

**MINUTES
TOWN OF HARWICH
RECREATION AND YOUTH COMMISSION
CH 8 STUDIO, COMMUNITY CENTER
100 OAK STREET, HARWICH, MA 02645
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2023 - 5:30PM**

MEMBERS PARTICIPATING: Vahan Khachadorian, Chair, Leah Mercurio, Vice Chair, Francis Crowley, John Mahan, David Nixon and Phyllis Thomason

ALSO PARTICIPATING: Eric Beebe, Recreation Director

1. RECORDING NOTICE; CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. Khachadorian called the meeting of the Recreation and Youth Commission to order on Tuesday, October 24, 2023 at 5:30PM and read the Open Meeting Law Recording Notice.

2. PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS/COMMENTS/GUESTS

Mr. Khachadorian introduced the members of the Commission. He also introduced guests, Joseph Powers, Town Administrator, Julie Kavanagh, Select Board Liaison and Jeff Handler, Select Board Member. He read the Public Hearing Guidelines.

a. Bianca Caswell - Youth programming and communication

Bianca Caswell, Harwich resident was present. She described her years living in Harwich up to the present, with her husband and children. She spoke of the Commission's responsibilities as written in the Charter and the Commission's mission statement as listed on the website. She voiced her opinion about the Recreation Department and expressed her goal of opening up communication between the Recreation & Youth Commission, the local government and the residents. She noted the four areas that she feels need to be addressed, which she described in detail. Ms. Caswell listed programs for adults vs children and noted a lack of programs for teens. She also noted programs listed in other towns and questioned the budget.

Lauren Bombiante, full time Harwich resident, noted her concerns. She questioned why Harwich does not have what other towns are offering and gave examples. She also asked how parents could help. She suggested contracting with other facilities and gave examples including the skating rink or the Y. She emphasized that importance of communication and letting the parents know what they can do to help.

Jeff Morino, current Harwich resident and former Brewster resident was present. He noted how in the past, every town played sports against the other towns and questioned why that is not happening now. He offered to help working towards getting the towns to play against each other again.

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Seth Demontigne, Harwich resident expressed his concerns regarding the Recreation Department, programs, playgrounds and other items. He emphasized focusing on the youth of Harwich.

Tiffany Turcot, Harwich, resident spoke about the cost of Youth Programs compared to other programs. Ms. Turcot expressed that she would like to see Harwich built up again and have more programs for seniors and youth.

Jolene Nesty also spoke of the cost of programs specifically noting the Afterschool Rec Program. She commented on the two half days and school vacations that are without programming in Harwich and also noted what other towns are offering for more services and lower costs.

Abby McGillan, Harwich resident spoke of the summer programs and suggested they be for Harwich residents only, giving her reasons. She stated that she sent an email offering to coach and had not received a response and that there are many parents who are willing to volunteer.

Kristen Wentworth, Harwich resident and business owner who also coaches soccer was present. She noted how few kids are in the program. She suggested different ways to market the programs for public awareness. She expressed her frustration with the lack of communication regarding programs and registration information giving examples of what other towns are doing successfully. Ms. Wentworth suggested organizing a Booster Club and emphasized the importance of and benefits of being part of a team. She summarized by saying that what they need is action and action items moving forward.

Brian Wentworth, Harwich resident commented on field access. He also emphasized the importance of team shirts, of being part of a team and town pride. He commented that fields and shirts should not be a barrier.

Jeff Handler, Harwich resident and Select Board member thanked everyone who spoke and commented on their offers to volunteer. He feels that they are moving in the right direction.

Mr. Khachadorian responded to the parents, acknowledged their concerns and understands their statement that action is needed. He noted that he and his colleagues are concerned and will take every opportunity to review what was said. He hopes to continue the discussion and dialogue to come up with resolutions to the issues that were raised. He offered his assurance as Chair that they will work on everything that was brought forth tonight and address their concerns to the fullest. He welcomed anyone who wants to, to attend their meetings.

Ms. Mercurio thanked all the parents for voicing their concerns. She commented that she is looking forward to working with everyone.

Other members voiced their gratitude to the parents.

Item a. Recreation Program Update under New Business was taken out of order for the benefit of the parents in attendance.

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3. MISCELLANEOUS CORRESPONDENCES

a. Harwich Pickleball Association, Tom Bryant, Chair

Mr. Khachadorian noted that all members have a copy of the correspondence from the Pickleball Association's Chair.

Tom Bryant, Pickleball Association Chair was present. He suggested the possibility of the pickleball players doing something with the youth. He addressed the RYC about 204 Sisson Rd. and expressed the Association's concerns regarding their start date.

4. NEW BUSINESS

a. Recreation Program Update

Mr. Beebe gave an update, the Rec Dept. has a part-time program specialist who has been handling the social media posts. A high school student has also been helping after school. Mr. Beebe noted the new Youth Simple Fit Program which he described. All information is on the Town website and on social media. He is in the process of reserving a room for a Youth Movie Night, details will be out tomorrow. Mr. Beebe continued explaining current programs and upcoming programs. All information will be on the website as plans are finalized.

Questions were asked and suggestions were made which Mr. Beebe responded to. The subject of "low staff" was raised.

Joseph Powers, Town Administrator made a general statement regarding the suggestion of having a Booster Club. He explained that yes, there can be a Booster Club and the Town has the ability to receive a gift of funds. He explained that the Town can acquire funds from different mechanisms and the term used is "Gift Funds". Mr. Powers also explained the Revolving Fund, the cap on those funds and what the options are regarding those funds. He noted that the Town has a mechanism in and can rely on the expertise of the Rec and Youth Commission to build programs. He emphasized that the answer from the Town of Harwich is "yes" to their requests and to their offers to volunteer.

Julie Kavanagh, Select Board Liaison also thanked the parents who attended. She encouraged them to contact her through email if they have questions or concerns. She also encouraged them to attend the RYC meetings.

Mr. Khachadorian also encouraged parents to attend the RYC meetings.

Parents asked about next steps and when/where they can sign up to volunteer.

Mr. Handler explained the process of volunteering and expressed that some things will take time. He also assured parents that the Select Board is on this and they will be moving forward.

b. Fee Rate Schedule - Pickleball

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Mr. Beebe referred to the proposed Pickleball program for 204 Sisson Rd. for this winter and noted the options for days, times, seasons and fees.

Mr. Powers noted that he had requested that Mr. Beebe freeze the registration process for the winter season until he was able to attend the RYC meeting. He explained that the Select Board works on the Budget all year and gave an explanation of Local Receipts. He noted that the Select Board will be discussing fee schedules and fee rates generally. Mr. Powers stated that the Select Board operates under MGL 40 s22f noting that fee rates must get final approval from the Select Board. He also noted that the registration process will begin again tomorrow but the fee schedule may change if there is a discussion at the Select Board level.

Members asked questions about registration and fees that have already been paid. Mr Powers responded. He also responded to a question regarding the Select Board meetings and whether or not there will be an opportunity for people to be heard regarding fees.

Mr. Mahan referred to the Select Board's Handbook, Recreation and Youth Commission. He read from the Handbook and asked Mr. Powers for clarification regarding the question of who sets the policies and fees.

Mr. Powers gave a detailed explanation noting that Mass General Law Chapter 40 Section 22f prevails.

Mr. Beebe summarized that regarding Pickle Ball, They will start on Thursday at the 204. Rec will take registration forms and will hold payment until they have more details.

Discussion followed regarding Saturday morning Pickle Ball and whether or not they should offering it again.

c. Dept. of Public Works (Highway) Department's work order process

Mr. Beebe explained the DPW's work order process in detail. Discussion followed regarding work orders that have been submitted and an update on the progress of those.

Mr. Mahar requested that, when a work order is requested, a cc is also sent to the Chair.

5. RECREATION AND MAINTENANCE

a. Director Report

Mr. Beebe gave an update that the new Facility Policy Subcommittee has met and that the Facility Policy will be an Agenda item. CPC project will also be on a future Agenda. The Rec Department will be submitting their MUNIS request for the Budget. He gave an overview of the Budget timeline.

b. Property Maintenance Report

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Mr. Beebe gave an update on the spinner at Brooks Park.. He noted that the Sand Pond Bids are opening the next day and gave the project update. Mr Beebe has submitted the CPC requests and will e-mail details to all members.

- c. Budget Report
- d. Chairman's Report

Mr. Khachadorian would like to develop a subcommittee or a working committee based on what had been expressed at this meeting. He would like the working committee to be comprised of members of the Commission, Mr. Beebe and parents.

Mr. Nixon described what he feels was the change in responsibilities and how things changed over time.

Discussion followed regarding new programs, responsibilities and procedures.

Mr. Mahan read the section of the Charter that refers to the Commission's responsibilities and policies.

Parents who were at the meeting were involved in the conversation. They expressed their support for Mr. Beebe and noted that they would vote for more staff at Town Meeting.

- e. Liaison Reports & Subcommittee Updates
 - * Community Preservation Committee

Mr. Nixon gave an overview of the money that will be voted at Town Meeting for funding and the status of CPC projects. He expressed that it will be a competitive situation for funds.

- * Facilities Committee

Mr. Khachadorian reported that he had attended meeting of the Facilities Committee and gave a detailed update. He noted that there are 3 positions available on the Committee.

- * Fees Subcommittee

Mr. Beebe noted that he had sent out meeting minutes/notes from the subcommittee meeting. He reviewed the recommendations and changes in the scheduling to prevent blanket bookings. Mr. Beebe continued with additional updates, non-profits vs profits and suggested a change in fees. Also discussed was the little parking lot at Whitehouse. He will send out another update after their next meeting.

6. OLD BUSINESS

- a. CPC project update

Discussed previously.

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7. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Nixon moved to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Mercurio.

Vote 6:0 in favor. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Judi Moldstad
Recording Secretary

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