park have been in CIP before but never funded. Excess shingles from the Library project will be used to re-roof the gazebo.

Mike needs another man six weeks out of the year. Dave needs recommendation from the Rec Commission on what we need for resources for field maintenance.

#### **IV. Coordinator's Report / Parks Report**

Two camp directors have been hired and will share the job. Neither candidate could cover the entire duration of the summer camp alone. Registrations for summer camp are coming in slowly.

#### **V. Old Business**

Field Expansion Project – The trees have been cut by machines. Seven trees need to be cut by hand in order to be used for veneer. By next week the stumps and trees should be removed, then gravel can be taken out. The contractor will repair the park road at the end of the project. Mike has discussed with the public works department to oil and stone the road and parking lots at the end of the project.

Any revenue from the gravel project is going to the general fund.

STEAP Grant – the STEAP grant application was for \$500 K, \$200 K for recreation facility improvements. The application was not specific about use. The other \$300 K was for continued Somersville redevelopment. It is likely that limited funds will be available. We won't know for sure until the state adopts a budget. The budget will have a specific line for STEAP program. Money awarded for Somersville previously has not been spent or allocated. Town Hall is working to get specific projects contracted.

Skate Park – Karen reported that the Skate Park Committee was on the agenda for the BOS meeting on June 11 to re-affirm the BOS approval of the planned skate park project.

#### **VI. New Business**

Karen Murdoch requested that the Rec Commission present to the Board of Ed a plan of recreation needs for facilities. The request included a possible Ad Hoc committee to act as a liason between the two boards. JJ Wassmuth will arrange with Teri Henderson to discuss further.

Troy has requested survey data that can be overlaid on town drawings that show the locations of fields with respect to town property lines. Contractor did a survey for the gravel bank. Troy will make a request through Dave Pinney to get the needed information from the Town Engineer.

**VII. Correspondence**  
No correspondence.

**VIII. Adjournment**  
The meeting adjourned at 10:18 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

Karen Murdoch  
Secretary, Somers Recreation Commission