



**Walpole Recreation Committee
Meeting Held on Wednesday, January 9, 2019
Blackburn Hall - 5:30 p.m.
30 Stone Street - Walpole, MA 02081**

Recreation Committee

Regular Members

Present

- Joseph Grant, *Chairman*
- William Buckley, *Vice-Chairman*
- Richard McCarthy
- Anneliese Fair
- Michael McGrath

Associate Members

Present

- Jeffrey Hutnick
- Lorraine Dundon
- Umesh Kumar*

Not Present

Robert Taglienti

*arrived at 6:00 p.m.

Staff

- Brendan Croak, *Recreation Director*
- Arielle Carney, *Assistant Director*
- Cheryl Cavanaugh, *Aquatics Director*

Call to Order

Chairman Grant called the meeting to order at 5:30pm.

Appointments

William Carroll, Weekend swimming at Jarvis Farm

- William Carroll has come before the Recreation Committee to request public swimming on the weekends at Jarvis Farm.

Mr. Carroll stated that he has appeared before the Sewer and Water Commissioners and the Finance Committee with this request. He appeared before the Sewer and Water Commissioners a second time, and they stated that permission would be granted for a two-weekend pilot program at Jarvis Pond. The Sewer & Water Commissioners stated that they would wait for a formal application to be submitted by the Recreation Department.

Each season, the Recreation Department pays the Sewer and Water Commission a percentage of the revenue that is generated from the Walpole Woods program in order to use Jarvis Farm. Mr Carroll was under the impression that the Sewer and Water Commission voted to fund this pilot project using the money that the Recreation Department pays the Sewer & Water Commission from the Walpole Woods revenue. However, William Abbott, Chairman of the Sewer & Water Commission was in attendance and clarified that he presented the idea to the Commission. However, the vote that was taken at their meeting did not include any mention of financials for this pilot program.

Mr. Carroll stated that he believes that the pond at Jarvis Farm is a natural resource that should be utilized and that offering swimming should not come down to a matter of financials. Mr. Carroll estimated that staffing costs would only be \$500 per day. Director Croak provided Mr. Carroll with a more accurate estimate of cost breakdown which totaled between \$1,300 - \$1,500 per day. The staffing costs include one Aquatics Director, one Assistant Aquatics Director, no less than five lifeguards, one gate attendant, and one maintenance person. All of these positions would be based on the existing wage schedule that was approved by the Personnel Board.

Chairman Grant explained that his concerns lie less with the financials and more with the safety of the public. Public swimming in an open body of water is something that the Department is not currently familiar with. Chairman Grant stated that while there *is* swimming offered during the Walpole Woods Summer Day Program, it is under much more controlled conditions. No more than 20 children are in the water at any given time. There are periodic buddy checks, in addition to individually-fitted life jackets on most, if not all, participants after they have undergone a swim-test, as well as shallow swimming depths. Mr. McGrath echoed Chairman Grant's statement that the concern of the Department and of the Committee with public swimming of any sort, has always been and will always be, participant safety.

Mr. Carroll proceeded to ask if the Town had an insurance policy, and Director Croak said that an insurance policy *does* exist. Mr. Carroll replied that the Town is covered from liability in the event of a lawsuit, so safety should not be a deterring factor in allowing public swimming at Jarvis Farm. There were multiple comments that while this *may* be the case, safety is not something that the Department should brush aside simply because they would be covered by an insurance policy.

Mr. Carroll requested that the Department send out a survey to the public asking how many people would like to swim on the weekends at Jarvis Farm. Director Croak assured Mr. Carroll that this was something that the Department would look into.

Mr. McCarthy wanted to remind Mr. Carroll that South Pool has been closed on weekends for two years after several years of low attendance on weekends, and stated that he doesn't see why there would be a demand for *pond* swimming when there isn't even a large demand for *pool* swimming. Mr. Carroll asked why other towns had pond swimming, but Walpole does not. There was some discussion that other towns were not directly comparable to Walpole, as the majority did not have *both* pond swimming and pools to maintain - most towns are either one or the other, with the exception of Needham, for example. Vice-Chairman Buckley stated that Needham subsidizes their Recreation Department with a million dollar budget through taxation. The Walpole Recreation Department format is different, where it is self-sustaining, so the format for Needham's Department is not comparable to Walpole's situation.

The Aquatics Director, Cheryl Cavanaugh, informed Mr. Carroll that currently, the pond is roped-off for the Walpole Woods summer program, and its depth is only 5' at the deepest roped-off spot. Ms. Cavanaugh also told Mr. Carroll that the sand on the beach is not new sand, and it is minimally maintained. In addition, she stated that often days, the water is not clear due to the fact that it is a natural body of water and the Department is unable to treat the water with chemicals or any sort. Ms. Cavanaugh also stressed the importance of water clarity when there are more than 10-12 bodies swimming in the water because with the increased water activity debris becomes stirred up from the pond floor making it difficult to see if anyone has not resurfaced from under the water. Mr. Carroll proposed the installation of a filtrating fountain in the center of Jarvis Pond to improve water clarity. Mr. Carroll did not have an answer when asked what the cost or where the funding source for this installation would come from.

Mr. McGrath suggested the formation of a possible sub-committee that would research what it would take to have public swimming in addition to possible alternatives for ensuring water clarity and acceptable conditions. Chairman Abbott of the Sewer and Water Commission, stated that the Sewer and Water Commission does less and less each year with regard to the cleaning of the pond.

Director's Report

Winter Registration

- Director Croak stated that program revenue is up 80% from this time last year, and up 2% overall for the current year. He stated that this is revenue only, and does not include expenses.

There was some discussion about Saturday Basketball. The program wraps up this weekend, and Session 2 begins early February.

Spring Registration

- Spring registration opens up on February 25, and programming will begin March 25.

Summer Programming

- The Department is in the early stages of planning, which includes picking dates, reserving buildings, and coordinating with the directors for the sports programs. When spring registration opens up, the Department will also open registration for Walpole Woods, Little Rec'ers, in addition to releasing dates for Summer Academy.

Little Rec'ers will adjust its structure, and will mirror the structure that is in place for the Walpole Woods program with regard to staffing ratios and safety measures. This will also include a very strict enforcement of the maximum number allowed on a daily-basis in order to maintain safety measures that are in place. Periodic reminders will be sent out via email to ensure that participants have adequate time to register.

Program Coordinator, Lauren Wolf will be taking over the supervision and coordination of many of the sports leagues this summer, in addition to working on the creation of Adult sports leagues that include flag football, a tennis ladder, and more.

New Business

- None

Old Business

A. Route 1A Fields Project

- Director Croak stated that there were no new developments to report on.

B. Smiling Eyes

- Director Croak stated that there were no new developments to report on.

Public Comment

- None

Minutes

- On a motion made by Mr. McGrath, seconded by Vice-Chairman Buckley, the Committee voted 5-0-0 to approve the meeting minutes from the December 12 meeting.

Adjournment

- On a motion made by Vice-Chairman Buckley, seconded by Mr. McCarthy, the Committee voted 5-0-0 to adjourn at 7:42 p.m.