

**Town Of Bedford
Recreation Commission
December 7, 2016, 7:00PM
Town Hall Auditorium Bedford, MA 01730**

Members Present:

Ron Richter, Robin Steele, *Delayed:* Mike O'Shaughnessey, Tom Mulligan and Virendar Kaushik.

Absent: None

Quorum: Yes

Others Present:

Recreation Director: Amy Hamilton, Adult Program Coordinator: Raeann Gembis, Residents: Rebecca Grossman, Julie Halloran and Richard Courtmanche, Representing the Bedford Citizen: Julie Turner.

Proceedings:

Meeting called to order at 7:00PM by Ron Richter, Commission Chairman.

Agenda Item A: Springs Brook Park Discussion
Discussion continues regarding the 2017 summer season.

Springs Brook Park ran a deficit of approximately \$100,000 in the 2016 season. Richter states that the fund cannot sustain a loss of that magnitude again.

The Commission sought to make SPB a family destination, appealing to Bedford residents. They took steps to rectify many of the issues members were seeing at the park. Their strategy was to invest and build momentum.

The Recreation Revolving Fund has a lower than desired balance due to the expected and unexpected financial expenses of 2016, including major operating loss caused by SBP as well as losses in certain Recreation programs such as basketball and soccer.

Other contributing factors to the state of the Revolving Fund include Youth Center costs as well as imposed salary costs. Amy informs that when the Youth Center was created, Recreation was not meant to be fiscally responsible for it; the full amount was supposed to be supplied by the town. There is no income generated by the Youth Center however, the expenses are approximately \$50,000 per year.

The town asked Recreation during the pilot year, a fiscally challenged year, to pay half of the cost (\$25,000). The next year they asked the same thing and Recreation paid half, again. Eventually, they requested that Recreation take on the full amount.

Salary costs have been assumed by the Revolving Fund in a similar manner. Half of the Youth Program Coordinator salary was moved to the Revolving Fund last year. Currently, the tax levy pays only for the Director and half the salary of the Youth Program Coordinator. In addition, the revolving fund fully pays the salary of an Adult Program Coordinator, Administrative Assistant and Department Clerk. For Kids' Club, benefits are charged to the Revolving Fund.

Amy states that at that time these salary costs were imposed on the Recreation Department the revolving fund had a high balance; this is no longer the case. In consideration of The Recreation Department's value to the town, as well as the current financial state, she believes this agreement should be reviewed and revised in order to fairly align with other municipal government departments.

The Commission reviews operating model options for SBP 2017 Season:

The basic options include:

- Small operation: Pond closed, spray park model.
- Medium operation: Utilizes shallow side of the pond, open Tues-Sat, no lessons offered.
- Large operation: Last years model, with the exception of a schedule that runs from Tues-Sat.

Richter states that a decision must be made to determine a recommended operating model. This model will be brought before the Selectmen in hope that financial support will be granted to accommodate it.

The Commission debates over which model can best serve the majority of Bedford Residents. Discussion includes the support staff necessary to run each model as well as management needs, operating costs and, the likelihood of gaining/losing members.

It is determined that, following the success of last year's model in the areas of park operation and patron feedback, the Commission would like to stick to the same model as much as possible. This is the largest model and includes swim lessons. The Commission would like to make an exception to include an edited weekly schedule, which would run from Tuesday through Saturday.

Amy states that her biggest fear is the potential inability to attract Lifeguards. She doesn't want to promote a guard-heavy model and not be able to deliver what that model consists of, due to lack of guards.

As stated in previous meetings, swim lessons of the past season were suppressed by the constraints of the lifeguard shortage. Summer Adventures Swim lessons were not effective. Participants spent the first and last day testing with 1 - 2 lessons in between. Children did not receive enough instruction to progress to the next level. Amy warns that alternate plans should be considered.

Raeann Gembis informs that when SBP was in its prime and was opened on weekends, it operated with 30 guards. Even with this number of guards, they were given only two days off every fourteen days. This level of commitment was expected. Today, it is nearly impossible to find guards with that level of commitment. This is an addition to the regional lifeguard shortage and the fact that Recreation could not find enough guard support last season.

Concerns are also noted for staff and management positions. The former SBP co-directors, who were familiar with the park, its patrons, and staff, are not returning. It will be challenging to bring in new management.

The Commission reviews the status of SBP; attempting to legally define whether it is a pool or a pond. This definition could impact aspects of a future model. Amy will verify the category with Board of Health and report back to the Commission.

Discussion of Strategy for Selectmen Presentation:

Richter suggests that the chosen SBP model be presented followed by other areas in which Recreation could use financial support. The Commission intends to seek funding for: SBP, the Youth Center and, Recreation office staff.

The Commission will present that the revolving fund can no longer withstand the incurring expenses. Richter states that these models are not a long-term solution and suggests that an ad hoc committee should convene with Selectmen to determine the future possibility of a pool.

- The next Recreation Commission meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 22nd.

*Adjournment at 9:15 governed by Ron Richter, Committee Chairman.
Minutes submitted by Michelle Racette, Recording Secretary.*