

**Town of Auburn  
Board of Selectmen  
Workshop Meeting  
September 26, 2018**

**Selectmen Present:** James Headd, Richard Eaton and Keith Leclair

**Also Present:** Parks & Recreation Commission Members David Nye, Margie McEvoy, Lisa Canavan, Zach Eaton, and Pat Kelly; Parks & Recreation Coordinator Amy Lachance, Maintenance Director Mike Dobmeier, Alex and Ruth Eisman and Town Administrator William Herman.

Mr. Headd called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

**Parks and Recreation Commission – Operations and Structure**

Mr. Headd opened the meeting noting the Board had received the list of duties, responsibilities and job functions as requested from the last meeting held on September 13<sup>th</sup>. He felt it was very helpful information. Mr. Leclair also felt it was very helpful as it appeared to identify a full list of daily activities, as well as those performed once or twice a year. He felt it was all good information to know, particularly with some of the work being for Parks & Recreation, while some work is for other departments within the Town.

Mr. Leclair asked if an outside concern performed safety inspections on the playgrounds, and Mike Dobmeier noted they have had an inspector from Primex on several occasions, but with their help had developed a safety checklist for the Auburn employees to follow.

Mr. Leclair indicated he read through the list of duties and job functions performed by the individuals, in addition to the suggested responsibilities for the Parks & Recreation Commissioners that Pat Kelly has provided and the general statutory responsibility provided to Parks & Recreation. He indicated it looked to him that it all points to a need to more clearly define an organizational structure of administration to provide full accountability and transparency for all of the multi-faceted work that is currently performed.

A specific area of concern noted is to ensure the Town's purchasing policy is adhered to in the Commission's activities. It appeared that a lot of purchases has been done by or through the Commission Chair in the past due to a lack of a staff position. He felt this has led to at least the appearance that the individual is budgeting the job, awarding the job and doing the job. Mr. Dobmeier indicated they have generally gotten quotes for anything in excess of \$2,000. David Nye questioned who is going to go out and get the bids and pricing for projects if he didn't do it. He didn't feel it would be an area of expertise for the Parks & Recreation Coordinator.

Mr. Leclair indicated his idea was not to eliminate anyone from being part of the process, but rather to put a central focus for coordination and accountability. In general terms, he indicated he was suggesting the Parks & Recreation Coordinator be directly responsible for:

- Creation of the parks & recreation budget
- Approve the work projects based on the approved budget.
- Support and direct the part-time employees serving parks & recreation.
- Ensure the Town's Purchasing Policy is being followed, and
- Approve invoices for payment.

Mr. Headd indicated he agreed in general with the outline of responsibilities for the Parks & Recreation Coordinator's position, but he also felt the Commission needed someone like Mr. Nye to handle projects. Mr. Leclair suggested this outline doesn't prohibit that, but it provides a separation from the appearance Mr. Nye or anyone else was assigning themselves work.

Mr. Nye noted he met with a vendor within the past two weeks to review the ice skating rinks and how to repair them so they will retain water. He said he put in for an hour of time for \$25 as he shot grades and performed some work with the individual. He indicated the payment was not made as it was thought to be part of his role as a Commissioner. He feels he has donated a lot of time and service in the past without charge, but that this was a justified area to be paid.

Mr. Eaton indicated Parks & Recreation needs someone like Mr. Nye and he felt he needs to be paid when he performs work for the Town. He felt things were getting out of control and that Auburn was still a small town. He suggested it needs to be like a family, likening the Parks & Recreation efforts to the contractors who perform the Town's road work. He agreed there needs to be better coordination, and he felt parks & recreation was getting to the point of needing a vehicle and a place to store their equipment and materials.

Mr. Nye expressed concern for not involving Parks & Recreation in the awarding of the Town's mowing contract where they have a large portion of the property serviced by this vendor. He indicated they were not pleased with the work performance, and the Town had just opted for the low bid for cost.

Mr. Eaton expressed his belief that if we can do work necessary with someone locally, then we should do that and not award work to someone from elsewhere. Mr. Leclair noted the Town's Purchasing Policy addresses that, indicating that were all things equal, preference is given to local vendors.

Mr. Nye felt the Town can save money by working the way they are now. He felt if the Town put more work out to bid, the vendors are going to build a buffer factor in to their bids, which will ultimately cost the Town more money in the end.

Mr. Leclair said it is clear we are not following the Town's Purchasing Policy and we need to take steps to ensure we do. He felt it provided an opportunity to take care of accountability. Whether work should be done by town employees or contractors is a different issue altogether.

Mr. Eaton felt the Board needed to determine whether Mr. Nye is the "go to" guy for Parks & Recreation or not. Mr. Nye stated he would prefer not to be the one to do the work, and would prefer to let the Town find someone else to do the work. He said he was taking time away from making money working while he was doing spec and other work for Parks & Recreation.

Mr. Leclair said that is not where any of this discussion was heading, while Lisa Canavan agreed and indicated what is being discussed is to have the Parks & Recreation Coordinator take more of an administrative role in the operation to provide a better level of accounting and accountability.

Mr. Headd agreed, indicating he saw the suggestion as providing a clear chain of command, in addition to making certain the Town's purchasing policy is being followed.

Mr. Dobmeier indicated he subscribed to the "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" philosophy, and he didn't think anything was broken.

Discussion returned to whether members of the Commission should be paid for work they may perform. Mr. Leclair asked how they could define when a volunteer member is performing paid work versus volunteer Commission service. He felt it would be hard to treat the chair of the board differently than other board members, observing that Pat Kelly and Zach Eaton both perform similar efforts in contacting vendors and securing quotes for work for various things. But they do so as a volunteer member of the Parks & Recreation Commission. Mr. Leclair felt it would be difficult to set an hourly rate of pay, but if this sort of effort is a concern, perhaps offering a stipend of some sort to Commission members would be something to consider.

Mr. Dobmeier indicated concern was raised last year about \$5,800 included in the Parks & Recreation budget for cutting brush at Circle of Fun. He noted the amount was questioned, but a tree service would charge \$1,800 per day. Ultimately, the work was accomplished for less than budgeted. Mr. Leclair said he was one of the Budget Committee members who questioned the budget item last year because there was no real back-up to the request. He felt there should nearly always be at least a second quote for most projects like that to demonstrate due diligence was done to get the best price.

Ruth Eisman noted she worked for the City of Manchester and when they put work out to bid, it is for anything over \$5,000 and the proposals are reviewed by two committees – one for technical review to make certain the proposal covered the work proposed, while the second committee focused on pricing. She felt the system worked well, as the low bid is not always the best bid for work desired.

Mr. Headd indicated he felt all Town boards and departments needed to work within the Town's Purchasing Policy and that we are all obligated to make it work.

Mr. Leclair felt it made sense to leave the Commission as it is now with seven members appointed by the Board of Selectmen. He felt the Parks & Recreation Coordinator should be tasked for budgeting, purchasing, assigning and tracking of work projects, and managing the part-time parks & recreation employees to provide a greater level of accountability. He felt the Town should try that and see how it works moving forward. All three Selectmen were in agreement with this recommendation.

Mr. Nye indicated there were two outstanding projects for this year that he would not be doing, and the Town should look to put the work out to bid. One was building wall ball boards at Wayne Eddows Field and Circle of Fun, and to do some repairs to at least one of the ice skating rinks. He indicated he was hoping to do work on one of the ice skating rinks this year due to a bottom line balance in the budget, and then plan for the second one in 2019. However, currently, they have both in the 2019 budget proposals.

Mr. Kelly felt this would be a good approach to provide accountability and to be sure the Town is getting the best bang for its buck. He felt this type of structure would address current concerns and would provide information moving forward that could tamp down the misimpression some folks have concerning parks & recreation. He agreed it would be best to follow the rules the Town has, and to have an above board, open process that can be easily defended to the public.

Several individuals expressed that addressing the structure and process in this manner is not an attack on anyone, it is simply to ensure the continued function of the organization and that existing policy is being followed.

The Board members asked for the designation of the Parks & Recreation Coordinator's position be placed on the agenda of the next Board meeting.

Mr. Eaton again suggested Parks & Recreation is getting a little bigger than what should be expected of volunteer board members. He felt that part was a little more than what should be expected of volunteers. Mr. Leclair offered how does the Town fairly define volunteer time and effort and what should be paid for versus what shouldn't be paid for. He felt the question was where they drew the line as it was hard to say one person's time was worth more than another person's time. He noted there were three employees performing work for parks & recreation (Amy Lachance, Marge McEvoy and Mike Dobmeier) and perhaps they should look there for some of this effort or perhaps there should be some sort of stipend for the Commission members.

Mr. Leclair asked about the overall maintenance efforts. He indicated from reading the list of activities and responsibilities, it appeared to him Mr. Dobmeier and Ms. McEvoy were Town of Auburn employees who mainly perform most of their work for parks & recreation, but they also did work for Town Hall, the Safety Complex and the Library at a minimum. Mr. Herman indicated some of the work requests outside of parks &

recreation come through him and some come through the Finance Director. Mr. Dobmeier indicated there hadn't been any real conflicts with work requests and schedules.

Mr. Leclair asked if an inventory of the tools and equipment purchased during the past year has been prepared including an indication of where the item is stored. Mrs. Lachance and Mr. Nye both indicated they do have an inventory. This lead to an overall discussion of whether these items should be exclusively listed in the Parks & Recreation budget or would it be more accurate and appropriate to include them in a general Town property and facilities maintenance budget account. As the discussion ensued, the Selectmen reached consensus that they would like to have line items for maintenance tools and equipment moved to the general Town budget to more accurately reflect their need and use. Mr. Herman indicated he was certain it could be accommodated within the General Government Buildings budget within the Selectmen's budget accounts.

Mr. Eaton noted the remaining items the Board will need to address is a truck and a building for Parks and Recreation. Mr. Leclair indicated they are included in the Parks & Recreation budget, so the Board will be discussing these items soon. Mr. Nye indicated he has received a proposal for a brand new Morton building that he assumes would be placed on the Eddows Recreational Fields property for a cost of \$120,000.

Before adjourning, Mrs. Lachance reported planning for next year's Old Home Day event would be starting later this evening. Before moving too far in this direction, she asked the Selectmen where the money goes that is raised by the Old Home Day event. Mr. Leclair asked how the money she was inquiring about would be generated, and she reported there was a booth fee of \$25 to \$50 for vendors, while last year the food vendors provided a percentage of their gross receipts. All of the Selectmen indicated those type of revenues generated from an event that is funded through the Town budget should come back to the Town to off-set the cost of the event. However, that did not include any revenues vendors who put in a booth generate as the result of their booth being at the event.

## **Adjourn**

***Mr. Headd adjourned the meeting at 5:33 PM.***