

**MINUTES
TOWN OF HARWICH
RECREATION AND YOUTH COMMISSION
THE HARWICH CHANNEL, 100 OAK STREET, HARWICH, MA
TUESDAY, JANUARY 30, 2024 - 5:30PM**

MEMBERS PARTICIPATING: Van Khachadoorian, Chair, Leah Mercurio, Vice Chair, John Mahan, David Nixon and Brian Wentworth present with Phyllis Thomason and Francis Crowley, Clerk participating remotely.

ALSO PARTICIPATING: Eric Beebe, Recreation Director

1. RECORDING NOTICE; CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Khachadoorian called the meeting of the Harwich Youth and Recreation Commission to order on Tuesday, January 30, 2024 at 5:30PM and read the Open Meeting Law Notice. He thanked the members of the Select Board that are in attendance, Ms. Mercurio for chairing the meetings in his absence and Mr. Mahan for keeping him up to date on meetings in his absence.

2. PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS/COMMENTS/GUESTS

a. Karen Doucette – Kayak Storage Rentals

Ms. Doucette of Harwich was present and asked about the possibility of having kayaks for seasonal rentals. She suggested possible locations for racks.

Mr. Beebe responded that the suggestion had been discussed last year. The concerns were the liability issues and the issue that people are currently leaving their kayaks on beaches.

Mr. Khachadoorian requested that Mr. Beebe bring this subject up again and report back to the Recreation and Youth Commission (RYC) at the next meeting.

b. Steve Almonte, Cape Cod Baseball Club – Use of fields

Mr. Almonte was present and distributed a proposal to RYC members. He explained the goals and mission of the Cape Cod Baseball Club and what they offer to kids and the community. He gave a detailed description of insurances and the staff's qualifications. He also emphasized that he would like to continue this program on the lower Cape.

Commission members asked questions and expressed concerns which Mr. Almonte answered and addressed. Discussion followed regarding the different field including condition and availability. One field specifically noted is behind 204 Sisson Road. There were questions asking who owns it and what work is needed there. Also discussed is the challenge of securing an indoor location for the Club.

Mr. Nixon moved to support this project, seconded by Mr. Wentworth.

January 30, 2024

Vote: 7:0 in favor. Motion carried.

c. Parent Group – Programming

Kristen Wentworth was present representing the parents of Friends of Harwich. She gave a description of why the group was formed and emphasized that she is representing all the parents and that their goal is to collaborate with there RYC. Ms. Wentworth reviewed issues and concerns that parents have expressed regarding present programs. She also expressed concerns regarding spring and summer programs, staffing, sign up issues and lack of information about the programs. Ms. Wentworth noted another town's website, suggesting that it be used as a template.

Mr. Khachadoorian commented on the process that he feels should take place prior to starting a program, suggesting that it should be done more methodically. He suggested that they make sure the spring and summer programs are well organized, comprehensive, informational and that parents get information before the programs are posted. He also suggested that they be proactive and develop a newsletter as a way of communicating with parents. Parent volunteers could be helpful in creating the newsletter.

Mr. Beebe responded that the has started working on a newsletter.

Ms. Wentworth commented that she disagrees with parents helping create the newsletter, that it should be done by the Recreation Director.

Discussion and conversation continued between Ms. Wentworth and Mr. Khachadoorian regarding the Director's responsibilities, parent volunteers and parents collaborating with the Director.

Mr. Khachadoorian emphasized the need for and requested that the parent group work with Mr. Beebe and include him in discussions.

Mr. Beebe noted the he has been instructed by the Town Administrator not to interact with the Friends of Harwich group.

Discussion continued regarding the Friends of Harwich group and the fact that it is a sub committee without officers. Mr. Khachadoorian suggested that the group change their name.

Ms. Wentworth commented that the members of the group are willing to collaborate but that many have full time jobs with limited time to volunteer. Many are already volunteering as coaches and other time consuming positions.

Ms. Mercurio commented that the spring and other programs in other towns are already being posted. She emphasized that, she feels that the time period of November through January is ample time to post information so that people can plan.

January 30, 2024

Mr. Mahan commented that the communication between Mr. Beebe and Ms. Wentworth should be a priority. He also emphasized that the Commission cannot tell Mr. Beebe what to do and do not have control over some of the Friends requests.

Discussion followed regarding the uncertainty of the parameters for communication between the Friends group and Mr. Beebe.

Ms. Mercurio brought up the subject of the website and asked for an update which Mr. Beebe gave.

Members asked questions regarding delays and projected dates for the completion of the site.

Mr. Beebe explained the delays. Data has to be entered which is detailed work and employees are spending time each day entering that data. He also commented, when asked, that if there was one person who entered data full time, the project could possibly be completed in two to three weeks. Mr. Beebe gave an overview of the information that has to be entered. He did not have a project end date. Mr. Beebe also gave an update on spring programs and summer camps, what has and has not yet been posted.

Julie Kavanagh, Select Board Liaison, clarified that the “Friends” group can meet. However Mr. Beebe is not obligated to go to meetings because they are not the subcommittee that was presented to the Select Board. She emphasized that there is nothing to prevent any of the members of the Friends group from going to meet with Mr. Beebe. She also emphasized that the November meeting was held on the 28th, December’s meeting was on the 12th and then this meeting which is only 3 in total. With holidays and school vacations during that time, the timeline has not been very long. She acknowledged the delay with the website, that Finance is working on their numbers and there is a backlog. Ms. Kavanagh referred to the Rec Dept. in Chatham and believes that they have company sponsors that supply the uniforms. She suggested that seeking sponsors may be a project for the Friends group, Mr. Beebe cannot solicit for sponsors. She summarized by emphasizing that all these things take time.

3. MISCELLANEOUS CORRESPONDENCES

- a. Jim Gunning, Cape Cod Senior Softball – Request for fee waiver /reduction.

Mr. Beebe presented and gave an explanation for the request.

Mr. Mahan suggested that they table this item until the Select Board has voted on the fee increases. After discussion, it was decided to continue this item to the February meeting.

- b. Kerri Griffin Email re: Curbing more litter at beaches.

Mr. Beebe presented Ms. Griffin’s request by reading her letter to the members. She suggested placing recycling containers at each beach.

Discussion followed regarding following up on the suggestion of containers, who would pay the cost and who would be responsible for emptying the containers etc. Mr. Beebe will follow up and bring the issue to the Highway Dept.

c. Paul Reedy Email re: Sand Pond Boathouse/Revitalization, dated 12-5-2023.

Mr. Beebe read aloud a letter from Mr. Reedy requesting the safety status of the boathouse and also requested that he be notified when the Commission is schedule to discuss Sand Pond.

Mr. Beebe gave the Commission an update on Sand Pond, what is needed and next steps going forward.

4. NEW BUSINESS*

a. Local Planning Committee Community Survey – The survey can be found here:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CMFVMWX>

Mr. Beebe read a correspondence from the Town Planner regarding the Comprehensive Plan. He brought the survey to the attention of the members.

Ms. Mercurio suggested that those who had not yet read the survey do so, so there can be further discussion. She suggested this item be tabled until all members have reviewed the questions. This item will be on a future agenda.

b. Department of Public Works – Memorial Bench Ban at Town Beaches

Mr. Beebe stated that this is a request from the Department of Public Works (DPW) to halt taking requests for memorial benches on town beaches. His reason for this request is that there has been significant storm damage to beaches and there is a lot of work that needs to be done at the beaches. He needs time to do the work before more benches are added.

Members agreed to halt taking requests for memorial benches on beaches. No vote needed.

c. Discussion on a “Splash Pad”

Mr. Beebe commented that the Splash Pad will be one of the priorities going forward.

Members asked questions regarding cost and funding options which Mr. Beebe responded to and answered when possible. They discussed next steps moving forward to deciding on a location. Members made suggestions for the location and suggested sending a survey to residents asking them to choose their preference from a few choices including Brooks Park, 204 Sisson Road and behind the Rec building..

d. Pickleball – Spring and summer

Not addressed. Included on the agenda in error.

January 30, 2024

5. RECREATION AND MAINTENANCE

a. Director Report

No report.

Mr. Nixon noted trees that had been removed from Cahoon Hollow and asked that Mr. Beebe check on one remaining tree that should be removed.

Mr. Wentworth asked for information regarding T-ball which Mr. Beebe answered.

b. Property Maintenance Report

No updates at this time.

c. Budget Report

No report at this time.

d. Chairman's Report

No report at this time.

e. Liaison Reports & Subcommittee Updates

Mr. Nixon reported on a preliminary discussion on the beautification project at the tennis courts. He was told by the Select Board that CPC does not fund beautification projects.

o Community Preservation Committee

Recreation Department Articles will go before CPC on February 14, 2024..

o Facilities Committee

Not addressed.

6. OLD BUSINESS

At the Commissions request, Mr. Beebe will get an update on the status of the minutes.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Mahan moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Nixon.

Vote: 7:0 in favor by roll call vote. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

January 30, 2024

Judi Moldstad

January 30, 2024