

**Amherst Leisure Services Commission Meeting Minutes
November 8, 2017**

Present Nate Budington, Sarah Marshall, Becky Demling and
Meg Rosa

Absent Jim Brissette

Staff: Barb Bilz, Director

Visitors: Jim Pistrang, Ted Diamond and Michael Chesworth from the
Amherst Dog Park Task Group

Call to Order Meeting was called to order at 5:35 p.m.

Change in Agenda Order

- The Commission voted unanimously to change the order of the agenda in order to accommodate members of the Amherst Dog Park Task Group who were at the meeting to make a presentation.

Dog Park Task Force Group Update and CPA Request

- The Task Group reported that there is broad support in the community for a dog park. They are currently working to identify a site and have had four public meetings so far. Their first objective is to identify a site. They will develop a design, seek funding, create rules and regulations and plan for sustainability.
- They felt that this project fell under the umbrella of Leisure Services as a dog park is important for the social wellbeing of not only dogs but it creates a central recreational meeting place for people. The Task Force reported that 44% of Americans own a dog. Dog parks are attractive to home owners and potential home buyers.
- Grant funding is available to fund dog parks in Massachusetts. Ten towns are funded every year up to \$250,000 each with a 10% match from the community.
- In order to apply for the grant, land must be secured to build the dog park first. The Task Force is looking to apply for CPA funding in the amount of \$200,000 to purchase land in Amherst. They cannot use conservation, active recreation land, or the old land fill. However they also are looking at other Town owned land as potential sites. The Town Manager supports using existing Town owned land but if no Town owned land is available they would use the \$200,000 CPA funding to purchase land to build a dog park on.
- Approximately 1-1.5 acres of land is needed for the dog park. The land will need to be fenced in, have water, parking, and proper surfacing.
- The Dog Park Task Force requested the endorsement of the LSSE Commission for it request of \$200,000 from CPAC.
- There was discussion that the dog park did not fit with LSSE's mission but the majority of Commission members felt it did. Sarah Marshall asked about financial sustainability. Jim Pistrang stated that a Friends of Amherst Dog Park group would be created and that they would have responsibility for oversight of the park and its sustainability.

- The Commission unanimously voted to hold off public endorsement for the proposal until they could actually read the proposal first. The Commission supported the “concept” of a dog park and will review the proposal at their next meeting.

Minutes

- The minutes of the October 19, 2017 meeting were approved as amended by a unanimous vote.

CPA Request

Barb Bilz reported that Dave Ziomek recommended that the request for a comfort station at Plum Brook be put in the FY19 Capital Budget requests.

There was concern that not enough funding for the basketball court resurfacing at the Mill River Recreation Area was requested last year from CPAC. Barb Bilz will secure a quote from the vendor who resurfaced the courts the last time, Vermont Tennis Court Surfacing, and will provide that estimate to the Commission at their next meeting. If more money is needed for the project, the Commission would like to request additional funding from CPAC in FY19.

Potwine Lane and Traffic Update

LSSE, Amherst Youth Soccer Association (AYSA), DPW and the Amherst Police Department are working together to slow traffic down during soccer games and practices. APD had a cruiser stationed on Potwine Lane on November 4th and the average speed was 30.8 miles per hour. They will continue to monitor the situation next spring. DPW has put arrows and one-way signs up at the parking lot to make it safer. AYSA is emailing their parents and visiting teams to remind them to monitor their speeds on Potwine Lane. They are also making announcements at games and practices. AYSA board representatives stated that they want to do their best to be respectful of the neighborhood.

The Commission felt strongly that “Do Not Enter” signs be posted at the exit of the parking lot at Plum Brook. Yard signs will be purchased for this purpose next spring.

FY19 Budget

Barb Bilz reported that budgets are essentially level funded for FY19. A 2.5% increase will be reflected in permanent salary lines only. She will provide the full budget and capital requests at the next Commission meeting.

Director’s Report

Staff

Vacant Positions

- Marketing and Registration Coordinator position was filled by Nicholas Damren. His first day of work was Monday, November 6, 2017. He is currently receiving his job orientation, training and has also been started daily work related tasks.
- I will introduce new staff members, Nicholas Damren and Nikki Abelli to the Commission at the meeting in December.

Program and Facilities

Facilities

- The design firm Weston and Sampson was selected to create a master plan for the downtown recreation areas and facilities. They will be meeting with the Downtown Recreation Area Working Group in the next few weeks to start the project.
- Both the Groff Park and North Common committees have been appointed and will begin meeting once the proposals are received. Tentative due date for proposals is 12/11/17 for Groff Park and 12/22/17 for the North Common.

Golf Course

- The course will close for the season on November 13, 2017.

Aquatics

- Indoor Pool Program at the Middle School will end for the season on November 18, 2017 and resume on February 3, 2018. Below are the complete listing of dates for both the Middle School Pool and the UMass Totman Pool.
 - Sept. 21 – Nov. 21, 2017 Tuesday/Thursday Swim Lessons
 - Sept. 24 – Nov. 18, 2017 Sat/Sun Lap and Open Swim

 - Feb. 3 – May. 19, 2018 Sat/Sun Lap and Open Swim
 - Apr. 3, 2018 – May 29, 2018 Tuesday/Thursday Swim Lessons

 - We will also be offering Swim Lessons at UMass Totman Pool. Here are the dates for those lessons:
 - Jan. 23 – Mar. 29, 2018 Tuesday/Thursday Swim Lessons
 - Jan. 27 – Feb. 24, 2018 Saturday Swim Lessons
- There will be an article in the Gazette about the swim program. It should appear in the near future.
- An advertisement appeared in the Amherst Bulletin to publicize lap and open swim. Flyers were distributed to PGO's, Senior Center, schools, and after school programs. All summer lap swimmers and members have been emailed about the program. Exposure on social media includes: Facebook, Instagram, LSSE website and Town website.

Special Events

- 49th annual Halloween Fest went on as planned on October 29th. Due to the rain the parade was cancelled but all other activities took place at the Bangs Community Center. Attendance was down about two-thirds from the previous year but sponsorship revenues was up over 31% over 2016. \$4,245 was raised in sponsorship revenue this year.
- WinterFest planning started this summer. The committee is working to expand WinterFest to a week-long event with activities happening throughout the Town

beginning on Saturday, Feb. 3 and culminating with the main event at Cherry Hill on Saturday, Feb. 10.

Adult and Youth Education

- Fall classes are in progress. Enrollments are stronger than last year at this time.

Other

Professional Development

- All members of the leadership team for the department continue participating in a study group to take their Certified Parks and Recreation Professional examination. The team has also become more active in the Pioneer Valley Recreation and Parks Association and will be hosting its next meeting.

Marketing

- Mapping of program sites is completed and will appear in the winter brochure. The program site map will also appear on the LSSE website.
- The winter brochure will be out at the end of the month.

Community Visibility

- LSSE has had a presence and provided activities at the following community events this Fall:
 - 1st Day – provided face painting and program information.
 - UMass Community Breakfast – representation by staff
 - Apple Harvest Festival – provided arts and crafts activity and program information.
 - Embrace Race (a national program to help parents deal with sensitive issues of race) - provided childcare and program activities.
 - Amherst Block Party
 - Amherst Chamber Awards Night
 - Amherst Area Chamber Legislative Breakfast
 - Puerto Rico relocation Task Force Meeting

Other Commission Member Comments and Updates

- None

Next Meeting

- The next LSSE Commission meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, December 5, 2017.

Adjournment

- The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 p.m.