



**Walpole Recreation Committee**  
**Meeting Held on Wednesday, January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024**  
**Blackburn Hall - 6:00 p.m.**

**Recreation Committee Present**

***Regular Members***

*Present*

- Joe Grant, *Chair*
- Rich McCarthy, *Vice-Chair*
- Jeff Hutnick
- Doug Shea

*Not Present*

Mike McGrath

***Associate Members***

*Present*

- Bobby Boyda

*Not Present*

Josh Walther

Brad Hickey

**Staff Present**

- Brendan Croak, *Recreation Director*
- Lauren Antonetti, *Assistant Recreation Director*

**Call to Order**

- Chair Grant called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**New Business**

**Minutes**

- On a motion made by Mr. Shea, seconded by Vice-Chair McCarthy, the Committee voted 4-0-0 to approve the November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023 meeting minutes.

## **Director's Report**

### **Saturday Basketball**

Director Croak gave a brief update on the Saturday Basketball program. Last week, Saturday basketball started with most hours filled, except for a few in the eight-year-old age group, which were half full, as expected. Additional spots were added for waitlisted children, but expansion isn't possible due to gym size constraints and older kids using the Fisher gym. The idea of adding a third session or a Sunday option was discussed but isn't likely to be as popular. Session two begins at the end of February and runs until mid to late March, with enrollment slightly low initially but expected to increase as session one participants usually continue into session two.

### **Registration Dates**

Director Croak provided the Committee with a brief update on some upcoming registration dates that the Committee should be aware of. Spring registration is tentatively set to open on February 27, with programming starting in late March. Information about summer programs will also be released at that time, with registration opening on March 12. Pool registration will open in early May, about a month before the pools open. Seasonal pool tags will not be sold at the pools this year due to capacity issues and errors in registration forms. Instead, they must be purchased online and picked up at the office. Extended office hours may be offered to accommodate pickup and sales.

### **Lifeguard Wages**

Director Croak gave the Committee on the proposed increase to the lifeguard wages that will be considered at Town Meeting in the spring. Primary funding will be sourced from pool tag sales. A portion of the increase will be covered by the budget's appropriation for lifeguard costs, which was previously increased in November. The plan is to advertise the positions and temporarily reclassify lifeguards to a specialized instructor salary range until official approval is obtained, retroactively adjusting their pay if necessary. The idea of increasing wages was favored by the Department's Aquatics Director, who suggested focusing on wages first rather than offering certification incentives to the lifeguards. A recent proposal for lifeguard certification classes from Westwood was shared with Cheryl, indicating potential interest in pursuing certification as an option down the line. However, the department is currently focused on implementing a significant pay raise for lifeguards, hoping it will be sufficient to attract and retain staff. There's also been discussion about the possibility of revisiting the Board of Health's regulations on lifeguard age requirements, though this has been met with some resistance in the past due to concerns about maintaining safety standards. Ultimately, the department is prioritizing addressing the current shortage of lifeguards through wage increases while considering other options for recruitment and retention in the future.

### **Summer Staff**

The Recreation Coordinators are beginning the process of reaching out to last summer's staff to determine who will be returning for the upcoming summer. This process involves identifying returning staff, determining promotions to Supervisor positions, and filling vacancies for Counselor roles. The deadline for Directors to confirm their availability is expected to be around February vacation. From February to April vacation, the Department will continue to finalize staff assignments and fill remaining vacancies as needed.

## **Walpole Day**

This year's Walpole Day is scheduled for Saturday, May 11th. The annual request to the Select Board, usually submitted in January or February, will be sent in the next week or so. Once the request is approved, the Assistant Director can begin contacting vendors to invite them back for the event. The inclusion of the 300th Anniversary Committee may lead to additional items, but the core event will occur as usual.

## **Old Business**

### **Update - Athletic Fields**

Director Croak shared with the Committee that following a heavy wind and rainstorm before Christmas, one of the soccer goals on turf one was severely damaged and had to be replaced at a cost of approximately \$6,000. The replacement goal has been received but not yet assembled due to the weather. Additionally, six medium-sized nets with holes have been ordered and delivered, awaiting installation when there is downtime for the Parks Department. Overall, aside from these repairs, the facility appears to be in normal condition.

A mandatory Fields Workshop for spring user groups is scheduled for February 6. Attendance from the Recreation Committee is not required. The workshop is intended to improve communication between user groups and the Parks Department regarding field maintenance expectations. All spring groups have been invited. The workshop aims to address maintenance concerns and establish clear expectations for the season. It does not affect the permitting process but enhances communication throughout the year. The workshop is anticipated to last about half an hour and may involve discussions with groups experiencing leadership turnover, such as Little League. A reminder will be sent in early February.

The application window for Spring Field Permit Applications opened on Monday, with several requests already coming in. Accommodating all requests can be challenging, especially as some groups are requesting more time than last year. Discussions are needed to balance field usage among various groups. Permit applications will be accepted until February 12, and efforts will be made to process them promptly to alleviate workload and expedite permit issuance.

The scoreboards are installed and ready for use at the new field complex. A survey is being prepared to gauge interest from groups interested in accessing the scoreboards. Two options will be offered: renting or buying. The handheld unit, priced at around \$800 each, is recommended for its portability and weather resistance. The larger controller unit, around \$1100 each, is more suitable for indoor use. Groups interested in renting a controller will be required to pay upfront and will receive a partial refund at the end of the season. The goal is to make the process simple for users and ensure efficient management of the scoreboards. The controllers are interchangeable for each scoreboard, but multiple controllers may be needed for simultaneous games. The plan is to coordinate the ordering process for the user groups, which will limit interactions with the supplier. Overall, there is expected to be significant interest in accessing the scoreboards across various field groups.

### **Update - 300th Anniversary Committee**

The 300th Anniversary celebration had a successful laser show on December 16, with about 2,000 attendees for the first show and 1,500 for the second. Despite technical issues during the second show, the event was well-received. The 300th Committee discussed merchandise such as apparel, coffee mugs, pint glasses, and golf balls. Flags and stickers will also be used to promote throughout the year. The next event is the Senior Gala in the spring, with entertainment and food at Avenir.

### **Public Comment**

Mr. Hutnick asked about fall sales at the Concession stand. Director Croak reported disappointing sales due to rainy weekends. Efforts to involve seniors in the work-off program only attracted two individuals initially, who faced challenges like low foot traffic and insufficient assistance. This highlights the need to reassess strategies, possibly involving user groups and volunteers to improve sustainability and efficiency.

Although the lacrosse teams showed some interest, securing volunteers to manage the concession stand during games is difficult due to commitments and cleanliness concerns. There's worry that opening the facility to others could lead to issues like the high school's poorly maintained snack shack. Despite potential success, the lack of consistent volunteer availability poses a significant obstacle. The fall weather affected operations, and there's concern about the sustainability of operating the concession stand due to the high wages for the workers.

### **Adjournment**

- On a motion made by Mr. Shea, seconded by Mr. Hutnick, the Committee voted 3-0-0 to adjourn at 6:55 p.m.