



Town of Acton

Recreation Commission

Minutes

ROOM 126, ACTON TOWN HALL

DATE: AUGUST 6, 2015

ATTENDEES	Present were Ms. Bridget McKeever-Matz, Recreation Commission Chair, Ms. Nancy Gerhardt, Commissioner, Mr. Joe Will, Commissioner, Ms. Cathy Fochtman, Recreation Director, Ms. Melissa Rier, Recreation Coordinator and Ms. Mary Lou Repucci, Recreation Secretary. Absent were Ms. Carol Gerolamo, Commissioner, and Ms. Katie Green, Selectman.
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TOPIC: CITIZENS CONCERNS

DISCUSSION	<p>Ms. Fochtman reported a call from Acton resident Holly Henkel, who is a NARA Beach member, regarding problems on a busy Sunday at NARA Park. Ms. Henkel observed people climbing over the fence to access the Beach without paying, motorcycles on the interior road, the presence of alcohol and general overcrowding. These problems are perceived as caused mostly by out-of-town visitors and are worse on very hot days. Parking lots fill up, preventing residents from using the Park. While at NARA Ms. Henkel spoke with the Park Ranger, Ms. Nancy Harter Whitaker, who was aware of the situation. Ms. Harter Whitaker had called Ms. Fochtman who advised her to call Acton Police. Ms. Henkel was sympathetic and offered to speak directly to any Town entity that might be helpful. Ms. Fochtman assured Ms. Henkel that steps are being taken to better monitor NARA including the Park Ranger, a parking lot attendant and better signage. More staff is needed on busy days, but peak times can be unpredictable. Groups renting grills for the day often bring in large numbers that also contribute to the Park exceeding capacity. Ms. Gerhardt suggested charging for use of NARA by non-Acton residents. Ms. McKeever-Matz added the idea of a system such as that in use at Walden Pond and emphasized the need for a “new model” to manage traffic other than allowing unlimited access. Mr. Will suggested obtaining videos of specific problems. Ms. Fochtman said that recent weekends have been well-controlled but that permanent signage is needed plus security gates for the interior road. Ms. Gerhardt asked whether parking would be allowed outside the Park but Ms. Fochtman explained that this is not possible due to the surrounding neighborhood and that visitors with mobility challenges need to be able to enter NARA without having to walk far. It is anticipated that the opening of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail will increase traffic pressure on the Park.</p> <p>Ms. Fochtman also reported an incident at NARA Pond on a July weekend. The lifeguards had tried to discourage two men from going out on the water but they did so regardless and capsized their boat. The lifeguards assisted. One of the men was transported to Emerson Hospital but was unharmed. Alcohol was involved.</p> <p>Ms. Rier reported that the NARA Rules and Regulations have been updated to incorporate resolutions addressing the use of private watercraft at NARA Park approved by the Recreation Commission during its June 2015 meeting. The new rules are not yet posted but will appear in next year’s Park signage.</p>
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CONSENT AGENDA

DISCUSSION	June 2, 2015 minutes
ACTION ITEM	June 2, 2015 minutes accepted, 3-0.

TOPIC: REPRESENTATIVE TO THE COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT (“CPA”) STUDY COMMITTEE

DISCUSSION	The Recreation Commissioners unanimously approved Ms. McKeever-Matz to represent the Recreation Commission on the CPA Study Committee. The pros and cons of an increase in the tax surcharge from 1.5% to 3% were discussed. Ms. McKeever-Matz and Ms. Gerhardt opposed the increase. Mr. Will was neutral.
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TOPIC: NARA MASTER PLAN AND SURVEY

DISCUSSION	<p>Ms. Fochtman noted a strong response to the NARA Master Plan Survey with 384 replies to date and more coming in. The Survey was drafted to gauge how NARA Park is presently being used along with desires for future development. Responses will be collected until Labor Day.</p> <p>Ms. Fran Portante is writing a history of NARA Park for the NARA Master Plan. Recreation Department staff members are compiling a comprehensive description of what NARA provides today, and what is planned for the future, based on Survey responses and other public input. A draft of the NARA Master Plan will be available for review by Recreation Commissioners at the next Recreation Commission meeting with a goal to present the final version at the next CPA meeting.</p>
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TOPIC: NARA SUMMER OPERATIONAL UPDATE

DISCUSSION	A great run of events took place at NARA Park over the summer. Consistently fair weather contributed to the season’s success. Highlights included two well-attended ticketed events: The Glenn Miller Orchestra, July 10, and TUSK Fleetwood Mac Tribute Band, July 31. Approximately 800 attended each event. There
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	were no reported problems or complaints. The Walden Shakespeare Company presented three outstanding performances of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" on July 24, 25 and 26. The director, Ms. Careena Melia, had visited NARA Park and wished to bring Walden Shakespeare there due to the exceptional stage and Amphitheatre acoustics. She noted how rare it is to be able to perform without microphones. This event will be promoted in future with more publicity to boost attendance.
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REPORTS:

DISCUSSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) NARA Picnic Pavilion – Ms. Fochtman reported that final payment for the Picnic Pavilion was made in July and that the facility is fully operational. b) NARA Comfort Station – Mr. Tom Tidman and Ms. Fochtman visited a modular house on Rex Lane that may be donated to NARA Park along with two similar homes. Joining two units with a common roof is being studied for a possible NARA Comfort Station. They also met with The Office of Michael Rosenfeld regarding a concept plan for remodeling the units. Placement of the units, potential amenities and related costs were discussed. c) Morrison Farm – Ms. Fochtman reported that a Request for Proposals is being prepared for individuals or businesses to use the Morrison Farm house. d) T.J. O'Grady – Ms. Fochtman met with Ms. Nina Pickering Cook regarding a Request for Proposals for improvements to the Skate Park. Qualitative measures will be included in addition to price bids for the proposed work. e) Playgrounds – Ms. Rier reported responses to the Jones Field Playground Survey and that a large number of people volunteered to help refurbish the Playground. Ms. Gerhardt advised that the next step would be to contact the individuals to form a working group and to help them get organized, especially to obtain funding. Ms. Rier will reach out to the volunteers to assist. f) Community Preservation Committee – Ms. Fochtman is working on updating ongoing Recreation Department projects for presentation to the Committee.
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NEW BUSINESS/DISCUSSION:

Ms. Fochtman reported that the Town of Acton is renewing its lease at 33 Nagog Park for the Recreation Department to remain for another year.

MEETING ADJOURNED TIME:	Meeting adjourned at 12:15 PM.
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**Supporting and referenced documentation relating to these minutes are available on the DocuShare site; <https://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-1985>*