



Acton Recreation Commission
Meeting Minutes
Room 121
Acton Town Hall
March 9, 2010

Call to Order

Ms. Karen Jarsky, Chair, called meeting to order at 7:00 PM. The following attendees were present: Ms. Karen Jarsky, Chair, Ms. Kim Bodnar, co-Chair, Mr. Frank Calore, Commissioner, Ms. Elizabeth Payne, Commissioner, Mr. Michael Gowing, Selectman, Ms. Cathy Fochtman, Recreation Director, Ms. Maura Haberman, Recreation Event Coordinator/Admin. Asst., Guest Mr. Matt Condon, President of Old Gold Rugby was in attendance for Agenda Item VIII.

Consent Agenda

MOTION: Motion to Approve January 5, 2010 Minutes by Ms. Jarsky. Minutes approved as amended, Motion passes 4-0

Citizen Concerns

- a) **Field Availability for Lacrosse:** Ms. Fochtman reported that Ms. Sue Cotter came to the Department to express her concern regarding uncertainty for field assignments for A-B Youth Lacrosse as they await Acton-Boxborough Youth Soccer scheduling. Lacrosse wants to get their league schedules put in place, and is unable to do so without field assignments. Ms. Fochtman reported she is unable to designate space due to field repairs at both NARA and School Street, and is awaiting soccer's finalized schedule. In past seasons, Lacrosse has been using School Street Extension fields for their practices and informed Recreation they do not want the School Street Extension fields, due to concerns of potential injuries from current field conditions. New fields they are requesting have been used by AB Youth Soccer over many years and will take coordination with ABYS to work out movement of assignments. AB Youth Lacrosse games are held on the school campus and only practice on town fields. Ms. Jarsky asked why not tell soccer they can't use the field? Ms. Fochtman informed the Commission that she has received a lot of resistance from soccer about lacrosse wear on fields, and they cannot be repaired in the same playing season. Soccer will not repair damages caused by Lacrosse during their short season. Soccer does contribute to field maintenance with Nobel Landscaping. Ms. Fochtman reported that AB Youth Lacrosse is willing to pay for field repairs. Mr. Gowing commented that the field damage at School Street is not the solely responsibility of ABYB or ABYL, but is caused by continued use which doesn't permit the field to rest.

ACTION ITEM: Mr. Gowing recommended Ms. Fochtman set up a meeting with ABYS and ABYL leaders to work out a plan together.

IV.

Recreation Spring/Summer Program

Ms. Fochtman reported that the 2010 Spring Summer Program Booklet has been delivered to all homes and businesses in Acton & Boxborough, and is receiving a favorable response. NARA Beach Membership and NARA Youth Summer Camp fees did not increase this year. The program offers multiple sports clinics including soccer, lacrosse, flag ball, and birding. Additional classes include indoor and outdoor tennis run by All Seasons Tennis, marital arts and special young teen classes like Duct Tape Madness and Fleece Blanket Night. A variety of bus trips, special events and concerts are also within the program.

Ms. Haberman reported that our Acton IT Website Designer, Ms. Mason, has been working on the Recreation Department page and expects it to be uploaded this week. The site will reflect the same information as contained in the program booklet.

Due to overcrowded classes at the Senior Center, Ms. Fleming, Director COA, asked Ms. Fochtman if a special flyer can be made highlighting programs seniors may want to sign up for that Recreation is offering. This new flyer is now at the COA building.

The program includes a special order page for 275th merchandise where proceeds will directly help fund the 275th Celebration event. Mr. Gowing reported that Boxborough sells merchandise each year at Fifer's Day and it works out well.

Mr. Gowing inquired when online registration will begin. Ms. Fochtman reported that Peak Software and a new server have been received and anticipates online registration to begin this spring.

Ms. Bodnar reported that she read an article that the obesity rate in Acton is one of the lowest in Metrowest Boston.

Ms. Fochtman reported that the Recreation Department is now overseeing permit issuance for Camp Acton. Over the past, permits were obtained through Natural Resources. Mr. Calore reported he had heard there used to be a Girl Scout Camp area near the High School. Ms. Fochtman was not aware of this, but will investigate.

V. **NARA Park Summer Hiring**

Ms. Fochtman reported that she has sent out 32 staff acceptance letters. She has received numerous new applicants for summer employment. At this time, it looks like an additional two waterfront and two camp staff may be needed. Ms. Fochtman is awaiting confirmation receipt from acceptance letters and will then make a decision on new hires.

VI. **Recreation Operations – Peak Software Installation**

Ms. Fochtman reported that Peak Software will provide new procedures for money handling and beach entry. She has been meeting regularly with Mr. Hald, IT Director, and Finance Department. She will be able to give a more detailed update at the next meeting.

VII. **Rugby Outreach**

A refresher on the Rugby situation was given to the Commission by Ms. Fochtman at the request of Ms. Jarsky at the start of the meeting. Ms. Fochtman reported to the Commission that Old Gold Rugby was the permit holder and hosted the USA Rugby Tournament at NARA Park in October. Despite a signed weather policy for field use and communication, USA Rugby continued to use the fields and caused serious damage to the three closest fields near the amphitheater hill. Repairs were approximately \$600. A security deposit was kept and applied to make repairs. AB Youth Soccer was very dissatisfied about the situation, and moved all their games from NARA for the remainder of their playing season to other town fields. Ms. Fochtman reported that 2/3 of NARA fields were still playable and that ABYS didn't have to close all the fields to play. Repairs were made in early December. Right after repairs were completed, the fields and amphitheater were vandalized by a truck resulting in severe and extensive damage to the newly repaired field and amphitheater. Ms. Fochtman looks forward to working on repairing the fields in April, with anticipation of reopening fields in mid-June.

Mr. Matt Condon, President of Old Gold Rugby, joined the meeting at 7:55. He would like to continue the 30-year relationship with the Town of Acton as the host site for their annual Rugby Tournament. They have 50 clubs from all over the region and this tournament is used as a bridge to bond teams and draw revenue as a major fundraiser for community outreach projects in Boston. Over the past, Old Gold Rugby has been especially careful to pick up any litter and make repairs caused by their tournament. They like to leave the fields in the same condition and have maintained a good relationship with Acton Recreation.

Ms. Fochtman agreed that prior to this incident there have not been any large issues with the annual Old Gold Rugby Tournament. For all field users, there is a weather policy which is signed by Permit Holder regardless of weekday or evening events. Ms. Fochtman reported that staff is not on the fields on the weekends and all users must abide by the weather policy. The damages caused by USA Rugby were due to non-compliance and the fact that the majority of players traveled cross country to play in this one weekend tournament. Mr. Congdon reported that the tournament was online live with 20,000 viewers for each day of the tournament. He also expressed how much of an honor it was for their league to host this event.

Ms. Jarsky asked what measures Old Gold Rugby would take to ensure that this won't happen again. Mr. Condon would like to have an open channel of communication, and have their executive team make the call. Steps that can put into system to assure that this won't happen again would be a week before, call and talk with Recreation Director, call on Friday prior to weekend tournament and discuss decisions and alternatives.

Mr. Gowing asked since Mr. Condon noted they are a 501(c)3 Non-profit, is it possible for their insurance to cover the damages?

Ms. Jarsky inquired about spectator attendance and if they advertise this event to the public. Mr. Condon reported they don't have many spectators and was enthusiastic about advertising this opportunity in the future in local papers.

Mr. Calore reported that there is a Rugby team in Concord.

Mr. Condon would like to rectify the bad experience and continue the good relationship with the Town. Ms. Jarsky would like to avoid 'out-of-state' tournaments in the future and have a Plan B in place with alternate location should weather become an issue. The Commissioners agreed that they want to maintain this long-standing relationship with Old Gold Rugby and continue the tournament at NARA in the future.

MOTION: A motion to allow annual Old Gold Rugby Tournament was made by Mr. Calore, seconded by Ms. Jarsky. Motion carries 4-0.

VIII. **REPORTS**

- a) **Elm Street Update:** Mr. Gowing reported that he spoke with Attorney Walter Foster, a former Acton Selectman, and found that most of the issues that created the Elm Street injunction, have been addressed. The new lights do not pollute and users are well-mannered. It was recommended that it would be best to get a handshake agreement to save court costs, and Town use of power on its citizens. From the original injunction, only two of the neighbors still reside in the area. Just one of these two would like the injunction to continue. Mr. Gowing will continue to work on this issue.
- b) **Morrison Farm Update:** Mr. Gowing reported that architectural firm Kelleher Architects has finalized reuse options. After Town Meeting the Board of Selectmen will have a televised meeting about various use opportunities including: sports fields, open space, gardening, and historic preservation.
- c) **CPC:** Mr. Gowing reported that CPC is looking to acquire agricultural property in South Acton owned by the Caouette family.
- d) **School Street:** Ms. Fochtman reported that she is meeting with the Water District later this week to discuss well use and water restrictions. Ms. Fochtman has been discussing with Mr. Chalmers, Farm Supervisor at MCI Concord, School Street improvements and repair including soil testing, affordable fertilizing options, and potential use of water cannons for irrigation.
- e) **Playground Update:** Ms. Fochtman followed up with Goric (playground equipment manufacturer) for replacement parts and cap posts for the Goward Playground. She is also looking to replace netting at Jones field this spring.
- f) **Open Space and Recreation Plan:** No report
- g) **NARA Picnic Pavilion Update:** Ms. Fochtman reported an initial meeting has taken place with the designer, Kaffee Kang, and the Picnic Pavilion Committee (Tom Tidman, Dean Charter, Cathy Fochtman, Maura Haberman). Ideas for design work included timber frame structure with metal roof that can serve as a facility for a large group outing or multiple smaller ones at the same time. Products discussed included eco friendly materials, concrete pad, electrical, and water. The next meeting scheduled with the Ms. Kang is March 23.

IX. **NEW BUSINESS/DISCUSSION:** No new business was reported.

X. **MS. JARSKY ADJOURNED THE MEETING AT 8:38 PM**

NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING IS TUESDAY, APRIL 6, 2010, ROOM 126, ACTON TOWN HALL

Minutes taken by: Maura Haberman, Event Coordinator/Administrative Assistant