

**Recreation Commission**  
**MINUTES**  
**October 20, 2021**

**Present:** Recreation Commission Members Ed McCann, Jeremy Schaller, Linda Aquavia, Greg O'Brien; Administrative Assistant Christine Hayward.

Members of the Public; Rick Berneike, Trisha Brett, Jane Allyn, Matt Allyn, Hilary Schibi

Ed McCann called the meeting to order at 6:40 PM. Ed stated that Chairman Joe Petrarca was unable to attend the meeting this evening and therefore the Commission needs to appoint someone as Chairman for the meeting.

**MOTION:** by O'Brien, second Aquavia to have Ed McCann serve as Chairman for the meeting.

The Commission members introduced themselves to the members of the Public that were present for the meeting.

Chairman McCann suggested that Public comment be the first item on the agenda to allow those present the opportunity to address the Commission right away.

**Opportunity for Public Comment:**

Mrs. Jane Allyn spoke to the Commission, stating that she had sent correspondence to the First Selectman and to the Recreation Commission regarding Ski Club, or more precisely, wanting to have a Ski Club this year. She has spoken directly with First Selectman Mr. Jerram who told her that he did not want the Town/Recreation Department to take this on this year for a couple of reasons. The first being due to COVID and the second due to the fact that there is no paid staff available to act as the organizer of this Club. When Mr. Jerram learned that there was a volunteer interested in taking over as the organizer, the agent for the insurance company was contacted for guidance. The insurance company had concerns with offering the program due to potential liability for possible claims due to exposure to COVID. However, Jane feels that the benefits of ski club outweigh the risks and would like the Rec Commission to reconsider this decision and support this request to have a Ski Club this year. She stated that she understands that it did not happen last year due to the pandemic; but this year is different; everyone is used to safe practices and there are procedures in place to limit exposure. She has been reaching out to parents to see if there is interest and she has several families who would like to see Ski Club reinstated. She is aware that there is not a Recreation Director who would oversee this program as there has been in the past; therefore, she is offering to provide that oversight. Mrs. Allyn stated that she has spoken to the Superintendent of Schools who was concerned with allowing the program to be offered to students without Recreation Department involvement; thus her presence at the meeting this evening.

The insurance company has indicated that there would be no coverage for this program without town sponsorship. Jane has reached out to individual insurance agents to get a quote for independent insurance; however, she really does not want to have to go this route as it could be expensive and really add to the cost of participation. The Commission offered to make a donation from the recreation program account to the group that will run the ski club towards the cost of the insurance, as they have

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no authority to sponsor the program without the Town's backing; but would like to see the program continue.

Questions were asked by the Commission members regarding the operations of the program. Mrs. Allyn explained that there would be volunteers assisting with the management of the Club. There are already procedures in place at the school on ski club mornings to assist children in stowing their equipment in the art room for the day. Mrs. Allyn would be present at the end of the day to get the participants onto the bus and over to Ski Sundown. There would be a parent volunteer in the lodge at the table and available to the participants if they needed any kind of assistance and this person would keep an eye on things. The Bus Company has been contacted and they stated that one school bus holds 45 participants plus equipment. The Club would meet on Tuesday afternoons. There was a brief discussion of contact tracing and that is a detail that will need to be ironed out if Ski Club moves forward.

Commission members were supportive of Mrs. Allyn's request to have Ski Club this year and asked Administrative Assistant Hayward to discuss options with the insurance company to see if there is any way that Ski Club would be able to proceed. They would like to see the program occur this year.

**MOTION:** by Aquavia, second by O'Brien to make a donation to the Ski Cub to help offset the cost of private insurance, if that is what will be needed to make the program run.

*Unanimous.*

Rick Berneike, long-time volunteer with New Hartford Youth Soccer, approached the Commission to request consideration of continuing their support by providing an annual allocation of \$5,000 to assist with expenses of running the sports programs. Mr. Berneike discussed the costs of field maintenance at Browns Corner. He thanked the Commission for their past assistance and gave a brief overview of some of the costs that are incurred. He stated that in addition to the \$5,000 that was picked up by the Recreation Department, the youth sports teams expended an additional \$8,000. Examples of where these funds were used included irrigation costs, field fertilizing, grub control, replacement of the well pump and other items.

Mr. Berneike stated that he has been providing oversight of field maintenance for many years and has enjoyed his role; however, it is getting close to the time when he won't be doing it much longer and someone needs to take things over. There has been discussion between several of the key volunteers in the various sports leagues and they all agree that it might be time for the Town to take over the full maintenance of the fields. Youth Sports has been doing it for many years, but the people who have been doing it as volunteers are getting older and there aren't as many people willing to volunteer as in the past. The Town Crew currently cleans the bathrooms and mows the fields, but that is really all they do. Mr. Berneike keeps a spreadsheet showing the usage of the facilities by the various youth organizations and the costs are split according to usage. He stated that the town can use that information and then bill the leagues if they take over the maintenance.

Recreation Commission Member Ed McCann responded to this; stating that there is a lack of manpower to assume those duties. He stated that the same problem exists with summer camp. There isn't any maintenance crew available on Fridays during the summer and the camp staff is charged with cleaning the bathrooms. It would be beneficial to have a parks employee on duty five days per week at Brodie during the summer.

The Commission asked Mr. Berneike to present them with information showing how many hours are

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devoted by volunteers to provide the administrative tasks they are currently handling. Berneike will get some numbers together for the Commission to review. It was agreed that it may be time to consider having a full time recreation director once again- especially if Youth Sports is going to become a town responsibility.

**Approval of Minutes:**

**MOTION:** by O'Brien to approve the minutes of the Recreation Commission meeting held on August 17, 2021 as written; seconded by Schaller.

*Unanimous.*

**Review of past topics:**

*Pickle ball at Browns:* There hasn't been any forward movement with measuring the size of the courts; just not enough time/manpower to get everything accomplished.

*Golf Cart:* Ed informed the Commission that he has found a 4 person golf cart for sale. It is electric, in good condition and has been looked at by the town mechanic. It is \$4,000. The purchase is pending.

*Shed:* Ed told the commission members that he went to a couple of different places to look at pre-fabricated sheds. He found one at Kloter Farms and it has been ordered. This shed will be placed on gravel (recommended depth by the manufacturer is 18") at the entry to the beach road and will be used by the beach pass sales people. It will provide shelter when needed.

*Lions Club Windows:* A check has been issued for a deposit for the windows that the Lions would like to replace on their cabin.

*Nurses Cabin:* The Commission discussed the state of this cabin and there were mixed feelings regarding repairing or razing the structure. The Commission would like someone to check and see if it is structurally sound.

*Garage Doors on Field House:* Rick Berneike told the Commission that he had measured what will be needed for a garage door at the Brodie Field House. It needs to be 12 feet wide, 10 feet tall. The vendor has said that it could take 18 weeks for the doors to come in. Rick needs the ok to proceed to order the doors.

**Signage—Brodie Park:**

Discussion occurred regarding new signs for Brodie Park entrances –one on Niles Road and the other on West Hill Road. The commission reviewed a couple of photos with sign designs. They preferred the simpler one without the stone base. They would like an option for having signs that announce special events. A letterboard could be used to draw attention to special activities – i.e. camp registration, summer concerts, etc. Jeremy will get pricing information for consideration.

At this point in the meeting, Ed realized that there were a couple more items he would like to discuss as updates. He asked if the Commission could circle back to the updates.

Ed stated that there is a need for an AED to be kept at Berkshire Hall and the Beach. The unit could be at the Beach during the day and when the Beach is closed, it could be stored at Berkshire Hall. He said that the Ambulance Association is assisting in providing contact information for getting quotes. The Commission agreed that this is an important purchase.

Mr. McCann informed the Commission that he and First Selectman Jerram had been discussing the issue

of training for lifeguard certification. There is a concern that it is getting harder to find lifeguards. The lifeguards that work at Brodie need a particular type of certification for lakefronts/waterfronts. There was some training provided this year right at Brodie for the guards to get that certification. Ed would like to see this training continue and to have the town pay for it as incentive to work at Brodie. There would need to be a commitment that the Guard would work for Brodie for the season. The Commission had no issue with this incentive.

Ed notified the Commission that there has been evidence of teenagers hanging out in some of the cabins. They haven't done any real damage; but have left it disorderly.

**Disc golf – design/layout**

Jeremy Schaller gave an overview of the layout of the disc golf course that is being constructed at Brodie South. He explained that the discs will be set along the perimeter of the field, saying that there will still be room for dog walkers. There will be two sets of tees, the red tees will be the amateur course and it could be used by the summer camp as an activity. Jeremy said that there may be a need to do some clearing of some smaller trees; about 6 skinny trees – no professional services needed.

Jeremy informed the Commission that he recently went on walk on the Kearney trail sponsored by the Open Space Commission and the Land Trust. He said that Ann Hall gave an interesting talk about the area. Jeremy had a chance to tell the participants on the walk about the disc golf and explained what it is. He said it was a positive experience.

Jeremy ended his update by saying that this disc golf course will be a great place to learn how to play. He asked the commission for funding to pay for 1000 tee pads. They will be installed in the spring by volunteers. He also talked about having some discs available for use as he would like to have an introduction to disc golf day in the spring and it might be useful to have some equipment for people to try out.

**MOTION:** by O'Brien to approve the purchase of 1000 tee pads plus 6 packs of 3 discs for a total estimated cost of about \$600.00; seconded by Aquavia.

*Unanimous.*

**Bike Race at Brodie:**

Administrative Hayward stated that Pat Cunningham had reached out to request permission from the Recreation Commission to use Brodie Park once again for a Cyclo Cross Bicycle Event in November. He had stated that he would steer clear of grassy sections. He intended to use the park roads and the trail he had made behind the Boy Scout cabins and use the beach road. There would be some off road action on the grass behind the skate park fence but they would avoid wet sections where the beach trail meets the field.

**MOTION:** by O'Brien to authorize the use of Brodie Park for the Cyclo Cross event in November; seconded by Aquavia.

*Unanimous.*

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**Correspondence:**

An Email from resident Judyth Hein was distributed. She expressed concerns regarding the disc golf course at Brodie. She is a dog walker and wanted to be sure that this activity would still be allowed. Jeremy asked that he be authorized to respond to the concerns on behalf of the Recreation Commission. The Commission supported this request.

**Any Other Business:**

Commissioner Greg O'Brien addressed the commission. He considers Berkshire Hall to be a gem of a place for people to use for various functions. He knows that it is used throughout the year. He would like to see a pavilion constructed at the north end of the big field. He envisioned it to be big enough to hold about 250 – 300 people. He would like it to have a concrete floor, electricity and picnic tables. He would also like to see it have sides that could be rolled down to protect from driving rain if needed. He estimated that it might cost between \$30,000 - \$45,000 to build something like this and would like the Commission to keep this thought in mind when looking ahead for projects. Administrative Assistant Hayward cautioned about putting two venues too close to each other. She stated that many renters of Berkshire Hall rent a tent for additional space and they place this tent in the field. Need to be careful of events overlapping into each other's space. The Commission suggested that perhaps they should look at Brodie and see what options for a pavilion space might exist.

Ed informed the Commission that the slide has been replaced; but noted that there are other items on the playground that need to be fixed or repaired. The Commission supported spending money to fix the equipment.

Greg drives through the park regularly to make sure all is well. He receives positive feedback from the public regarding the park.

An Eagle Scout project was recently done by the Boat Mooring area. There are some benches that are loose and need to be set firmly into the ground. The Commission requested that the highway department assist with making the benches safe. The Commission did not know the name of the Scout who supervised the project, but they thanked him for his contribution to the Park.

**MOTION:** by O'Brien to adjourn at 8:31; seconded by Schaller.

*Unanimous.*

*Respectfully Submitted,*

*Christine Hayward, Administrative Assistant*

*ATTACHMENTS (available from the Town Clerk upon request)*

*Photos of signage for Brodie Park*

*Brodie Park Disc Golf Layout*

*Correspondence from Judyth Hein dated August 26, 2021*