



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

April 12, 2021
5:00 PM via Zoom

Due to the COVID-19/Coronavirus crisis and in accordance with Governor Sununu's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, this Board is authorized to meet electronically. The public has access to contemporaneously listen and participate in this meeting through the video conferencing platform Zoom.us.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Justin Garzia, Chairman
Chris Lorio
Jackie Christensen
Lyndsay Harkins
Gregory Partham
Kim Pruett-Ilg
Sheri Cote

OTHERS PRESENT: Kim Hallquist, Town Administrator, Tom Elliott, Selectman Janet Kidder

New Recreation Commission Introductions

Justin Garzia asked the Recreation Commission members to introduce themselves as there are new member that have recently joined the commission. Two members of the Commission, Janet Kidder and Carol Kinzler have resigned and will no longer be on the Commission. Mr. Garzia thanked them both for all of the work they have done over the years for the Recreation Commission.

Selection of Recreation Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary

Justin Garzia volunteered to continue as the Chair of the Commission. Jackie Christensen volunteered for the Secretary position and Chris Lorio has volunteered for the vice chair position.

IT WAS MOVED (Lyndsay Harkins) AND SECONDED (Kim Pruett-Ilg) to appoint Justin Garzia as the Chair of the Recreation Commission, Jackie Christensen as Secretary and Chris Lorio as Vice-Chair. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Update on Waterfront Director

Chair Garzia reported that a candidate has been selected for the Waterfront Director position and the offer was accepted. The hiring process is underway and will be announced soon. The candidate is qualified and is familiar with the area.

Waterfront : Program and Equipment Plan

Swim Lessons – The group discussed offering swim lessons for the upcoming season. Lyndsay Harkins stated she understands that swim lessons are part of the summer experience in New London but we are still in a pandemic and need to follow guidelines and statutes that the Governor has put into place. We still are unsure what the parameters will be for that age group. Ms. Harkins

recommended waiting until mid-May to release additional guidelines. Chris Lorio agreed but other areas across the country are also dealing with this so we should research how they are providing swim lessons. We could issue a statement saying while we would like to offer swim lessons more information will be coming. It was suggested that the Waterfront Director investigate swim lessons and if it is possible to do lessons while following the rules.

Boats/Paddleboards

These were not offered last year but in previous years, boats and paddleboards were very popular. It was decided that this was also something they would like the Waterfront Director to look into to see if there is a safe way to make them available to residents.

Sailing Lessons

Lyndsay Harkins stated even if there are sometimes two people on the boat (the instructor and student) if they are wearing masks there should be no reason why they can't participate. The Waterfront Director can investigate to see if this can be offered within safe guidelines.

Swim Platforms

Chair Garzia stated these were not put in the water last year and were greatly missed. Ms. Harkins stated they would need to know what the state guidelines are before deciding if they can be used this year. Chris Lorio feels the swim platforms would be the hardest to do safely because of social distancing requirements.

Chris Lorio asked if the plan was to still offer the beach to only New London residents. Chair Garzia stated this was put in place by the Selectmen in 2009 so yes, that is still the plan. There was a limitation on the number of people allowed on the beaches last year so this was strictly enforced. They purchased a machine last year that issued ID cards in an effort to limit the numbers. Chair Garzia stated they need to have further discussion to clarify what "resident and their guest" means. The Selectmen need to provide clarity on how to interpret that rule and also will there be limits on the number of people at the beach this year. Selectman Janet Kidder stated while the Selectmen make these decisions, they want recommendations from the Recreation Commission. Ms. Harkins volunteered to check in with Fire Chief Jay Lyon and Police Chief Emily Cobb to get their input on these issues.

Chair Garzia stated some frustration expressed last year was that the terminology was not clear as it relates to the ID. To streamline that, the Waterfront Director can make these decisions and if need be, can work together with Town Administrator Kim Hallquist. Cleaning has been budgeted for 7 days a week for both beaches. An advertisement to hire life guards was posted and applications have been coming in.

The search for a year round Recreation Director has been paused for a bit to focus on hiring the Waterfront Director and lifeguards so the beaches are ready to go by Memorial Day.

Update on Outing Club Director Search/Summer Camp

Selectman Kidder asked Chair Garzia if the Outing Club had selected a Board member to join the Recreation Commission. Chair Garzia stated they have not selected anyone yet and have offered for someone from our Board to join theirs. Kim Pruett-Ilg volunteered to join the Outing Club board. Chair Garzia will put her name forward as our designated representative to be on their board. Ms. Pruett-Ilg will also reach out to Pete Smith as well.

Chair Garzia stated he told Mr. Smith that they would be happy to have a representative from their board join ours but they have been very busy getting programs up and running and that has been their focus. It was Chair Garzia's understanding that as long as there is one person on both boards that will fulfill the requirement. Selectman Kidder disagrees and feels it is important to have one of the Outing Club board members on the Recreation Commission as well.

The Outing Club has hired a Camp Director that is currently working full time on the summer camp program. They plan to use the SAU space and gymnasium and will not use Whipple Hall. The cost will be similar to what it was in years past. There is a chance that they will put in a request for money potentially to be reallocated from this year's recreation budget. This was discussed at a budget meeting in December or January. A formal proposal has not been sent to us yet and Chair Garzia feels the Selectmen should evaluate a proposal from them for a request for money. This is an important program that should be offered this summer and if there is an ability to take some unused recreation funds from the current budget year to allocate to the Outing Club this should be considered. Town Administrator Kim Hallquist noted the Selectmen do have the authority to spend funds in the budget as long as there is a public purpose.

Chris Lorio asked if we know what the dollar figure for the allocation is going to be. Lyndsay Harkins stated they can look up what it was in the past. This is something the Recreation Commission specifically requested that the Outing Club take over for us. Chair Garzia stated the Recreation Commission is in support of the Selectmen evaluating this and we think this is a worthwhile program for recreation funds to support. Selectman Kidder stated knowing the Recreation Commission is in support of a proposal from the Outing Club is important. Selectman Kidder noted there are questions that the Outing Club has not answered including what amount of money they are getting from other towns and they have still not placed a board member on the Recreation Commission's board. We need to know that they are going to step up and do the things we have asked them to do.

IT WAS MOVED (Justin Garzia) AND SECONDED (Lyndsay Harkins) to recommend supporting a proposal for reallocating funds to support the summer camp program if the proposal is reasonable and sufficient. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chair Garzia stated the search for an Outing Club Director is going well and they have a few finalists.

Spring Recreation Program Offerings

Granite State Track and Field was a program offered up until last year. It allowed pre high school children to learn about track and field and they meet at the Colby Sawyer track. The group met a few times a week and a few meets were held. The Outing Club would like to take over this program. Gregory Partham stated he has heard concerns from people in town that the Outing Club is taking everything over. Would you have to be a member to join Granite state track? Lyndsay Harkins stated they are asking that a membership rate apply since we are now supplementing the Outing Club's budget. Chair Garzia stated there seemed to always be confusion about what the Outing Club ran for programs and what the Recreation Department ran for programs. By having the Outing Club take these over makes it more streamlined. Ms. Harkins noted as a Commission they were not satisfied with the Director they had so coupled with the pandemic, it presented an opportunity for the Recreation Department to reevaluate. Chair Garzia stated it was in their proposal that New London residents would get a discount so they should be held accountable to that. They should honor giving a discount or they could make all New London residents Outing Club members.

Chair Garzia stated the Outing Club will have to request use of the beaches for the summer camp. Town Administrator Kim Hallquist stated she has not gotten that request yet. Chair Garzia asked if that was something the Recreation Commission will support. Ms. Harkins stated this would be contingent upon how many people are allowed at the beaches and what the anticipated camp numbers will be. Selectman Kidder stated they got a lot of push back from people on the beach about the camps using the beaches. People felt they were being pushed out by camp users. Time parameters for campers should be set. There are also other towns that have beaches that could be used as well. Ms. Harkins recommended getting the safety numbers and suggested the Outing Club ask other towns to use their beaches in addition to the beaches in New London. The Recreation Commission agreed that using New London beaches one day a week during a low volume time would be acceptable.

IT WAS MOVED (Justin Garzia) AND SECONDED (Lyndsay Harkins) to recommend that the Outing Club schedule a time with the Waterfront Director and the Recreation Commission to use the New London beaches and that the Outing Club ask other towns for water access as well. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Next Meeting – The next Recreation Commission meeting will be held on May 4, 2021 at 5:00pm.

IT WAS MOVED (Lyndsay Harkins) AND SECONDED (Chris Lorio) to adjourn. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:49PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Trina Dawson

Recording Secretary
Town of New London