

MINUTES

**PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2022
WILLIAM L. PULLEN MUNICIPAL BUILDING MEETING ROOM
ONLINE NON-INTERACTIVE ON TOWN HALL STREAMS
6:30 p.m.**

Committee members present: Dan Taylor, Ashley McKellar, Pat Hood, Mitch Wilson, Matt Wyman

Others present: Jay Feyler (Town Manager), Catherine Meyer, and others

1. **Call Meeting to Order:** at 6:30 p.m.
2. **Approve minutes from the last meeting:**

Ashley read the minutes of April 13, 2021 aloud. They in the parking lot with a small group: Pat, Jay, Mitch, Matt was absent, Ashley, Catherine, and Matt Speno.

They voted to order a banner for the public ice rink, which has not been ordered. Pat said they'll take it up under winter sports. They elected the officers to stay as they were. Jay was doing the Maine Fish and Wildlife application in June, which must have gotten done, because the boat ramp is done. Pat wanted invoices for money spent on the dugout. They talked about pickleball and doing it up on the basketball court and ordered equipment to get that jumpstarted. They talked about the courts, about having Midcoast Steel Coating come to fill the cracks. Vermont Tennis Courts have done them in the past. The tennis nets need to be replaced. She had a comment about littering signs, and about Little League, and the snack shack roof – Matt volunteered to help do the roof. The roof has not been done yet, but they have the stuff to do it. They finished at 7:08 p.m. The meeting before that was August 25, 2020.

Motion to accept the April 13, 2021 minutes as dictated by Ashley by: Mitch Wilson
2nd by: Matt Wyman
All in favor.

3. **Summer Program reviews:**

Pat reported on baseball. We had four levels of play: a huge T-ball team, a lower minor team, an upper minor team, and a Little League team. Those numbers are the most we have ever seen re: Union baseball in his tenure of the last six years. We saw huge numbers during covid. He thought the biggest piece was to get the players out of the house. We continued to see that growth. Union Little League and Medomak Valley Little League have a bright future ahead, as all these kids continue to rise to the next levels.

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We are running into some difficulty with volunteer coaches. Again we had a really successful year. We have the crown jewel of fields in our catchment area.

Matt reported on softball. Before covid we had good momentum, great support from the town, and Jay helped out a lot. After covid the numbers weren't there, and we got wrapped up with a neighboring town program. We do have some wonderful lower-level softball here that's in place. It's all volunteer.

In answer to audience questions, Matt said the age is nine through 12, the youngest six or seven. We played right here. Pat said the upcoming, younger typically girls who want to play softball should know there is a place for them to go: they do not get turned away though Union doesn't have a team right now. There are still opportunities. Matt noted it's still Medomak Valley Little League. Volunteers are super important and needed.

Ashley reported on lower and upper teams. We were able to field two teams, one of each. The lower is coach pitch, and the upper is when kids are starting to learn to pitch. The year previously we were only able to field one team. We had a Little League team which she was coach of, losing six to middle school. We could have broken out T-ball into two teams if we had more volunteers.

Pat said we purchased a pickleball net to try and bring pickleball to the tennis courts. It didn't go over that well for any number of reasons. The basketball court was used a lot during covid, both youth and adult, and organized games which is awesome to see but brings a little collateral damage/trash.

Catherine Meyer reported on pickleball. She gave handouts to the board. She gave a brief history of the program at TCC. Pat purchased three sets of nets, pickleballs, and paddles (four paddles per set, wooden which are fine for beginners). They have all the equipment if anybody comes who's never played before. She set up the TeamReach app. The code is 04862. That's where everyone goes to register, and people can see who's playing when. Charge is \$5 per person for two-hour sessions. She ended up teaching beginners, noting it's pretty basic and quick. She thanked all who've come and played, adding we're a team. She gets word out via facebook, flyers, and word of mouth. Then she got into lining the court, not easy: Rebecca Garis and Greta from Lincolnville, who ran into a similar situation and is an expert at this, volunteered to line the first court which took over three hours. Though the building is not state of the art and has warped floors, they got in at least the USAPA guidelines. Ideal distance beyond the baseline is 8'; they're 5' and love the wall. She mentioned challenges such as tables and chairs in the gym, needing a second court within the first two or three weeks, and how it would super if we had a third court but there's nowhere to put the tables and chairs. But they're working with it, she added – everybody's having a great time.

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She had 16 people one day, did a makeshift third court, and it worked fine. She noted it's very hot in summer, and none of the windows open – could use a couple commercial fans. In the winter it's cold, and we may not have heat. She also mentioned a sign created for people entering. They're up to 40 something people. They need volunteers. Hours are currently Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 10:00 a.m. to noon, as that's when they have volunteers.

Things that would help: a net from the ceiling; talk to Steve about getting volunteers approved for more pickleball hours; a landline; a website. She compared it with MRC. She explained further how they are working around things, having started officially August 3. In August they collected \$300, September \$265 (covid), October so far \$340 so as of today \$905. The number of players can range from four to 10; they rotate, and everybody gets a chance to play. Speaking for everyone, she said, "We are having a fantastic time" noting pickleball involves exercising and socializing, spending money locally going out to lunch, and is great for mental and physical. The potential for growth is limitless. She brought up a youth group, renting the court, it's all ages. People are coming from Warren and Washington. She suggested Union as a hub for Appleton, Washington, and Warren.

Pat clarified she said Parks and Rec purchased three pickleball nets. Where do the proceeds from her group go? Jay said the money from the thrift shop and pickleball comes to the town. Some of those funds help pay the TMA's liability insurance. The rest offsets the cost of heating oil, electricity, and all those costs per part of the budget approved in June.

Pat appreciated the explanation and thought that was great, a win on both sides.

Catherine guesstimated pickleball could bring in \$5,000 to \$7,000 per year, though Parks and Rec is about play and sports.

Jay clarified when the money comes in, it goes into an enterprise account and cannot go into the general fund.

Catherine had requested putting pickleball on the sign outside the TCC. Pat said it was a TMA issue, adding they could have a discussion as it could bring traffic in.

Pat addressed her earlier question: can pickleball use the basketball court during some time of the day? He didn't see why not. There are no restrictions on the basketball court. His concern would be what we would put down on the court: would it become slippery or some kind of hindrance, and as she said it took three hours to properly line – it took them an hour to do the one by the tennis courts, and somebody peeled it up because it interfered with tennis, so he thinks paint is the way to go.

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Discussion followed including who yields to who on that court, noting school hours for the younger group. Matt suggested committee members check out True Park in Hope, which has a basketball court lined for pickleball. Catherine said local pickleball groups want to share locations. Waldoboro is state of the art.

Pat asked Jay to talk about the courts. Jay said we're on the schedule for 2023. We took updated pictures, sent them down to the gentleman in southern Maine, and his price came in up to \$30,000 to repair the courts. He strongly suggested the same as Vermont Tennis Courts did: don't waste your money and instead plan to rebuild, because it's end of structure. Pat read the repair cost will be \$35,000 to \$40,000. Jay said those cracks will be back in two or three years.

Pat said rebuilding courts is costly, likely \$300,000. From his experience the basketball courts are in better shape because of the elevation. There may be middle ground to protect the actual basketball courts a little longer, and get extended use for both basketball and pickleball. In answer to Catherine, Jay said we have not signed any agreements; he is just holding us a spot. Also in answer to Catherine, Jay said he thought the Pullen Fund would be amenable to matching grant funds for the approximately \$30,000.

Pat said he'd like to get youth more involved in pickleball. It's an opportunity for local kids to try something different and maybe get off their cell phones and videogames. Pickleball camp was brought up. Pat added they'd work with the pickleball group on tables and chairs. Disposal of old tables and chairs was brought up.

Pat said they would have to table the tennis courts and say what are our options. Start asking questions as we go through the winter: what do you do with an old tennis court? There could be a summer program for tennis, which is big at the high school.

Re: action items, Mitch said we can check with the community and see what the interest in tennis is and look into options of what we can do if it's not a tennis court.

4. Winter Programs:

Pat said we have purchased and erected an ice skating rink for three seasons. Mitch came up with it a couple years ago. It's duplicated in many communities. The first year we had a fair amount of users, but since then the juice hasn't been worth the squeeze – filling, ton of water, shoveling. The group has to decide whether to do it again or have something more permanent as a pond type situation at the B. M. Clark building. Generally, the cost is about \$100 per year as they buy a liner. Mitch thinks it's served its purpose getting Parks and Rec back on the map. If people really wanted it, they could put a volunteer group together.

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In answer to Ashley, Jay said a potential ice rink at B. M. Clark is something to work on down the road. There most likely will eventually be public water going down to the building. It would probably be up to the Parks and Rec Committee to help plan the whole facility when we get to that point. He would suggest if the committee wants an ice rink, buy a commercial ice rink that stays there all year long as in Topsham.

Pat said pickleball could be a good focus for this group to continue to support.

Ashley brought up basketball for the Union teams. The committee has bought basketballs for the K-2 team they put together, also for our 5th and 6th grade boys' team. She thanked the committee.

5. Fall/Winter Clinics at TCC:

Pat said we typically use TCC in late February/early March for baseball skills and drills. Balls get lost there fast, but it's the best we can do, and the price is typically right. We've used it for tryouts, but he doesn't see it being an option unless we're doing it because we can't get anywhere else. He'd rather see a group for a pickup basketball game on a specific night or afternoon. We have to discuss the fee such as \$5 show up and play for two hours. With cold weather the school courts tend to fill up, and he would not be surprised if we talked about a basketball-oriented event at TCC that would fill – a good discussion to have with the TMA. He added if we can support them and still fill the Parks and Rec idea of bringing people together to exercise, get out, and have fun it's a win for everybody. It's important to make sure somebody's there to make sure no one is trying to mess with the lines. Catherine said as long as they don't rip it up it's holding up fine, and they paid for the tape themselves. Someone donated a ball basket.

Moving tables and chairs for pickleball was discussed. Pat said if they could move them to an agreeable location, maybe up on the stage, and if there was a prescheduled event he'd think their two groups could get together and move them back down to be good partners. It seems like an easy obstacle to overcome if pickleball brings in more traffic.

Dan said he saw the TCC as a viable basketball location, \$5 drop-in per week, have once a week some evening, 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. or 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. He could fill it. Now they play at Coastal Christian.

Pat asked about bathroom facilities at the TCC. Catherine said they work, clean but not handicap accessible.

Catherine promised to spread the word during the winter: don't wear your court shoes in, take off your shoes in the lobby. There are trays and a bench.

A youth pickleball clinic was mentioned for school vacation weeks.

Catherine brought up potential Steel Pro employee participation.

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6. Tennis and basketball court repairs: Above.

7. Clark Field update and plans for the future:

Pat said Jay shared some renderings. There are different versions, but it sounds like there's going to be a multi-use piece of that property specific to the Town of Union to develop for a Parks and Recreation area.

Jay said there is definitely future there. It's been the last year and a half negotiating with and recruiting Steel Pro. They're a very nice company, pleasant people to work with. They're going to be great assets to the town. We have three-phase power there, a big benefit to them, and they needed acreage.

Jay continued that the Pullen Committee purchased everything except for the building. Steel Pro needed additional acreage. We had to protect that acreage and buy it for recreation and knowing at some point they would ask for additional acreage, which they did, and which the Pullen Committee transferred to them. There were other companies that came in second after the town. This guy was adamant about selling it to the town. Part of the negotiation was they're going to partner with the town on the recreational facility. It's a good project for them, for their employees – right now they have 60 some, and they're looking to really increase that over the years. They can go out there and walk the track, play ball, stationary gym, pickleball court. These are all little concepts that they came up with as we just talked and their engineering, Gartley & Dorsky. There is nothing written in stone. There's still a long way to go – probably two to three years out before they actually do groundbreaking. We are working on industrial zones and possible TIFs, most likely a TIF so we can hide the value and not take a hit in the school and revenue sharing. Basically the additional taxes from the increased property value go into a TIF fund, which has to be dedicated to certain things. The agreement is recreational facilities, so it will help pay for a lot of that and help on matching funds for federal dollars. They're great partners, they're right into this with us, very easy to work with. It will probably be five or six years before everything is done, but it's going to be a great thing for the Town of Union to have them come up here – sorely needed, a multi-purpose field, outdoor pickleball courts, there's been talk about a fenced-in dog area. Owners along the river have allowed an easement for a track. There's more to get done with federal regulations for them; we are working with MCOG. The recreation committee is going to have to be an integral part of that design. They're going to fund almost all that design work.

Pat mentioned bringing soccer to Union and a bright future for the next generation of kids.

8. Other Business:

Election of officers was brought up. Jay will check the nomination papers. Tabled.

People are invited to join the committee. Just fill out the form.

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Pat said their budget is approximately \$2,000 per year.

Jay knows where there is a very large net.

Pat said they will as a group sidebar come up with the next meeting date.

9. Adjourn:

Motion by: Pat Hood

2nd by: Mitch Wilson

All in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sherry Abaldo
Secretary