Salem Park & Recreation Commission

Minutes

Date and Time: Tuesday, January 19, 2016 at 6:00pm

Meeting Location: 5 Broad Street

Members Present: Chair Amy Everitt, Chris Burke, Bob Callahan, James Shea, Leslie Tuttle

Members Absent:

Others Present: Jason Silva

Recorder: Stacy Kilb

**Meeting Called to Order**

The meeting is called to order bys Chair Everitt at 6:00 PM.

**Election of Officers**

Callahan nominates Tuttle for Chair.

*A motion to close the nomination is made by Callahan, seconded by Shea, and all are in favor.*

*A motion to elect Chair Tuttle is made by Callahan, seconded by Burke, and all are in favor.*

*Callahan is nominated as Vice Chair by Shea, and all are in favor.*

*A motion to close the nomination is made by Everitt, seconded by Tuttle, and all are in favor.*

*A motion to elect Callahan as Vice Chair is made by Everitt, seconded by Tuttle, and all are in favor.*

**Approval of November Minutes**

Shea notes one small change to his comments about basketball league and its fees.

*A motion to approve the minutes as amended is made by Callahan, seconded by Shea, and passes unanimously*.

**Visitors and Requests**

**Mack Park Neighborhood Association: K9 Golf Tournament Fundraiser, use of Olde Salem Greens**

This will be on June 6th, and all proceeds go to the charity. This is exactly the same as in previous years.

*Shea motions to approve the fundraiser, Callahan seconds, with the condition that it be coordinated with the Golf Course manager, all are in favor.*

Shea comments it has been very successful in the past two years.

**Mark Lovely, Wreaths Across America: Carnival Fundraiser at Leslie's Retreat Park on June 2nd through the 5th**

Shea requests a description of the organization and Mr. Lovely describes. They place wreaths on veterans’ graves and must fundraise to purchase them. This is the first year they are doing a fundraising carnival. Larry Cushing of Cushing Amusements is also present and describes the carnival. Their other carnivals have been held at Devereaux Beach in Marblehead.

Shea asks about his awareness of the City requirements for insurance and Mr. Cushing describes. Burke asks about cleanup and Mr. Cushing elaborates. Cleanup occurs nightly and upon removal of the Carnival. Portable toilets and a dumpster will be rented and provided. Mr. Lovely has spoken to the Police Department and to the Council, but not to the neighborhood associations yet.

*Shea motions to approve, Callahan seconds, and all are in favor.*

Mr. Lovely asks about furthering the process and will follow up with Jason Silva.

**Wicked Running Club: 6th Annual Miles Over the Moon, use of the Salem Common**

The applicant presents out of order at 7:15PM. Mr. Tom Mistretta describes the event. 600 runners are expected. Sanitation units will be provided. Other details are described. The race starts at 8PM. A new route is being explored this year; it will be similar to the Thanksgiving race toward the Willows.

Callahan references previous discussions about donations and Mr. Mistretta describes the procedure; typically the donation rotates to each of the area schools. Callahan feels that since Salem hosts the race, this City should benefit every time. Mr. Mistretta will discuss with Tim Short.

Shea asks about costs; financials are on the application but it costs $12,000 with a profit of about $2,000. Mr. Mistretta believes last year’s donation was made to Peabody, but upon review sees the entire donation went to Salem.

Callahan motions to approve the race with 50% of the donation being made to Salem and the remaining 50% to a school of the race organizer’s choosing. He is seconded by Shea.

Mr. Mistretta is unsure if his Board will accept this condition and Shea is unsure if what they are requesting is legal. He suggests tabling approval until next month as it is not time sensitive.

Callahan withdraws his original motion and makes instead a motion to approve the race, with a strong recommendation that 50% of the donation goes to Salem, and 50% to school of choice. Shea seconds and all are in favor.

Mr. Mistretta will bring the issue before his Board and will update Mr. Silva.

**Parks and Recreation Department:**

**Snowshoe 5K on February 21, 2016 at Olde Salem Greens Golf Course**

**Nutty Irishman on March 19, 2016 at Olde Salem Greens Golf Course**

**Junior Golf Tournament on August 23, 2016 at Olde Salem Greens Golf Course**

Jason Silva describes the events; all are City runs but he has the information.

*Shea motions to approve and Everitt seconds.*

Discussion:

Burke asks about funds, and Silva describes as much as he is aware of. Proceeds from the Snowshoe 5K and Junior Golf Tournament go to the City but it is uncertain whether to the revolving or the general fund. The Nutty Irishman is in its second year, in collaboration with B & S Fitness. Salem receives 30% of those proceeds.

*All Commission members vote in favor of this motion.*

**Superintendent Report**

**Revenue Report**

Almost all amounts are positive compared to last year, except for the Winter Island store. The golf course and Witch House are doing well.

Shea asks if the Mayor would support an increase in parking fees at the Willows meters. They are the lowest in the City. He would like to increase them since all money needed for the Willows comes from that source. That has been requested previously. Silva thinks the Commission can petition the City Council directly, and can do so again. The Commission would like to increase from 25 cents to 50 cents. Also those meters are never monitored. Silva notes that some meters are missing. Callahan also mentions that at a previous meeting, it was suggested that Parks and Rec hire a seasonal employee for meter control.

**Basketball Leagues Review**

The Commission had voted previously to eliminate all fees on a trial basis, so the program is now being offered for free. Jason Silva outlines the numbers so that Commissioners may be informed. He is unsure if continuing to offer the program for free us sustainable but feels it is a good way to get kids involved right now. He indicates that the revolving fund balance is $27,600 but that running both the travel and rec leagues at no cost to participants is impacting that balance, at a cost of $10,000.

Thirty participants were already registered prior to the fee elimination; that number increased to 66 and Silva notes that there has been an increase in signups compared to prior years. Shea feels that the custodial fees should be discussed.

Silva comments that, if the Commission wishes to offer this program for free moving forward, sponsors will be needed. Shea comments that revenue has fallen because programs are not advertised heavily enough. Tuttle comments that at the last meeting the Commission was eliminating the fees as a way to determine whether the issue was a lack of interest vs. inability to pay. Ideally, those who could pay for the program would, and those who could not, could still participate for free. Burke comments this should be the target group of Salem Parks and Rec, since all youth activities are fee based. This would be an appropriate place for the City to spend money. The travel team does pay a fee while the rec team is free.

Shea comments that the cost of this program ($10,000) should be a budget item approved by the mayor. Je notes that revenue from the golf course, Witch House, etc. goes to the City, not back to this Department. Silva comments that the Parks and Rec managed properties that generate revenue are doing “amazingly well.” There is further discussion on the exemplary management of the golf course.

Burke asks about the summer program and Silva elaborates on the cost. He does not think cost would be the same over the summer but will have to wait and see. Silva comments that Eric, who is running the program, is doing well, making sure it is a positive experience so participants will return, whether or not they decide to charge a fee in the future. Callahan comments that it can be stressed to the new Director that the fees can be put into the operating Budget.

Shea comments that he spoke to the Coach who complimented Eric and Kathy.

Burke comments that the decision to waive the fees was made after some fees were collected, and wonders if there will be an even bigger bump in registrations if the fee is waived beforehand next year. Callahan comments that the reason for waiving the fees was that, at the time former director Partanen was hired, she was concerned that the league was in jeopardy of folding due to lack of signups.

**Park, Recreation and Community Services Director and COA Director Hiring Updates**

Seven candidates have been interviewed with one more scheduled for tomorrow (1/20). Silva comments that their qualifications on the Rec side have been more impressive than those on the Council on Aging (COA) side. He further describes where they are in the process; the pool of COA directors is not as deep as that for Park, Recreation and Community Services Director, with no good fit yet for the COA position,

Burke comments on hiring the Director and wonders if the candidate must go through the Mayor or if it is the choice of this Commission by ordinance. Silva describes the process as the candidate being appointed by the Mayor, then approved by the Parks and Rec Position, whereas previously candidates were chosen by this Commission. There is some debate as to whether that ordinance was changed before former director Partanen was hired. Burke opines that this Commission should be involved in the hiring process, and that the top three candidates should be presented here.

Everitt provides an update on the hiring process so far. Once a selection is made, the Mayor will send the candidate for approval by the Parks and Rec Commission; he or she must also get confirmed by the City Council. Thus, if the usual selection process is followed, the Commission will not see the second and third choice candidates. It is expected that the new Director will be hired by the next Parks and Rec Commission meeting; Tuttle asks if a special meeting should be held in between. There is ongoing discussion about the ordinance and possible changes. A special meeting can be requested if the status of the ordinance is unclear. Up to two Commissioners can sit in on the final interviews without it constituting a meeting requiring posting and a quorum. Burke is interested and will follow up with Silva.

**Parks and Facility**

**CPA Project Applications Submitted**

The CPC met recently and included 5 projects, as outlined. Some were denied in the last round, but approved instead as historic resources. Mack Park and Forest River bathrooms as well as the Forest River Pool are now eligible and Silva must submit a funding application for each.

**Salem Willows Project (area abutting Hobbs Popcorn)**

An update is provided. A stakeholder group has met once to redesign the space with pathways and green space with patio seating and pedestrian scale lighting. Everitt says it will draw people into the park, creating a promenade down to the water/pier.

Benches and patio updates are discussed. Those wishing to make a donation could sponsor a brick on the patio rather than a bench, or perhaps a tree, as Tuttle comments that Willows have a lifespan.

**McGlew Park Working Group**

The Planning Dept. is spearheading this effort with money from the CPA, so this is a redesign of the park. A landscape architect has been hired.

**Bertram Field Update**

A working group meeting was held and is nearing their last meeting. An architect has been hired. Projects such as new concessions, etc. are being prioritized and sited. The group is also trying to devise an operational model that will allow the park to generate a revenue stream to pay for its upkeep.

Burke asks if the gate is intentionally left open at night or if it should be locked; Tuttle states that the community wanted it unlocked and it was voted upon to leave it that way. Burke has not seen any problems.

**Facility and Park Assessment, Evaluation and Recommendations Update**

Final recommendations are upcoming and an overview of findings will be presented at the next meeting.

**McGrath Park concessions stand construction**

Construction is ongoing and will be completed next spring.

**Salem Common Fence Improvements**

This project is being completed with CPA and CIP funds, through the Planning Department. Costs and progress are outlined. New molds had to be produced as the originals could not be found.

**Forest River Pool contract - plan to accept last year contract option**

This contract is on the last of three one-year options. Some complaints have been addressed but others such as gaps in the gate and standing water/ice still remain. There is some question as to the role of the carektaker and Silva describes, stating that the responsibilities go beyond Forest River Park.

**Coast to Coast Paddle at Salem Willows - plan to enter into another 1-year license agreement**

This organization was at Willows last year. Shea motions to approve acceptance of the contractg, Everitt seconds, and all are in favor.

**Old Business**

n/a

**New Business**

Callahan request that Scott come in next meeting to outline fee requests, along with Paul.

Tuttle comments that the golf course was on the news, in a segment outlining where people were still playing in December in MA.

This leads to a discussion on compensation for the golf course Superintendent. Salary structure is described and conversations will begin soon. More compliments are given to the current Superintendent and the Commission feels fortunate to have him on board as he is exemplary. They hope to retain him.

**Road Race Fee Schedule - consider modifications**

This has been previously discussed. Silva spoke to the legal dept about what information can and cannot be obtained. It appears that the Commission could, if desired, charge a percentage of the gross revenue of road races. Alternately, a previous proposal had been to charge a fee per participant. However, no written opinions or agreements have been made so Partanen was originally going to check with the City Solicitor.

Further discussion ensues. Shea comments that the Commission would like to get revenue from road races that take up an entire park, and Tuttle wished to see profit and loss. Road race and golf tournament applications coming in were providing that data.

There is additional conversation indicating that it is unclear what, exactly, the outcome of previous discussions re legality was. Callahan recalls that the City Solicitor indicates that they were NOT allowed to pursue the information re income, profit and loss of each organization but COULD charge a fee for each participant. Burke disagrees, commenting that this Commission wanted said information in order to know if proceeds were going to a charity or for profit, and that his understanding was that the City Solicitor thought the Commission could obtain it.

Mr. Paul Tucker is a runner and comments that he also had discussions with the City Solicitor. He feels there is a distinction between a charity event, such as one using the golf course, which would take away from the profitability of the event, and one in which the organization is using the streets for an hour or two, and paying for a police detail, making sure cleanup occurs, etc. When he spoke to the City Solicitor, he was given the same impression as Callahan, that financials could not be requested but that a per-participant fee (say $2/participant) was reasonable. Mr. Tucker states that B & S races are very popular with hundreds of participants because they are very well run, and outlines the effort that goes into each race. He feels it would be reasonable for an additional fee to be charged for the City, but that it should be a per-race-applicant fee.

Shea agrees but feels that for-profit companies take over a public park, receive complaints, and host out of towners so that residents cannot use the park.

Mr. Tucker comments that B & S Fitness is a brick and mortar business here, vs. one that is out of town, and also that there is spin off business to local establishments. Shea again comments on the complaints. Burke maintains that the Solicitor indicated in a letter that the requests for financials was appropriate and wonders if she changed her mind. Shea comments that it would be best to table the issue until the Commission has all the information in writing.

Everitt indicates that there are two separate issues: the Commission’s right to see event financials, and the question of fees.

Burke agrees that the types of events mentioned by Mr. Tucker are different. He feels races that give to charitable organizations could be prioritized. Callahan notes that this Commission solely has jurisdiction over use of the parks while the City Council has purview over the streets for the duration of the race. This Commission only has jurisdiction over the start and finish. While the Commission may feel one amount is fair compensation for the use of one of the parks, the Parks and Recreation DEPARTMENT administers the fee. Silva originally thought the road race fee was in question, not a fee for use of a park, and also agrees that the issue should be tabled but that the Solicitor was comfortable with the Commission charging a fee based on gross revenue or per participant.

Tom Mistretta, of the Wicked Running Club/Miles over the Parks and Rec Department, but it is modest. This race brings 600 runners, so a per-runner fee would be $1200 if charged $2per runner. He notes that organizers would have to increase fees to runners, which would be a negative. He would rather use the money to donate to local high schools. He also states that the difference between for profit and nonprofit races should be noted.

Everitt comments that this Commission regularly waives fees upon request for nonprofits so he could request that.

The discussion about the donation rotation to area high schools from above (see Miles Over the Moon race) recurs.

The question arises of what the Commission would like to see – the road race fee or a fee for the use of the park? Callahan feels it should be the same thing, but only for races that use the parks. Other fees would be beyond the purview of this Commission.

Steven Dion, owner of B & S Fitness, comments that he also had conversations with the City Solicitor. The application has a space and requirement that the race organizers declare which to charity and how much they will donate. That was the original issue. He feels that if the company is a nonprofit, financials may be requested, but takes issue with asking them of a for-profit company. Shea comments that Salem charities should benefit, but the exact charity that receives the donation is up to the race organizers.

Tuttle indicates that the Commission will await written clarification and take up the issue again at the next meeting.

**Mary Jane Lee Park grant agreement**

The Chair must authorize entrance into the grant agreement with the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs for a $400K PARCC grant for phase two park renovations.

*Shea motions to allow the Chair to authorize, is seconded by Everitt, and all are in favor.*

**Chris Burke - discussion regarding the creation of a plan for tree planting in city parks**

Salem has no tree policy; most towns do. He comments that Park improvements come before this Commission already designed, including landscaping. He would prefer instead to have the Commission set some priorities that any landscape architect hired should take into account during the4 planning process. Specifically, he personally would like to formulate a policy for tree planting. It would be wise to seek a volunteer arborist to form an educated policy. He notes the presence of Silver Maples in the Common, vs. the invasive Norway maples elsewhere. He notes that when streets of a historic nature such as Chestnut Street are re-landscaped, which trees to plant are carefully considered; the parks deserve the same merit. Larger and better trees can be planted as those in the parks do not have to contend with overhead wires, etc. He describes his vision, and would especially like to see fruit trees. He notes the apple trees in Lafayette Park.

Rosemary O’Connor of the Mack Park Neighborhood Association states that the Ward 4 Councilor has started large commission to review all trees in Salem; Burke may collaborate with him on that. There is a shade tree division under the Cemetery Dept. However, even though that division does work in parks, they are not included as part of the obligation. No landscaping or replanting gets done unless the parks are redesigned. Burke would like to know what David Eppley is planning re City Council.

Everitt points out the resource of Salem State geology and environmental students and comments that this may be a project opportunity for them. She will see if there is any interest. Shea recommends forming a subcommittee, and also to coordinate with the City Council and other staff.

A motion to form said subcommittee is made by Shea, seconded by Callahan, and all are in favor.

**Adjournment**

**Next Meeting: Tuesday, February 16, 2016**

*A motion to adjourn is made by Shea, seconded by Callahan, and passes unanimously.*

The meeting ends at 7:35PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Stacy Kilb

Clerk, Salem Park & Recreation Commision