Dover Parks and Recreation Commission
Meeting of April 1, 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 – Warrant Committee; Greg Dowd, Dennis Dowd

The meeting was called to order at 7:35am.

Prior Meeting Minutes
Minutes from January and February were approved as amended.

Peter Mitchell – Capital Budget Committee
Peter Mitchell is the CBC member assigned to P&R. He reported that P&R’s request for a new tractor was approved by the CBC and that the CBC will present its recommendations to the Warrant Committee.

Greg Dowd – Baseball Dugouts
Greg Dowd and his father, Dennis, were at the meeting and delivered an update on the fundraising efforts associated with the memorial dugouts being planned for the baseball diamond next to the Caryl Park tennis courts. There is a Casino-themed fundraising event on April 25, 2009 at the German Club on Route 109. Last year this event raised $10,000 toward an estimated $30,000 necessary.

Greg presented a mock up drawing of the planned structures. The dugouts would be a post and beam construction that would tie in with the neighboring Caryl House and blend in with the site. The dugouts would be constructed on a concrete slab, using the existing grade so there would be no drainage issues.

Greg was questioned about security concerns. He informed us that he had shared the plans with the Chief of Police who was not concerned about safety and security because there were clear sight lines directly into both the proposed dugouts from Dedham Avenue. The idea of raising the dugouts 6 to 8 inches off the ground was raised; this would allow feet to be seen underneath. Perhaps the dugouts could be configured with a lock system similar to the one currently used for the tennis courts during the off season. This would then limit any security concerns to the six months between April and October.

Player safety was addressed with Greg stating that he hoped there would be enough funding to erect fencing in front of the dugouts. He would like to see the fencing positioned right to the face of the dugouts and be similar to the fencing used for the backstop. Safety cap fencing was suggested. Greg asked if P&R could provide materials and labor to cover the fencing portion of the project. P&R agreed to explore the possibility.

It was mentioned to Greg and Dennis that at some time in the future this particular ball field may be converted from a baseball field to a softball field as Dover has no regulation-sized
softball fields. Greg answered that this would not be a problem. This particular field was Matt’s favorite and this is where they want his memory honored even if it is converted to a girls field. Greg will research the dimensions and features of a regulation-size softball field to make sure that once placed, the dugouts won’t be in jeopardy of having to be moved.

Ideally, construction would be done during a weekend in the fall. Labor will be volunteer driven with a sign-up sheet at the fundraiser.

P&R will add the fundraiser announcement to our website and will send an email announcement to our email list which is mostly baseball and softball families anyway.

**Town Meeting – Article 11 wording**
The Dover Community Center Building Committee has asked P&R for its endorsement of Article 11. After much discussion, P&R unanimously agreed (Approved 5 – 0) on the following position statement regarding Article 11:

“The Parks & Recreation Commission supports maintaining the Caryl School building to ensure the safety of its employees and to allow the continuation of its current programs. We support the concept of the Caryl School property as the location of Dover’s community center. Assuming Article 11 of the 2009 Warrant is requesting funds to address these objectives, the Parks & Recreation Commission supports Article 11.”

Additionally, the DCCBC has asked P&R to take the lead in researching cost and construction details for an athletic facility. P&R has accepted this role.

**Turf Field at Caryl Park**
John Budd has been approached by three different people who have asked him about getting turf fields in Dover. The issue seems to be a regular topic among parents on the sidelines of all sport events. Conversations have ranged from: “Why don’t we have a turf field like everyone else” to “Let’s do turf fields with a bubble similar to John Smith’s facility in Milford which would allow more use, extend the seasons, and allow the town to bring in revenue.

Dave reported that Dover is definitely behind the neighboring towns in terms of installing turf fields. About 18 months ago, two residents offered to lead a private fundraising effort for turf fields at Caryl Park, but the down turn in the economy has pushed this effort off the table for now. The problem with adding field space in Dover has been lack of voting support at Town Meetings. It is anecdotally apparent that adults with children in Dover’s youth sports programs do want more high quality field space; however, this voting block is not well represented at Town Meetings. The DS Boosters Club is considering converting the Farm Street field at the regional school to a turf field.

If P&R funds a turf field project with private funds, our costs could be 30% lower than funding them publicly. Private funding of turf fields in neighboring towns has allowed the projects to be performed without the municipal bid restrictions that are more costly. Their timing was lucky in that 30 months ago, the economy was in their favor.
It was agreed that John and Jess would work on an article for the local papers to educate the townspeople on the limitations being faced both by the quantity and quality of available field space. The article should mention the growth trend we have experienced in youth sports, the related growth at the high school level, and the implication of Title 9 requirements as it relates to that growth.

Dave was asked what was needed to finish the Caryl field reconfiguration study and whether we could ask the soccer and lacrosse clubs in town to help fund the remaining portion of the study. It was agreed to ask the club presidents to contribute money in order to get the study completed. The baseball and softball commissioners will be asked as well since the field reconfiguration would allow their teams to play games simultaneous with soccer and lacrosse games – something that is not currently possible.

Dave will ask Camp Dresser McKee if their $16,000 quote to finish the study has changed; it is possible that with the downturn in the market, the price could be lower. We will aim to have the study complete by September so that we have time to put together materials to present at the 2010 Town Meeting (FY2011 budget). Peter Mitchell reported that the Fire Department has a new fire truck slated for FY 2013, so if P&R is going to go forward with field reconfiguration, it would be better to have P&R’s capital budget request not coincide with that of the Fire Department.

For the May 2010 Town Meeting, we could request of the moderator to have the P&R article early in the list so that young parents could come early and leave if the meeting ran late.

Peter Sylvester could run a program in the middle school gym.

**Trees & Driveway at Caryl Park**

**Trees:** The P&R office received a phone call from a concerned citizen regarding the tree cutting that took place at Caryl Park in March. The caller was informed that P&R prunes trees as part of its regular annual field maintenance program. The trees that were felled were at the back end of the Caryl playing fields and were casting too much shade on the back baseball field. It was determined that these trees were inhibiting air circulation and were not allowing enough sunlight to allow the fields to dry. Grass fields require direct sunlight and “breathing room” in order to keep them from deteriorating.

**Driveway:** P&R Employees will cut a new driveway for Caryl Park this month. The new driveway will be directly across from Park Avenue and is being installed as part of the town’s traffic safety plan for Dedham Avenue. It is anticipated that the driveway will be operable in time for the start of the busy spring sport season. Jess will draft an article for the newspaper about the driveway change and the parking reconfiguration that this will allow.

**Nomination for open vacancy**

Three people expressed an interest in running for the seat being vacated by Barry Cullen. One of these submitted the necessary paperwork prior to the filing deadline. Rich Oasis will run to fill the remaining one year of the term he was appointed to serve upon Wade Kennedy’s mid-term departure.
Miscellaneous

- The Warrant Committee approved our Reserve Fund transfer request to fund the first year of Jess’s Recreational Director’s school. The program runs for one week in August for two consecutive years.
- The Selectmen are proposing a salary increase for non-union employees of 4.1% rather than the 3.2% which is what was approved by the Warrant Committee in a 4-3 vote. Dave raised the issue on Jess’s behalf. There are roughly 60 non-union employees on the town’s payroll, including Jess, but not Dave. Scott Seidman reported that the Personnel Committee made their recommendations to the Warrant Committee in October when the COL, CPI, and other MA-specific data were high. Oil prices and other historical data suggested continued robust growth. When the economy tanked, the Warrant Committee made a downward adjustment to the Personnel Committee’s original October recommendation. Scott stated that their adjustment was not about the money ($18,000 roughly), but about the principle. Their goal is consistency and transparency.
- The Dover Mothers Association has asked P&R to run the annual Easter Egg Hunt, beginning in 2010. P&R has agreed to take responsibility for this much loved town event.
- The Sherborn P&R commissioners will be invited to our June meeting. Dave will extend the invitation. The goal of the joint meeting will be to explore further opportunities for collaboration especially as it pertains to public perception.
- P&R has received inquiries about expenses associated with field maintenance. Dave insists the costs are necessary to ensure safety of the players and to avoid issues of liability should a player be hurt on one of the P&R fields. He cites as an example the case of a current high school junior who broke his ankle on the third day of lacrosse practice while on the Upper High School fields (Medfield State Hospital fields). These fields are not well irrigated and have a very uneven surface condition. There is not a lot of money in the regional school budget for field maintenance. The student will be out for at least seven weeks.
- The regional school budget does not include funding for freshmen coaches which will become a bigger issue in the coming years as the growth in youth sports hits the high school. The regional school budget also does not include coaches for middle school athletics. These costs are carried in the P&R budget.

The meeting was adjourned 9:05am.

Respectfully Submitted,
Nancy Simms, Secretary, P&R Commission