

Bridgewater Parks and Recreation Commission

Meeting Minutes of December 11, 2023

Members Present: Mark Thomas, Mike Flaherty, Gina Guasconi, Jim Small, Dan Buron, Tom Arrighi

Other attendees: Jeff Gosciminski

Mark Thomas called the meeting to order at 7:10 pm.

Mark confirmed that all members had received and reviewed the minutes from the November meeting. He then made a motion to approve the minutes. Gina stated that Tom Arrighi's name wasn't spelled correctly in the minutes. Mark advised that he would provide Allyson with the correct spelling. **A motion was made to approve the November minutes with the spelling correction for Tom Arrighi's name. Motion was seconded and approved.**

UPDATES -

Pickleball – Jeff Gosciminski re-introduced himself to the Commission and advised that he and his committee had been working behind the scenes to have the Bridgewater Pickleball Association established as a non-profit organization. They are filing for a Federal ID, opening a bank account and are in the process of establishing a Board of Directors. Jeff will be the President of the organization. Since the Pickleball season starts on March 1st and will run through Dec 31st, they need to get themselves, their code of conduct, fee schedule and website organized quickly.

Jeff explained that the Association will be a fee-based Membership program. There is a system called Team Reach which will manage memberships and court reservations for members. The initial plan is that the Bridgewater Pickleball Association will be utilizing the 6 Pickleball courts from 7-11am and 4-8pm on Monday through Friday. The Bridgewater residents will have access to the courts from 11am to 4pm Monday through Friday. Weekend availability will be dependent upon any tournament or league schedules. Each Pickleball Association member will be required to submit a formal application and sign a code of conduct. The 2024 Annual Fee will be \$50 for Bridgewater residents and \$100 for non-residents. Twenty percent (20%) of each membership fee

will go to the Bridgewater Parks and Recreation department. Jeff advised that in 2023 the membership in the Pickleball Club had increased to about 500 members up from 115 in 2022. Jeff advised that there will be an open program for guests -\$5.00 fee. Twenty percent of this fee will also go to the Parks and Recreation department. Jeff hopes that the fee structure will help reduce the amount of litter/trash left on the courts and in the general area.

Jeff expressed that the Bridgewater courts are beautiful and very popular with out-of-town people. The people that have joined the Association this past year have become friends and they have had lots of social activities. Jeff also stated that the Association will be conducting free pickleball lessons for the Bridgewater residents. He wants the residents to learn the game so they can enjoy the courts. The plan is to have tournaments and leagues starting in the spring of 2024.

Future goals include adding electricity for lighting and have a defibrillator on site. The Parks and Recreation department should work closely with the CPC. Gina suggested using solar panels to power the defibrillator.

Gina thanked Jeff for the update. She had concerns with the proposed schedule of members time limiting use for the Bridgewater residents. She also expressed concern that the town residents had already paid for the courts via taxes etc. and shouldn't have to pay to play, she compared it to using the basketball courts. Jeff explained that other towns have found that by charging a nominal fee to become a member, it deters people from just using the courts and it also enforces that people follow the rules etc., which results in the courts staying in good condition. Jeff also stated that Bridgewater residents would be given preference for use etc. It was also explained that the fee-based program helps us to monitor and control who uses the courts etc. Mark stated that in June the Commission had agreed to let the Pickleball Association set up their organization. He also stated that 2024 will be the initial year and it will be a trial. If there are any issues etc., we can reassess the program as needed.

Jeff stated that there were a few things the Association needs to work out for 2024. (Port a potties etc.). The Association will provide a written document outlining their process, rates, scheduling etc. to the Parks and Recreation department. This will be provided fairly quickly as they want to start the season March 1st. Several members stated they supported the current plan but would like to see it in writing.

Dan made a motion to accept the Bridgewater Pickleball Association as discussed and based on Jeff coming back to the Commission prior to March 1st to provide all rules, fees etc. Motion was seconded and approved.

Jeff left the meeting and the Commission continued with their agenda.

Gina questioned what would happen if another organization came to us wanting to form a new pickleball association. Mark advised that this was our organization just like our Football and Baseball leagues. We will reassess the Pickleball Association in one year.

Old Business:

Field Usage

Mark will work with Gina on the non-profit fees. Mark will also work with Jim and Allyson concerning Club Sports fees. There will be a Master Schedule in the Parks & Recreation office. Priority will be given based on who pays first.

Meeting with Jason Rawlings

Mark will be scheduling a meeting with Jason Rawlings in the new year. He plans to work with the Commission to identify some questions and then meet with Jason in February.

Miscellaneous

Mark stated that he needed to follow up with Jim after the meeting to discuss the following:

Dugouts

Angel Dust

Batting Cages

We need more prices for the concrete under the scoreboards. Mike reminded the Commission that in the past Graziano would provide a few yards of concrete. Mike is willing to dig the holes to save on our expenses. Mike also stated that we might be able to get the steel posts donated too.

New Business

Jim advised that Allyson had been contacted by National Fitness organization which discussed a program that is based on using body weight with structures that are part of a park. The program provides information on some grants that might be available to fund the project. Bridgewater State University has one of these parks. Jim will send some information out to the Commission members. Gina suggested that Jim speak with Emily too.

Jim advised that we were waiting on estimates to purchase the playground equipment that we removed as a result of the Playground Safety Audits. Mark will be sitting down with the Town Manager in January to discuss our playground needs.

Jim stated that we had received some estimates to resurface/paint/repair the 6 pickleball courts as well as the 2 basketball courts at Legion Field. He also stated that we had to address the Scotland Field basketball court as it needs to be replaced. He received estimates for both a basketball court and 3 pickleball courts at Scotland Field. We need to decide which option would be best for Scotland Field. It was also discussed that the sheds at Scotland Field need to be updated.

Gina also mentioned that she had seen a letter about some decisions that the Town Manager had made concerning Parks and Recreation. It was discussed that the Commission was not included in the discussion/decision even though we are supposed to be an advisory group. Mark stated that he would be discussing this with Michael.

Motion was made, seconded, and approved to adjourn the meeting at 8:32 pm.