Dover Parks and Recreation Commission
Meeting of March 4, 2009
Minutes

P&R Commissioners In Attendance: John Budd, Barry Cullen, Peter Davies, Rich Oasis, Nancy Simms
P&R Employees In Attendance: Jessica Cooney, David MacTavish
Others In Attendance: Scott Seidman and Jim Kinder (Warrant Committee), Geoff Merril (Long Range Planning Committee)

Prior Meeting Minutes
January and February minutes were not available and will be reviewed at the next meeting.

Caryl Gym – DCCBC Wording in Renovation Plan
Wording in the Caryl building renovation plan has raised concerns that P&R’s position with regard to gym space is not being recognized by the DCCBC. Currently, the Master Plan does not present an athletic facility as an integral component of the renovations. The P&R commissioners do not feel comfortable supporting the initiative at town meeting as it currently is positioned. An athletic facility must be included in whatever plan is presented to the town. It could be scheduled as a later phase component, but the funding for it must be included in whatever plan is presented to the town. P&R does not want to be in the position of having to fight for gym space as a separate warrant article in years after the town has approved monies for a community center. The likelihood of that proposal receiving town approval is very low.

The importance of an athletic facility to the success of a community center seems undeniable. It was suggested that a “multi-purpose recreational facility” might be a more apt description of our vision for such a space. A MPRF could serve as a gymnasium, yoga space, bar mitzvahs and birthdays and arguably can be used more purposes than a “large room with character”. Is there a greater audience for a MPRF or a large room with character? It is the opinion of the P&R commissioners that without a MPRF, the community center will not have enough draw; a MPRF needs to be the anchor to this building.

It was agreed that Nancy will call Ford today with our concerns. Rich will attend tonight’s DCCBC meeting, and Nancy will attend if she can. It was suggested that DCCBC come to a P&R meeting to hear first-hand how frustrating the space issue is. The DCCBC needs to hear that there is a need for an additional gym in town. During peak usage times, there is not enough gym space to accommodate demand. Spending money on handicap access for the existing gym does not address this need and is not supported by P&R.

P&R is in favor of spending money this fiscal year to address the structural deficiencies in the building in order to ensure the safety and comfort of the P&R employees who work in the building and of the P&R clients who are in the building to partake in P&R programs.

The importance of sports programs for kids was discussed. Activities such as sports programs are key to keeping kids away from temptations. Idle time is not a good thing for kids and therefore our community. Non-productive behavior happens when there isn’t enough structure for kids. Being connected to something helps kids develop into productive adults. Numerous studies document this. A MPRF would allow P&R to offer open gym nights for middle school students, middle school dances, and movie nights. Kids in grades 6 to 8 need more activity; this age group is not being addressed well enough by the Region nor P&R.

DCCBC Renovation Items - What P&R Pays For
Dave spoke with Ford last night regarding the reference to P&R in the Don Mills report as a Caryl building “tenant”. Ford confirmed that the P&R space would be covered in any future master plan that is put in forth. He underscored that the wording in Don Mill’s report has not been voted on and characterized the document
wording is premature. He assured Dave that neither the Committee nor the Selectman view P&R as a “tenant”.

**FY2010 Operating Budget – 2% cut request**
The Warrant Committee has asked all town departments to reduce their operating budgets by 2% in order to avoid bringing an override vote to town meeting. For P&R, this amounts to cutting $5,600 from our budget. Wages and salaries are non-negotiable, so that leaves only the expense categories within general services from which to take our reduction. The general services portion of the P&R budget has been flat for the last two years which makes the Warrant Committee reduction request a challenge for P&R. Possible amounts and accounts where we could cut are: $2,000 from electricity, $1,000 from overtime, and $1,500 from truck maintenance. We still would need to find an additional $1,000. It was acknowledged that each of these cuts puts P&R at risk of having to request funds from the Reserve Fund as the original requested amounts for this year were the same as for the past two years and did not allow for inflation or industry escalation of prices. It was suggested that Jess apply for a scholarship for The Director’s School.

Discussion turned to Whiting Road as a potential source of revenue for P&R. Dave explained that even though the expenses for the Whiting Road building are paid by P&R, all rental income from this property contractually goes to the town. Currently, P&R pays the full year salary for the one P&R employee who works winters for the highway department. P&R lends its employees out to the cemetery as well but absorbs the full wage and benefits costs.

It was agreed that the costs P&R bears for other departments ought to be examined proactively outside of the current budgeting process. These costs include both services and manpower provided to other departments, the Whiting Road electricity bill, and the grounds maintenance costs for land at the library and at Chickering School.

Peter pointed out that unlike some other town departments, P&R headcount has not grown at all over the past decade or longer. Many of the town’s expenses are driven by headcount (health benefits, other insurance, pension obligations). P&R has continued to run a very lean department. Other departments have ballooned. Is Warrant Committee looking at these manpower costs? Can they explain the increase in such costs over the past decade? Can they justify it?

Jim noted that it would be good for the Warrant Committee to have a representative at P&R meetings year round, not just at budget time.

**Christmas Tree Lights**
Dave has done some research on replacement lights for the town Christmas Tree. The current light string uses 10 watts of electricity per light. By comparison, the new LED lights use .9 watts. The life expectancy of the LED lights is 100,000 hours – much more than current. Additionally, the LED lights are safe to leave up all year round which would save the annual labor cost associated with putting up and taking down the lights. This topic will be discussed further at the April meeting.

**Baseball/Softball**
The program (DSYBS) currently is in turmoil, perhaps as a result of leadership transition. P&R is getting calls from parents confused about whether there are tryouts or not, what’s happening with corporate sponsorships, and what the uniform status is. P&R brochure lists dates and times for tryouts, but B/S commissioners have stated that there will not be tryouts for the boys’ teams. Teams are being set up this year strictly by grade level; 3rd and 5th graders will no longer be split up or down. Town feedback appears to be mixed on tryout elimination.

The P&R position is as follows: For future seasons, all plans need to be laid out, discussed and agreed upon in the fall. A timeline and clearer communication channels are needed. P&R needs to be a part of the planning
process in order for us to be comfortable providing all the resources to the program that we have. B/S is a
town program, not a club. The B/S Commissioners need to keep P&R in the loop. P&R has expended
significant effort to make sure that Sherborn and Dover are included equally in the program. The program was
established originally by P&R to provide infrastructure to both sports and stronger connections between
Sherborn and Dover.

Could expenses be reduced by having the players participate in maintaining their fields? They could help out
with re-lining the fields, trash pick-up, mowing. Community service credit could be awarded.
Summer Tandorf teams will be assessed a $20 per person field fee. Sherborn and Dover will share this revenue
60-40.

**Miscellaneous**

**Chickering Ski Program at Nashoba** – Next year, Chickering will have every *other* Wednesday free rather than
every Wednesday. The ski program has been every Wednesday for six weeks, beginning in January. The
weather and the vacation calendar would make it difficult to shift the program to an every other week
schedule. The question was raised as whether Nashoba would allow Dover to shift to evening classes.
Questionable as to whether Chickering families would be interested in an evening program. Other possibilities
to explore include running the program every other week and offering a four-week program rather than a six-
week one. Jess will contact Nashoba to gather data on our options.

**Staff Development** - Jess has been accepted at The Director’s School to be held in Wheeling, WV in August of
this year and again August of next year.

**Joint meeting with Sherborn Recreation Commissioners** – Dave has asked the three Sherborn Recreation
Commissioners to meet with us for June meeting. Topics for discussion include collaboration on program
sponsorship and balances due from Sherborn for various youth sports programs.

**Commissioner Re-election** – Terms ending this year are Peter’s and Barry’s up for 3 year. As Rich was
appointed to fill a position vacated mid-year, he will need to run for election for the remaining one year of his
term. Decisions on whether to re-up need to be made by Caucus Monday. Peter stated that he would run for
another term. Rich stated that he would run to finish his term. Barry stated that he will not run for another
term as he has several other committee responsibilities.

**Meeting adjourned at 9:10am.**

Respectfully Submitted,
Nancy Simms, P&R Secretary