



Walpole Recreation Committee
Meeting Held on Wednesday, September 20th, 2023
Blackburn Hall - 6:00 p.m.

Recreation Committee Present

Regular Members

Present

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

Not Present

Michael McGrath
Doug Shea

Associate Members

Present

- Josh Walther

Not Present

Bobby Boyda
Brad Hickey

Staff Present

- Brendan Croak, *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 Vice-Chair McCarthy, seconded by Mr. Hutnick, the Committee voted 3-0-0 to approve the June 14th, 2023 meeting minutes.

Director's Report

Summer Recap

Director Croak updated the Committee on the overall success of the Recreation Department's summer programs. Most weeks at Walpole Woods were at capacity, and Director Croak hopes to increase capacity in the years to come. The number of available staff members typically dictate the number of kids that the department is able to accommodate at any given program. The Department found continued success this year with the Summer on Stone summer program. All other athletic clinics and summer programs ran without any major issues, and enrollment was similar to previous years. Director Croak mentioned that the department is trending upwards with regard to pre-pandemic enrollment numbers.

Director Croak noted that, on a surface level, the pools were challenging due to an ongoing lifeguard shortage. This shortage created capacity issues throughout the summer. The department was forced to alter seasonal pool tag sales as well as temporary suspension of daily passes on days where capacity was an issue. There was a temporary request to the Board of Health to issue a variance that would raise the lifeguard to patron ratio for this summer only, with hopes to provide some relief to the capacity issues. Additionally, Director Croak noted that additional lifeguards were hired throughout the season to help with the shortage. The department will explore increasing lifeguard wages and a potential reimbursement program for lifeguard certifications, as well, to help with addressing the lifeguard shortage in the future.

Director Croak mentioned that there was a leak at South Pool that prompted repairs to be made prior to opening. Once repairs were complete, there were no noticeable leaks for the duration of the season. Minor maintenance issues throughout the season, but nothing out of the ordinary.

Update - Fall Programming

Director Croak noted that the annual Saturday Soccer program kicked off recently and will run through October. Most sessions were completely full, and the department will explore the idea of adding additional space in the future to accommodate some of the participants on the waitlist.

The Annual Halloween on Main costume parade will be returning this year on Saturday, October 28th. Historically, we have around 400 kids or so participating in the parade. This year, the Department is merging its annual fall event with the costume parade and holding the first annual *Falloween* event. Director Croak described this event as a combination of previous fall events and Walpole Day, without the vendors. This event will offer numerous food trucks, live music, balloon artists, face painting, and plenty of inflatable bouncy houses. The decision to combine events was made to offer some of the parade participants a more robust experience while continuing to provide a fun family event for all ages.

Chair Grant commented that there seems to be less adult program offerings than in the past and that the catalog seems to be getting a little stale. Director Croak acknowledged the lack of new adult offerings over the years, while highlighting some of the efforts by both Recreation Coordinators. While Recreation Coordinator Kim Guerino tends to focus on youth programs during the week, there is some age crossover between the two coordinators. He stated that Recreation Coordinator Rich Lamoury will be expected to increase efforts to provide additional adult offerings in the future that are independent from some of the usual programs that run each season. Mr. Hutnick questioned if the Department has plans to bring back the teen dances. Director Croak stated that he would like to, but with less frequency to create more buzz and increase attendance.

Town Meeting

Director Croak mentioned that Fall Town Meeting is taking place on Monday, October 16th, and provided the Committee with an update of some of the Capital Budget requests for the department.

Old Business

Athletic Fields

Chair Grant stated that he heard that the Walpole High School Athletic Director stated that the high school will no longer be able to use the S.M. Lorusso & Sons Athletic Field Complex. Director Croak stated that this is not the case, and that the High School currently has full access to all six fields each weekday until 4:30pm. Additionally, the High School has access to both turf fields on Tuesdays and Thursdays until 6pm for athletic games. Director Croak stated that when needed, the high school requests are accommodated as often as possible, while working in conjunction with the Walpole Youth Organizations. However, upon completion of the Middle School construction, Director Croak noted that there may be adjustments made to move some athletic games back to the Middle School field(s) and/or scaling the S.M. Lorusso & Sons Athletic Field Complex schedule on Tuesdays and Thursdays back to 4:30pm, in order to restore the normal youth organization schedules back to their original requests and needs.

There was some additional discussion about parking and dog-related issues, in addition to some minor vandalism that occurred at the new athletic complex. Director Croak stated that the installation of scoreboards may be taking place in the future.

Topics the Chair Could Not Reasonably Anticipate

Smiling Eyes

Mr. Hutnick asked for a status update on the Smiling Eyes scholarship program, and Director Croak gave a brief update.

Adjournment

- On a motion made by Vice-Chair McCarthy, seconded by Mr. Hutnick, the Committee voted 3-0-0 to adjourn at 7:20 p.m.