



# TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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## RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES May 4, 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  
Kim Pruett-Ilg  
Sheri Cote

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Lyndsay Harkins, Gregory Partham

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Kim Hallquist, Town Administrator; Bob Brown; Conservation Commission Chair; Putnam Kidder, Beach Director

Chair Garzia opened the meeting at 5:00 PM and called the roll.

### **Recreation Department Facilities**

Chair Garzia stated that Bob Bowers of the Building and Facilities Committee reached out to Peter Smith of the Outing Club in May regarding the potential for the Recreation Department to move to the SAU. This has been brought up in the past several times. Chair Garzia looked at the area they are proposing, and it would cost \$250,000 to put the recreation department there. Chair Garzia personally does not think it makes sense. There is not a formal proposal at this point, but it is being discussed.

Town Administrator Kim Hallquist noted that the town has looked into using the former library at the SAU in the past for the recreation department and the reception by the School Board was not overly enthusiastic; perhaps the current Board will have a different view of it should the town decide to pursue it. She noted that she recently spoke with the SAU Facilities Director and learned that this issue has not been presented by the town to the School Board yet so it is unknown if it is a viable option. Chair Garzia would like to ask the Selectmen about the use of Whipple Hall should they have programs they want to provide. He would like to have a formal understanding about what will be allowed with appropriate guidelines for spacing etc. and what the potential timeline would be for Whipple Hall use. Kim Hallquist noted that the recreation department has successfully used Whipple in the past and having the recreation department located close to it makes the most sense.

Currently the building is closed to the public due to COVID but after town meeting there will be discussions regarding the reopening of town buildings.

### **Waterfront**

Kim Hallquist stated there are five or six interested lifeguards but no interested candidates for beach attendants. Ms. Hallquist emailed employees from last year but has not heard back. Beach Director Putnam Kidder and Ms. Hallquist have teamed up with a certified lifeguard instructor to mentor Mr. Kidder and assist in getting lifeguards trained and properly equipped. They will review all the equipment at the beaches to make sure they have all the proper lifesaving equipment and do in-services throughout the summer. Training classes will be held in May prior to Memorial Weekend. Ads have been placed in local newspapers and outreach to schools is being done to find people that are interested in being lifeguards.

The Commission discussed offering incentives and bonuses to help recruit people.

### **Programs**

Justin Garzia stated there was a discussion last night at the Selectmen's meeting, but no decisions were made regarding beach capacity and other things related to the beach. Due to staffing it does not seem that swim lessons and sailing lessons will be offered.

### **Beach Equipment**

The Recreation Commission discussed kayaks and life jackets and being able to wipe them down in between users. Nothing will be decided at this time. Picnic tables will be available for use and spaced six feet apart.

### **Update from Selectmen's Meeting**

Issues discussed at the recent Selectmen's meeting were the floating docks and the potential use of the playground. The Recreation Commission put together guidelines last year that were adapted by the Selectmen as well as Police and Fire for capacity and other things. The Selectmen wanted the Recreation commission to review these rules from last year to see what needed to be changed if anything.

The Elementary schools are allowing children to use the playgrounds so the Recreation Commission felt they should follow suit with what the schools are doing.

The floating docks were discussed and there was concern about the ability to socially distance on them. Chris Lorio feels it is sending a mixed message to say you have to socially distance on the beach but not on the platforms and will cause confusion. There could potentially be a mix of kids and adults from different families. Sheri Cote stated many of the moms she knows want to see the docks go back in. Chair Garzia is in favor of putting them out and stated it is a situation where people can choose to use it or not to use it depending on their comfort level. It also helps spread people out in the water. Jackie Christensen does not want the responsibility to fall on the lifeguards to police this issue.

There was also discussion at the Selectmen's meeting about limiting the beaches to New London residents only. This was an ordinance put into place in 2009 but last year was the first year it was enforced. Chair Garzia asked if this was something they wanted to enforce again this year. Chris Lorio would like to start off the summer enforcing it and see how it goes. Jackie Christensen stated it should be enforced and would help control volume and social distancing. Putnam Kidder stated the beaches are not very big so we need to send a consistent and friendly message and do the best we can. Chair Garzia would also like to open parking up on Dump Road and he will recommend this to the Selectmen. It was noted that finding lifeguards is the priority, staffing for checking ID's may not be possible on a consistent basis.

### **Update on Outing Club**

The Outing Club took over the track and field program and the summer camp. Chair Garzia talked with Pete Smith about the new London resident discount that was discussed at the last meeting. Pete Smith will discuss this with the Outing Club board and will review the proposal to see how they had envisioned that discount being applied to New London residents. Chair Garzia also shared with him that if the expectation is to use the waterfront more than one time a week they will need to reach out to other towns. There are a lot of restrictions around the Outing Club busing kids, so they are not anticipating a lot of travel outside of Woodward Park. They are also in the process of reaching out to other towns for funding.

### **New Business**

Bob Brown, Chair of the Conservation Commission attended the meeting to discuss a request for funding from the Mary Haddad fund. This involves the purchase of a parcel of land at the Esther Currier Wildlife management area at Low Plain. This parcel is 23 acres and Cascade brook runs through it. This has been on the desirable lands list for over 25 years but just recently the owners just offered it for sale. The price has been adjusted from \$400,000 to \$245,000.

At the last Conservation Commission meeting they voted to make an offer for \$225,000 and it was accepted. The Selectmen approved funding using either the Mary Haddad fund or the Conservation land acquisition fund for up to \$245,000. The Conservation Commission is asking the Recreation Commission for their approval as well.

**IT WAS MOVED (Kim Pruett-Ilg) AND SECONDED (Jackie Christensen) to approve the request. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**Next Meeting** – The next Recreation Commission meeting will be held on June 1, 2021 at 5:30pm.

**IT WAS MOVED (Jackie Christensen) AND SECONDED (Sheri Cote) to adjourn. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:27PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Trina Dawson

Recording Secretary  
Town of New London