**Town of Westborough Recreation Department**

**Recreation Commission**

**Meeting Minutes - April 29th, 2020**

Members Present: Recreation Commission Chair Earl Storey, Beth Travis, Bill Clausen, Colleen Dowd, Brian Kane, and Recreation Director Jenn Kirkland..

**COVID-19 Update and Overall Department Update**

Limitations for gathering from the Governor forced the commission meeting to be recorded and posted online, and the meeting to be held remotely.  Jenn read a statement to this effect to start the meeting.  Jenn discussed the cancellation of programs and our efforts to provide refunds.  All of the public playgrounds and Recreation areas are currently closed.

**Summer Discussion**

The discussion regarding summer programs started off regarding the uncertainty towards it with COVID-19.  Jenn Kirkland has a phone call scheduled with superintendent Amber Bock to discuss whether or not the schools will be available for use the way that they have been in the past.  Colleen Down brought up the fact that Fales will be under construction, however arrangements to use other schools had already been made earlier in the year.  The current plan is to take registrations for the summer programs, but just with a deposit paid instead of the full cost of the program.  This will help those without their typical income, as well as prevent the need to provide bulk refunds for the Recreation, Accounting, and Treasury Departments.

A number of concerns and difficulties were discussed regarding what would need to come together in order to run summer programs.  Bill Clausen brought up the social distancing regulations, and how that would force changes in the way programs are run.  He also mentioned the possibility of medical equipment being available.  Both Beth Travis and Colleen Dowd mentioned that if kids are needed to be 6ft apart from one another, it will be more or less impossible to run the programs while having them to the same standard and amount of fun as previous years.  Colleen mentioned the fact that if this programming is available, there will be a demand for it.  Based upon the current restrictions, the first week of the summer programs is likely to be canceled.  There are future announcements to come on May 18th, and Adam is confident that once he has the guidelines, he’ll be able to determine policies to put into place to make things as safe as possible should we be able to run.  Other issues such as staff paperwork, training, and different age groups were also talked about.  Earl mentioned the need for additional staff being needed per kid due to the need to have kids more spread out.  Jenn brought up the fact that putting all of these different restrictions on our summer staff, mainly high school kids, will be difficult.

Other possibilities for programming were then discussed in relation to other organizations.  Bill Clausen brought up meeting with other organizations in town to help brainstorm best practices.  This has been done with other Recreation Departments via email.  Ideas for outdoor programs such as hiking, and field hockey that could be better distanced were included, as well as the various online programming that has been offered by the department by outside organizations such as New England Music Academy and Paradise Island kids.  Outdoor Recreation areas such as tennis courts have been closed, but people have gone to extremes such as climbing over the fences in order to play.  This led to the thought that controlling things instead of just staying closed might be beneficial.  Things such as fields and Lake Chauncy that can’t be “closed” have been in use by the public, and this is expected to increase as the weather continues to get better.  It was unanimously agreed upon that closures should be done on a continuous basis instead of saying “everything is closed until X date”, to prevent things being closed when it might be safe to use.

Jenn mentioned the difficulties around planning different events, but then stepping back to make sure they would be safe for the public.  The Board of Health, and Board of Selectmen in town are the ones who will eventually make the final call on whether or not things will be run.  On this topic, the algae treatment for the beach is being moved from the next town meeting warrant to the Fall one.  The beach will likely remain closed this season due to the lack of treatment, the staffing difficulties, the shortened season, and expected limitations for for the number of people allowed at each time.

The commission was complementary to the online programming that Jenn and Adam have done via facebook live and posting videos.  Nelson Ball’s generosity regarding a donation to build more pickleball courts was mentioned, and still planned for a time after construction is allowed again.

**Next Meeting**

No formal date for the next Recreation Commission meeting was set, but it was discussed that the next meeting will take place after the announcements on May 18th.