



Walpole Recreation Committee
Meeting Held on Wednesday, March 13th, 2024
Blackburn Hall - 6:00 p.m.

Recreation Committee Present

Regular Members

Present

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

Not Present

Mike McGrath

Associate Members

Present

- Brad Hickey
- Josh Walther

Not Present

Bobby Boyda

Staff Present

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

Call to Order

- Chair Grant called the meeting to order at 6:00PM

Old Business

Update - 300th Anniversary Committee

Director Croak provided updates on the 300th Anniversary Committee's plans, highlighting events like the Senior Gala, parade, and formal Gala, as well as merchandise and a statue project. All of these events and items are listed on the Walpole300.com website. While members of the 300th Anniversary Committee were unable to attend the Recreation Committee meeting, Chair Grant shared some of their plans for trolley tours at Walpole Day and a cornhole tournament with the Department of Public Works. There was emphasis on the importance of promoting these events alongside others for the anniversary. Director Croak mentioned that The Recreation Department is also involved in organizing various activities, such as a trivia night, a scavenger hunt app, and a "Find Rebel" activity for families. Amy Alexander, the Department's Principal Clerk, has done a great job spearheading the coordination for these Recreation events and activities. Director Croak has also purchased and will install banners at the new field complex, advertising the Town's anniversary.

Update - Athletic Fields

Director Croak gave an update on Spring Field Permits which are nearly complete. Due to an increase in conflicts, private teams are receiving less time, potentially leading to a significant drop in revenue. Director Croak expects less than 10% of field time to be allocated to private rentals, a decrease from previous years. Despite challenges, efforts are being made to accommodate groups and retain them within the community.

The introduction of scoreboards at the complex has shown low interest in utilization, with only lacrosse teams showing consistent interest. It is anticipated that the High School will use the scoreboards during their athletic seasons.

Director Croak provided the Committee with an update for operation of the concession stand this spring. The plan is to operate from 11AM to 2PM on Saturdays and Sundays. Five high school students have been trained and scheduled for shifts through mid-June. Although there may be challenges with last-minute call-outs, arrangements are being made to ensure coverage. Additionally, the Council on Aging's senior tax work-off program participants have shown interest in helping out with the concession stand. Discussions are underway to potentially involve them in filling gaps in staffing, particularly during weekdays or evening hours when high school games are taking place.

Additional maintenance work is taking place at various fields. Short-term repairs are being made to ensure usability for the spring and fall seasons. At Carty Field, a safety issue with the backstop has been addressed by removing a piece that was at risk of falling. Additionally, a portable mound will be installed at Morgan Field to improve playability and reduce maintenance.

Chair Grant brought up a concern revolving around some groups possibly sharing their allotted time with other groups. To maintain fairness and uphold facility integrity, he suggested incorporating language into the policies and procedures to specify that allocated time is for the respective program's use only. This helps avoid insurance complications and ensures fairness. Director Croak stated that the intention should be to find a solution that doesn't require intensive monitoring but still prevents groups from exploiting loopholes. While the Department can't actively monitor every instance of field use, it needs to be made clear what constitutes proper usage.

- On a motion made by Mr. Shea, seconded by Mr. Hutnick, the Committee voted 4-0-0 to add the following language to existing permit and field related documents: "Field permits are non-transferable and remain valid solely for the organization or individual specified as the permit holder listed."

New Business

Minutes

- On a motion made by Mr. Shea, seconded by Vice-Chair McCarthy, the Committee voted 4-0-0 to approve the January 10th, 2024 meeting minutes, as amended.

Summer Field Permit - Early Submission (Turf Burn Field Hockey)

A summer field permit application was received from Turf Burn Field Hockey looking to run a field hockey camp during the summer. Director Croak was approached with this request in January, but the next Recreation Committee meeting wasn't until March, making it difficult to commit to anything before then. The applicant expressed urgency for coordination and marketing purposes. There was some discussion that revolved around whether to allow exceptions for cases like this outside of the regular application window, though there's concern about fairness and consistency if exceptions are made. The Committee decided to allow the Director to continue to use discretion on a case-by-case-basis, and to allow this request to move forward.

Upcoming Meeting Dates

The next meeting will take place on Wednesday, April 10th. A meeting date for May will be discussed at that meeting.

Director's Report

Spring Programming

Director Croak provided a brief update on upcoming spring programs. Additionally, there's a need to hire a new Playgroup instructor, due to someone leaving for another position. Overall, the spring programs are progressing well, with some sessions filling up quickly.

Summer Preview

Registration opened recently with no major surprises. The Field Hockey clinic is showing strong interest with 60 currently enrolled. Musical Theater is almost completely full, indicating high popularity. The Summer on Stone and Walpole Woods programs have healthy numbers, with additional spots added this year. Some weeks, like the July 4th week, are traditionally lighter, while others, possibly around Week Th3ree, tend to have lower attendance due to vacations. Overall, the summer programs are progressing well, with anticipation of increased registrations as marketing continues.

In the upcoming weeks, more information will be released for the pools. The process of ordering pool tags has started, with plenty of time for them to arrive before sales start in June. The Department currently has about 15 lifeguards lined up to work this summer, with efforts ongoing to secure more, aiming for ideally 24-25 in total, though 18-20 is more realistic. Lifeguard wage increases were proposed and will be voted on at Spring Town Meeting to attract more candidates, with rates starting at \$18 per hour and increasing for higher positions.

Egg Hunt

Director Croak mentioned that the Department has brought back the Egg Hunt this year. Lauren has done a great job coordinating the details under such a short window of time. The plan is for the event to take place outside next Saturday on Stone Field. In the event of inclement weather, the event will be moved indoors to Blackburn Hall or the High School. Director Croak made a point to say that in the future there could be an opportunity to have a spring event that includes more unique activities.

April Vacation Programming

Director Croak gave an update to the Committee on some new programs that will be offered during April Vacation. Numbers are low right now, but the Department will continue to monitor as we get closer to April Vacation.

Saturday Basketball

Saturday Basketball wraps up next week, and Saturday T-Ball starts up next month on April 13th.

Budget Overview

Director Croak gave a brief overview of the Department's budget request that was submitted back in February for consideration at Spring Town Meeting.

Blackburn Hall Renovation Update

Lauren and I have been conducting regular meetings with an architectural firm assigned to come up solutions for the much-needed renovations of Blackburn Hall. Presently, their main emphasis lies in upgrading the bathroom facilities, in addition to the hallway and entrance. They have initiated discussions regarding potential designs for this area, which may involve removing the ramp or reorganizing the storage room area. The Department will be assessing cost estimates for the restroom renovations to continue moving forward with this project.

Adjournment

- On a motion made by Mr. Shea, seconded by Vice-Chair McCarthy, the Committee voted 4-0-0 to adjourn at 7:53PM