

**Amherst Leisure Services Commission Meeting Minutes
December 4, 2019**

Present Youssef Fadel, Sarah Marshall, and Meg Rosa (chair)

Absent Becky Demling, Stephanie Jackson, and Victor Nunez-Ortiz

Staff Barb Bilz, LSSE Director

Call to Order The meeting was called to order at 6:40 p.m.

Minutes

- The minutes of the October 29, 2019 were reviewed but not approved due to the lack of a quorum.

Public Comment: Sanjay Awade, Amherst Nordic Ski Association

- Sanjay Awade updated the Commission on the current status of Nordic skiing at Cherry Hill Golf Course: Cherry Hill is a golf course and a year-round recreational asset. While many sports teams utilize Town fields for their practices, the Amherst Regional High School and Middle School Nordic Ski Team utilizes Cherry Hill Golf Course as its practice field. Therefore Cherry Hill should be part of the conversation around facilities and fields. There are currently 65 girls and boys participating on the ARHS/MS Nordic ski team. The Ski Team is 10 years old and was founded by Nat Woodruff who teaches for the District. Barb Bilz and Nat were instrumental in winning grant money to acquire the necessary equipment to start grooming trails at Cherry Hill.
- Sanjay commended John Coelho, Golf Course Superintendent, who has taken great care grooming the course for skiing over the years. Grooming must take place when the temps are below freezing and that often means he must come in to do the grooming in the early mornings. John has been a great asset to the skiing community and the Town. His efforts have transformed the winter recreation possibilities at Cherry Hill.
- There are currently 160 members of the Amherst Nordic Ski Association. Fall lectures have drawn 50-100 attendees. 150 students at Fort River Elementary School participated in a cross country ski class last year. Most likely one of the most diverse groups of skiers in the region.
- There is an opportunity for the Town to do something very significant at Cherry Hill in terms of Nordic Skiing much like is happening at Weston Ski area in the East and Notch View in the Berkshires, Cherry Hill could become the source for Nordic Skiing in the middle of the State.
- Sarah Marshall asked if Cherry Hill is large enough to make it available as a practice area for other schools. Sanjay responded that the course is the same acreage as Weston and that it could definitely accommodate more teams for practices but three things need to be put into place: staffing, snowmaking and more grooming equipment.

- Meg Rosa asked about how access would be controlled. Sanjay responded that memberships could be sold at the beginning of the season with a volunteer commitment. The honor system would have to be observed as well.
- Sanjay reported that last year the High School/Middle School team was only able to ski/practice 6 days at Cherry Hill. What is needed is snow making. He stated that we have the terrain, water and electricity to make this happen. The estimated cost would be \$150,000 to finance the purchase of 2-3 snowmaking guns and other equipment necessary to provide a 1 kilometer trail.
- Sanjay would like the Town to hire a consultant to conduct a feasibility study for this project. He will work with Barb to put forth a capital request for FY21.
- Sarah agreed to investigate whether or not the snow making project could be financed by CPA funds.
- Sarah asked if there were any environmental issues that might arise with this project. Barb responded that there is a spring fed irrigation pond on the property and that snowmaking would use less water than what is used for the golf season. Sanjay responded that in fact the environmental footprint would be significantly reduced because less people would be driving their cars long distances to existing ski facilities.

CPAC Report

- Sarah Marshall reported CPA recommended that \$279,000 in CPA funds be used to meet the requirement put forth by the State in order to obtain a \$400,000 grant to fund the playground at Kendrick Park. The Finance Committee also recommended this action and Town Council will vote on it on December 16, 2019. Town Council will likely borrow the funds to be repaid to CPA over time.
- Sarah reported that the deadline for CPA submissions is December 6, 2019.
- The PARC Grant agreement form was signed by all Commission members present.

Director's Report

Facilities and Fields

- Construction work continues at Groff Park. Tentative opening is still spring 2020.
- The first public forum for the Kendrick Park playground is scheduled for January 9, at 5:00 pm. Location to be announced. The meeting will be hosted by LSSE and its Commission. The purpose is to seek input from the community regarding the type of equipment they would like to have at the park.

Golf Course

- The golf course closed for the season on November 7, 2019 and will reopen in early April (weather dependent).
- The golf course saw at least 100+ of skiers after the season's first snow storm in early December.

Sports

- The number of participants enrolled in the Amherst Youth Basketball League (AYBL) is at 183. This is five children down from last year at this time. The overall goal is to enroll a total of 400 children this season. The program begins in early January.

- As a way to get more children to enroll in AYBL a *Black Friday Thanksgiving Special* was initiated through Facebook where a child could receive a 15% discount. Sale ended December 2nd.

Aquatics

- Contact was made with Hampshire College to explore lap swimming time for seniors. Unfortunately they currently do not have time available so the LSSE Director contacted Belchertown Parks and Recreation. They have time available lap swim time at their pool and have agreed to honor our lap swim prices for any senior who would like to lap swim at their pool this winter.
- In addition, Hampshire Athletic Club reopened their pool on November 26th.
- Lap swim will start up again at the Amherst Regional Middle School the first week of February.
- Winter swim lessons will take place at the Amherst Regional Middle School this year due to the closing of the UMass Totman pool. Lessons begin on January 30, 2020.

Special Events

- LSSE will participate in the Merry Maple celebration on December 6. We will have a booth with various arts and crafts projects for the children.
- WinterFest planning is underway. Dates for the week-long event are February 1-8, 2020.

Community Theater

- Tickets for *Matilda* will go on sale Monday, December 2, 2019. There are 63 cast members this year.
- Set construction is taking place again at DPW.

Adult and Youth Education

- Most winter classes start in January and enrollment has been strong. New youth classes include: STEM classes, Red Cross Baby Sitter Certification, rock climbing and two pre-school level playgroup and art classes. New adult classes include: Mindful Eating, Naturopathic Solutions for Adult Women, Zumba and Pilates.

Program Outreach

- A December trip to Bright Nights in Springfield has been planned and will include parents and children living in the various housing areas. In addition, holiday parties and crafts are planned at two housing areas.

After School Program

- Due to a staff vacancy, the LSSE Director is currently acting as the liaison to the Department of Early Education and Care as we prepare for an inspection by the Licensing Specialist from their Department.

FY20 Budget

- Preliminary Capital requests for the Department have been submitted to the Town Manager.
 - Repairs to Mill River Tennis Court - \$25,000
 - Signage at Recreation Areas - \$75,000
 - Rough Mower for Cherry Hill - \$58,500
- In addition, work has started on the FY21 budget. Draft mission, goals and service levels are due to the Finance Director on December 13, 2019.

Strategic Planning

- The Strategic Planning Community Input Gathering Sessions are completed. A total of approximately 45 people attended these sessions.
 - October 29, 6:30 pm at Crocker Farm Elementary School
 - November 21, 5:30 pm at Wildwood Elementary School
- Surveys are to be distributed from December 4 – 18, 2019 (Members of the Commission brainstormed as to where surveys should be distributed).

Position Vacancy

- The Program Director position vacated by Stacey Lecuivre is under review. There is a strong possibility that the job description will be changed to reflect the current needs of the Department. The position will be posted after the holidays sometime in early January.

Marketing

- Winter brochure/e-Brochure have been distributed.
- Work continues with Town Hall on website redesign initiative.
- Increasing visibility on Facebook with paid boosts for targeted programs.
- Development/Implementation of Marketing Plan for WinterFest.

Next Meeting

- Tuesday, January 21, 6:30 p.m. at the Amherst Leisure Services Office

Adjournment The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.