

Building and Facilities Committee  
Minutes of 3-12-20  
Syd Crook Room, Academy Building

Members Present: Bowers, Beasley, Hogle, Lewis, Cross, Cannon,  
Bianchi, Sherman, Cardillo,

Guest: Ben Drummond, President, Outing Club; Peter Smith, V.P., Outing  
Club; Jim O'Hara, Operations and Programs Director, Outing Club; and Scott  
Blewitt, Director, Recreation Department

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

1. *Approval of Minutes*

The minutes of the previous meeting of March 5, 2020 were reviewed  
by the Committee and were then approved unanimously.

2. *Reports*

None

3. *Discussion With Outing Club re Rec. Dept. space*

The Chair thanked Mr. Drummond, Mr. Smith, and Mr. O'Hara for meeting  
with the Committee; and Mr. Blewitt for also attending to participate in the  
discussion. The Chair briefly explained that the reason for getting together was to  
learn what the current plans of the Outing Club were related to the possibility of a  
new building for its activities, and to explore any possibilities that might exist to  
have the Rec. Dept. and the Outing Club work together to meet their respective  
obligations in a way that might be beneficial to both groups. The background is  
that the Committee is looking at the possibility of using the space currently  
occupied by the Rec. Dept. in the Buker building for Police Department purposes,  
and if that were to occur, the Rec. Dept. would need another location for its  
space.

Mr. Drummond stated that the Outing Club would be very interested in  
exploring those possibilities, and as part of that would be interested in looking at  
the possibility of the Rec. Dept. using space at any new building that may be  
constructed. Their current thinking is that the Outing Club will remain at the SAU  
under its current lease, which has a present ending date of July 1, 2023. During  
that period of time, it would prepare plans for where a building might be located

on its property on Parkside Road, and then begin to construct new fields as needed to accommodate that location. Once new fields were in place, construction could occur without major interruption of their programs. It is likely to be a phased-in project, accomplished over a period of more than one year.

Mr. O'Hara stated that the participants in their programs cover a wide geographic area, with about 50% from New London, and the remainder from the surrounding towns. They focus on athletic programs, but also have a morning program for elementary students, and the Shakespeare program for students to become engaged in Shakespeare productions, both of which were programs originally offered by the SAU, but taken over by the Outing Club when the SAU no longer offered them. All funding is from donations, and program fees. Their budget is about \$70,000/year. They have substantial adult programs, and the gymnasium is pretty much filled and used whenever it is available after school hours. The Outing Club parcel is approximately 39 acres, and abuts Knights Hill Park, which is also under the Outing Club's control.

The Outing Club and the Rec. Dept. stated that they work well together, and for the most part their activities do not overlap, and they coordinate with each other to ensure a broad offering which does not present conflicts. The four of them met for the first time Wednesday morning, March 11, 2020, and found that they had many mutual interests and no issues between the two organizations that needed resolution.

Mr. Smith noted that raising the funds to build a new facility will have its challenges, but they believe it can be done, and they now have professional guidance as they go through the process. He stated that the bigger issue may be the funding of ongoing costs of staffing and maintenance, and that would have to be clearly resolved and explained in the efforts to go forward.

Mr. Cardillo suggested that there could be some valuable synergies in the two groups working together to provide the programs they offer, in a way that may save money overall. For example, the Outing Club rarely uses the fields during the summer, and perhaps coordinating with the Rec. Dept. for its use of those fields for its summer camp programs would be beneficial. There may be other areas where cooperation and coordination would provide cost savings to both. Mr. Bianchi suggested that if there were to be a cooperative effort of this

nature between the two groups, it would be important for the Town and its Selectmen to be supportive of the effort. There was general discussion around the topic that it would also be important for both groups to keep their constituencies involved, including the Recreation Commission, and to work through with them any concerns that may arise.

The meeting was concluded with the agreement that the Outing Club would keep the Committee informed of its progress and thinking on their project. Both the Outing Club and the Rec. Dept. will continue their discussions of ways to work together for their common benefit, and, as they move through this process, what solutions may be viable for the Rec. Dept. to share space, available fields, and gymnasium time with the Outing Club to maximize the benefit for their respective programs and participants.

Everyone felt it was a very informative and productive meeting.

4. *Other items to come before the Committee*

None.

5. *Action Items.*

None

The next meeting is at the DPW, on Monday, March 16, at 2:00 p.m.

The meeting adjourned by unanimous consent at 8:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Bowers, Chair