



**CITY OF DOVER**

## DOVER RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD - MINUTES

Meeting Type: Regular Meeting  
Meeting Location: McConnell Center, 61 Locust Street, Dover, NH 03820  
Senior Center Activity Room  
Meeting Date: Monday, September 9, 2013  
Meeting Time: **7:00pm**

**DRAFT**

**CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order by Joe Tenuta at 7:14pm.

### **ROLL CALL**

Recreation Director: Gary Bannon

Assistant Recreation Director: Krista Trefethen

#### **Recreation Board members in attendance:**

City Council Liaison: Bob Carrier

Joe Tenuta

Norm Fracassa

Stanley Kaubris

Scott Kelley

Jerry Newcomb

Jon Towle

Kathy Morrison

#### **Recreation Board members not in attendance:**

Ronan O'Doherty (Alternate member)

**Open Positions on Rec Board:** One full time & two alternates. A full board consists of nine (9) full time members and three (3) alternate members.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Approval of minutes for August 12, 2013

Stan Kaubris motioned to accept. Seconded by Scott Kelley. Motion passed unanimously.

### **CITIZENS' FORUM:**

None (no members of the general public in attendance).

However, it was noted that Dover Community Services Director Doug Steele was in attendance.

### **Discussion with Community Services Director Doug Steele**

Doug has been with the city for 23 years.

Joe stated for clarification that our interest is on how things are handled and get done once reported to the Community Services Division and Jon was interested in clarification on the \$30k in gravel money that was supposedly ear marked for "park maintenance" annually and how it's spent / held.



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Gary explained that the money isn't money in his budget as his budget is solely for capital projects and maintenance of parks and equipment is specifically handled by Community Services. Doug explained that the budgeted amount specifically for park maintenance / supplies is only \$5,700. Cost for contract mowing and bark mulch etc it's running ~ \$75,000. The gravel funds are quickly consumed by things such as irrigation and covering remaining maintenance needs. For example, the water bill for Shaws Lane fields alone can run upwards of \$20,000 annually. He is in the process of speaking with Gary about the possibility of a well going in for Shaws Lane to offset these costs which will help put money back into the budget for other maintenance items. However, the "Gravel Money" IS going to go away sometime in the near future so he has talked with the City Manager about the need to try to find other ways to fund these needs and to start considering budget planning to be ready for it when it happens. The funds currently in the budget include funds for contract mowing as well which eat quickly eat up these funds. The maintenance line item is grossly underfunded based on what the true needs are of the City Parks however he is required to follow the tax cap increase max of 2% annually which is easily consumed simply by the annual increases in fuel costs, equipment maintenance, employee benefits etc. As such, there isn't really any room for him to be able to increase line items beyond what he already does during his budget planning.

Jerry asked if we are doing a disservice by planning for new parks or remodeling old parks {ie: Henry Law } without having the long term thinking / planning for the maintenance after the first couple years. Doug agrees that there needs to be some thinking / planning for the long term once parks are remodeled or new parks are considered.

Norm asked if Community Services does not have the ability, given current funding, to provide all the maintenance & upkeep needed for the parks currently within the City Park inventory. Doug felt the amount budgeted for park maintenance & upkeep is certainly underfunded for what the true needs are. But, he felt that they were doing as good a job as possible given the funds allowed in the budget. He said he knows there's a need to increase the amounts for the park maintenance budget and he will include greater increases for the maintenance line items for his next budget.

Bob pointed out that when the items for the Recreation department get in front of the Council they are not often touched but that prior to the budgets getting to council they do get cut by the meetings Doug and Gary have with the City Manager in order to comply with the tax cap. Bob mentioned that while he has no interest in seeing the taxes go up for anyone in the city these are the problems with a tax cap budget restraining them from funding programs and items the way they truly need to be funded. With a tax cap in place there is nothing anyone can do and given the current sentiment of having to keep within the tax cap essentially everyone's hands are tied.



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Norm mentioned that he remembers Doug getting up in front of the council during a previous budget season and went in *great detail* on how additional money was needed for paving issues within the city. The suggestion being that we should do the same situation here. We need to go into great detail and support Doug as well as Gary during their budget presentations with specifics about the parks, what needs to be done (funding wise) for their continued upkeep, data about their usage and the level of use they get at all times of the day and at all times of the year.

Norm feels that we need to start putting some efforts in to help paint a clear picture of what needs to be done and how underfunding the maintenance budget doesn't project a good image when people go to the parks and see that there's graffiti on the equipment or that equipment is damaged or that it's a potential safety / liability issue when equipment isn't well kept. The parks, especially those getting the most use, are viewed by people not only from the community but those outside as well and we wouldn't want their opinion of Dover to be formed based on parks that aren't well maintained.

Doug said that he's informed his staff that as of now if there's something that the parks / recreation department needs that they're to order and just get it done and he'll overspend the budget if he needs to and move money from one area to cover but that's just to help show how underfunded it is and not a long term solution.

Gary mentioned the slide for Henry Law Park has been ordered and will be installed once it's in. The slide was obtained through the use of "green envelope \$". Doug said that we need to be thinking of the long term solutions to the funding problem without having to use "green envelope \$".

Jerry stated there needs to be more long term planning when we go to remodel parks or bring new ones on line. He stated we can't keep bringing on new and remodeled parks without considering the back side maintenance after they are done. Norm talked about the master plan with one of the main future goals being keeping parks clean and well maintained. He stated we need to recognize the challenges of upkeep and find ways to meet that challenge. Norm stated the parks are for keeping kids and citizens safe and healthy with a way for them to get out and exercise and enjoy the outdoors and we need to find ways to satisfy the upkeep so people continue to get out and enjoy them. Norm agrees with Jerry that we have to be thinking of the backside upkeep after parks are remodeled or new ones opened. Jerry clarified that he wanted to continue to work on the parks remodeling and potential new ones but that part of that must be to planning for the maintenance of them once they're opened.



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Kathy mentioned that she visits parks all over the city on a regular basis with family and she believes that overall the parks are in good shape. Kathy thinks it may be a good time to have the different neighborhoods come together that are around the park areas and have an “Adopt a Spot” type campaign where those in the general area of the parks help to maintain them as they see things while they’re there or in the area. Norm stated that the Dover Main Street group does work with interested residents to give advice / guidance to the ones who ask or show interest. Norm stated this helps in projecting the image that we would want for the city and the slide in Henry Law was just one example of having to wait too long to get it addressed and replaced. Norm believes that in the meantime it wasn’t projecting the image we would want to the visitors. Especially in the Henry Law area which is highly used for events like the upcoming Irish Festival. Gary pointed out that he has no access to any money from the Henry Law trust to fix items such as the slide so he’s forced to use the maintenance money that comes from Doug’s budget. Doug stated he believes Atty Cox is the one in charge of the Henry Law Trust and Doug isn’t aware of what funds are there or how they’re used in relation to the park.

Joe asked the question how we can fix the process. Doug stated we need to get more \$ but that money isn’t the only solution. Doug stated he will work on efficiencies within his staff to find ways to get things accomplished faster and at lower costs. He also said he needs support from groups like us and citizens during the budget season for presentations to the council in order to press for more money. Currently Doug states that with the current level of funding allowed for maintenance and upkeep he’s doing the best he can with the limited resources he’s allowed for the existing parks.

Bob pointed out that the council currently has those that are very strict with keeping to the tax cap and there are those that want to show flexibility however, the tax cap is what they are currently having to deal with and while that’s in place there’s nothing they can do. Bob stated that the tax cap only allows for very limited increases in budgets and that those are quickly consumed by things like insurances, county obligations, welfare, retirement etc. Bob said he believes the tax cap only holds the city back from properly covering / funding additional items that are really needed such as the maintenance budgets. It holds the council back from running the city as you would a business.

Jerry suggested we attend the budget presentations to the council to help get our voices heard in support of Doug and Gary and doing everything we can to try to get the needed support to increase the funding of the maintenance budget. Norm agreed stating that we should show up with the specifics stats on the parks such as their usage vs. costs, # of calls for graffiti, trash, broken equipment etc and use it to help present a clear picture spelling out why the need for the increase is there. Gary suggested that the advocacy for the park maintenance should really be



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pointed during the presentation done by Doug as it's his department that handles the park maintenance side of things. Norm suggested that people would be really surprised to hear just how little \$ is budgeted for the maintenance of their parks and just how many that it covers. Doug said that in the past his presentations haven't focused on the needs of the parks at all but on larger and pressing needs such as environmental compliance issues. He stated that his next budget he will clearly spell out the needs for the increase in the maintenance budget for the parks and why.

Jon asked if the park maintenance is something that should go back to Gary in order to give Gary more direct oversight of the parks and their maintenance. Gary said the department is currently specifically called the Recreation Department and he gets the parks as a catch all. He said he'd be happy to take over the maintenance side and make it "Parks and Recreation" however taking the title without the assets / tools {funding} to support it is a losing proposition. As it stands there are not enough people and too many projects to do in order to properly cover the needs of the maintenance if it were to come back to the Recreation Department. Norm said he thought the master plan made mention of 1 part time person in order to handle the maintenance specifically for the parks. Bob said that at the time there was one however the need was spread to other areas as well and it must have got lost in the shuffle.

Norm commented that we often focus on what the problems are and can sometimes forget the good out there. He felt that we are doing "okay" but we need to focus on what the goals are before they get out of hand.

Joe stressed we need to support and help Doug at time of budget hearings as that's where the maintenance money for the parks is coming from so we should attend and offer our support and make comments known to the council.

Norm asked are the park checklists something that Doug / Sharon find helpful in policing the parks needs for different maintenance items. Gary mentioned that he compiles the checklists and gets them to Sharon in an order of importance so she can enter them into the system. Doug replied that he will check with Sharon and get back with Gary.

### **REPORTS**

#### **A) ADVISORY BOARD:**

Kathy reported that she was looking for some guidance regarding the Fish Ladder Park area needing some work done. She mentioned she will do what she can for pulling some weeds but needs some attention beyond that. She was wondering if there were any volunteer groups that we could look at to get involved. Gary, Scott and Doug mentioned that Chinburg who is



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handling the adjacent mill property is putting together some plans that may encompass that area for some updating and revamping and the plans so far are very attractive.

Stan – asked about volunteerism, when groups want to do some work who they should contact. Gary said he’s usually the one they contact.

Joe stated that he has seen numerous people from all over the area utilizing the frisbee golf course in the Bellamy Park area. It’s only one of a handful of locations in the State and everyone he’s talked with speaks highly of it.

### **B) RECREATION DIRECTOR, GARY BANNON**

- 1) Park Plaza update – Gary gave time tables for the upgrades being done to the Henry Law Park Pavilion area where the Christmas tree has been. Scheduling has been tricky due to the timing of events that use the park. Doug Steele commented that the Highway Division has been removing some of the sidewalk and stone work. They’ve been doing grading etc. to accommodate the moving of electrical and water services that had been located under the previous tree location. Gary said the timing is that they’re getting the Community Services portion done and buttoned up first prior to the next events at the park area and then the Rotary will come in with the stone work and put in the combination flag pole holder / tree holder. It will hold a tree during the Holiday season and will hold a flagpole the remainder of the year. Expectation is that it will all be completed October / November.
- 2) Dover Federal Savings Bank will be doing a “Day of Caring” this week at the McConnell Center grounds. They will be doing some light landscaping and planting in front of the building. The idea being that it will be completed prior to Apple Harvest Day as there will be arts type events / booths in front of the McConnell center as in previous years.
- 3) Pool fundraiser recently held as per the article in Foster’s Daily Democrat. The event was to raise money for a critically ill six year old at Berwick Academy. The event was a great success and very well attended.
- 4) Slide for Henry Law Park has been ordered and will be installed as soon as it arrives.
- 5) There is a group proposing a new frisbee golf course along the Community Trail in the area of Cassilly property along Whittier St. Frisbee golf is growing in popularity as evidenced by typically being 100+ users of the Bellamy Park course on any given day and in any given season. There have been a number of tournaments held there as well which have all been well attended. There is also a



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group that has approached Gary to open a “pro shop” and “snack bar” in the existing Bellamy Park building. Gary is currently in discussions with them about this and seeing if a lease for the location can be worked out.

### **ASSISTANT RECREATION DIRECTOR, KRISTA TREFETHEN**

- 1) Gym Floor has been redone and is ready for basketball season.
  - a. Youth basketball signups will be October 1<sup>st</sup>
  - b. Other groups will be holding their signups after then
  - c. Player fees will cover the new padding for the stage area, the wall at the opposite end of the gym and the backboard structure. All of which are being replaced.
- 2) Senior Center activity:
  - a. 42 people are currently on the trips to the casinos.
  - b. 2 people are headed to France / Europe for that trip.
  - c. Nutrition classes are currently underway.
- 3) Fall fitness classes are underway and there may be add'l classes due to the response.
- 4) Bad mitten and volleyball groups are underway as well.
- 5) E-newsletter is up to about 800 subscribers. It's a very effective way of getting out the needed information.
- 6) The fitness programs are running ahead of last year's numbers.

### **Old Business**

#### **Garrison Hill**

Gary met with Harold Cook and they went over the project. Harold suggested that UNH would be a strong candidate to do a large portion of the work. Mainly doing a tree by tree assessment / inventory and helping put the plan together. The idea being that the inventory could be done this fall with cutting / clearing being done in the spring. The survey was completed and shows pretty much what was expected though some of the lines aren't quite as straight as originally thought. There's roughly 50 acres +/- . Scott reminded Gary that the Recreational Trails Program Grant's should be open shortly (in September) and the site should still qualify for up to \$30k in potential Grant funding. Gary said he'll contact the State to find out when he can apply.

#### **Indoor Pool Roof Project:**

Gary said the bid package is extensive but has been approved. Plan is for the project to be completed October / November time frame prior to getting deep into the winter season.



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### **Henry Law Improvement Project:**

Gary will be manning a booth in the lower Henry Law Park area during the Apple Harvest Festival to help get the word out about the project and to be able to show the plans to the general public. They are currently working on the timetable with the hope to have it underway the fall of 2014. The Senior Center and Pools will also be having booths in the upper Henry Law Park area during the Apple Harvest Festival.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **Long Hill Park / Dog Park / Cricket Group**

Gary mentioned that parking is becoming a problem at the park. During the Cricket tournaments the parking has been in along the road after filling the parking lot. Gary feels there needs to be a better plan for the parking during these events or the possibility of creating some additional parking in the current park. However, the cost associated with that would be a problem as there isn't any money for it. Kathy asked about the possibility of moving the Cricket group during the days of the tournaments to another park. Gary said that the Cricket Pitch is already at the park and isn't something that would be movable to another park. Stan asked if neighbors have been complaining. Gary stated they haven't made "complaints" so to speak but they've made mention of it. Middleton Lumber does allow for up to 13 spaces in their parking lot to be used during business hours and Gary thought that Middleton wouldn't mind more being used during times they're closed but it doesn't appear that people utilize the spaces during the tournament times. Scott asked if we require them to have a detailed police officer to handle traffic flow in the area during the tournaments. Gary said that it's not something we've done in the past but it is something we could consider requiring. Joe stated he's been there when the parking lot is at capacity and the people there for the tournament start parking in 2 rows down the center of the lot which creates problems for everyone getting in or out of parking spots. Gary said he will look at perhaps extending toward basketball courts or tennis courts but that it may create drainage issues. Norm asked that the cricket group in the meantime please alert their members and guests that the parking is somewhat limited and that they do have the option of the additional parking in the Middleton lot or the alternative may be that they be required to have a detail officer at their expense.

#### **Climate Change Forum**

Gary mentioned the climate change forum that is being hosted by the Recreation Advisory Board will be October 17<sup>th</sup> in Room 305 of the McConnell Center. Pizza will be served and Gary will confirm the time and get it out to us. Doug gave an overview of the forum he attended and thought it would be interesting for people to see the challenges / issues that it can create and attempting to find possible solutions.



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Other:

Jon Towle requested to be updated on what parks he has on his list for following up on.

Also, the parks Margaret Trefethen had will need to be reassigned.

### **ADJOURN**

Kathy Morrison motioned, Norm Fracassa seconded. Motion passed.

Adjourned at 8:40pm

Respectfully  
Scott C Kelley