

Park & Recreation Commission Larz Anderson Skating Rink Task Force Working Group Meeting Minutes 2/16/22

Park and Recreation Commission	Meeting Minutes
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Date: February 16, 2022, 12:00 PM

Place: Zoom Webinar

Commissioners Attending: John Bain, Nancy O’Connor, Wendy Sheridan Ames, Antonia Bellalta

Commissioners Absent:

Task Force Members Attending: Avi Urbas, Priscilla Karnovsky, David Driscoll Julie Jette, and Jim Carroll

Task Force Members Absent: Jeff Thibault

Staff: Alexandra Vecchio, Parks and Open Space Director, Leigh Jackson, Recreation Director, Jessica White, Parks and Open Space Assistant

TOPIC	KEY POINTS/DISCUSSION	
<p>Welcome and Introductions and approval of the minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A. Vecchio opened the meeting and introduced herself. • Staff members introduced themselves. • A. Vecchio read through the agenda and noted that there is no public comment on this agenda, this is a working group session. There are no votes on the agenda. The next meeting is most likely to take place in March and will have public comment. Any comments can be emailed in and shared with the Commission. • W. Sheridan Ames thanked everyone for being here and for staying committed to this process. • The members of the Task Force introduced themselves. • J. Bain moved for approval of October 14, 2021, October 26, 2021, and the October 27, 2021, Larz Anderson Skating Rink Meeting Minutes. Seconded by D. Driscoll. All in favor. A roll call vote was taken. Jeff Thibault was absent from voting. 	
<p>Discuss Preliminary Feasibility Report Process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A. Vecchio stated that we have rented temporary refrigeration chillers that are keeping the ice rink cold and keeping ice on it. That is because of the overall failure of the refrigeration system that occurred a few years ago and started this whole ice rink Task Force operation. The good news is the issues with the chiller are not leading to any additional cost for the Town to repair them. They are under warranty, and the company is responsible for making those 	

repairs. The bad news is that we've had both these mechanical issues and we also had a couple of days last week where temperatures reached the 50s and 60s with full sun. She stated that between that combination of broken chillers and the effects of having an outdoor exposed rink as we dealt with for many years, the rink had to be closed for several days, and programming was canceled on those days as well. The contractor is there today and hopefully making the final set of repairs. A. Vecchio stated that we do hope to have the rink back open and running however it is working with only three of the four chillers. She is hoping to have that fourth chiller fixed and up and running today, but it has been a little bit of a back and forth with the consultants. She just wanted to take a minute to thank everyone, as well as all the staff that has worked so hard to bring us to this point, she appreciates everyone's patience. A. Vecchio wanted that final report to be as robust as possible, everyone worked hard to incorporate all the public comments into the final report. She is very grateful for all the input and for all the staff time that went into this. She stated that we are working on getting some printed copies of this and stated that there is a very limited budget for this printing. It will be black and white for all the Ice Rink Task Force members and it will not include the appendices. The appendices are still available and are online. She is hoping to have printed copies for everyone in the next couple of weeks.

- A. Vecchio stated that the Ice Rink Task Force was created by the Parks and Recreation Commission back in June of 2020. The Ice Rink Task Force first started meeting to talk about the future of ice skating in Brookline and particularly at Larz Anderson Park following the series of mechanical failures and the large investments that the Town has made to keep the

	<p>ice rink functioning. The next piece of work that the Ice Rink Task Force has been working on is this preliminary feasibility report. To wrap that component of work up, the Task Force will need to do a review and either vote to accept or not accept the preliminary feasibility report to close out that work with the consultant team. This does not mean that the Task Force is recommending all the next steps outlined in that report. It's simply saying that you are accepting the report from the consultant team and making your recommendations from that text. The recommendations are what we're here to talk about, to try to prioritize, and then make a recommendation to the Park and Recreation Commission for them to consider. At that point, the work that has been assigned to the Ice Rink Task Force to date will be complete. A. Vecchio wanted to be very clear that there is no additional funding for anything outlined in this report. There is no funding set aside for any of the tasks that are recommended, some of which require a lot of additional analysis and expertise. The chillers currently at the ice rink that are having some mechanical issues have been budgeted for the next fiscal year. So for FY 23, which would be for the rink season of the calendar year 2022 to 2023. Those have been included in the operating budget for \$116,000. The Parks and Recreation Commission is currently discussing if there will be another season at the Jack Kirrane Ice Rink and if so, what is the investments and risks that the Park and Recreation Commission and the various departments are willing to take on.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A. Bellalta and A. Vecchio discussed where and how the funding gets approved.• J. Bain and A. Vecchio discussed the clause in the contract for the rink for any downtime that occurs due to a mechanical system failure. A \$375 per day will be given, credited to the	
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	<p>Town of Brookline and to the Recreation Department which runs all that programming.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A. Vecchio explained the five-year lease agreement. • J. Bain stated that it is hard for him to believe there's no wiggle room in this contract that comes after a test over the summer and was unable to get set up to use their equipment. A. Vecchio stated that it would have to happen before we signed the contract with them 	
<p>Discuss Preliminary Feasibility Report Conclusion Determine Areas of Focus for Task Force Members and Potential Recommendations for Park and Recreation Commission</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • W. Sheridan Ames stated that she was very pleased with the changes made from the draft to this final report. It's a more comprehensive document. She thought the executive summary was terrific. There have been years' worth of work done and it was very well summarized. She does think it's important that this story be told to the greater community. We always appreciate when people take time out of their day to join our meetings, but not everybody's able to do that despite having a real interest in this project. She stated that hopefully between L. Jackson and A. Vecchio we can find ways to make sure that this executive summary is told to the greater community in some public relations or public outreach capacity. She wanted to mention that she feels that chapter nine was missing recommended next steps. She stated that at the end of the day, her hope as a committee/task force here, we can tell the story of how we got to where we are right now, how we landed on this terrace design and the two options, and why are we designing this and for whom. She stated that we need to be able to very clearly tell the story of how we got here, and how we will move forward. She stated that it is such an enormous project and there are so many details that we could really, but she thinks the most important first step is really to help justify how we got to this design. She feels that 	

	<p>be under this category of feasibility. This report is called preliminary feasibility, but she stated that there are more steps in feasibility and that's going to tie into the recommendations this task force makes to the Park and Recreation Commission.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• N. O'Connor stated that the executive summary mentions the preliminary in the very first opening statement, and the second column of comments talks about the beginning of the process and potential programming. She thinks that if that seems to be weaved throughout and this is the beginning of a process and the hope is that folks realize that we're not at the end. This is the absolute beginning and there is so much more work to do. She is very proud of the work that was done and thinks it looks fantastic. She likes the recommended steps, there is a lot of good information in there. She stated that this is the beginning of a process that we don't know how long it will go for. She hopes the public is aware of all the mechanical issues that have happened thought-out the years at the rink.• W. Sheridan Ames stated that what she is proud of this Task Force and how we have taken a problem and turned it into an opportunity for our entire community.• R. Karnavosky thinks that the report is fantastic and reflects the journey that the Task Force has gone through. She stated that there's a section on if we just renovated Larz and she does remember any of that discussion. She stated that we have created an opportunity if money is no obstacle and every obstacle could be overcome, but then in the report tucked is a section for just renovating what we have for a fraction of that cost. W. Sheridan Ames stated that the reason the Task Force moved beyond the replace in kind, was because of the continued loss of weeks due to weather-related events climate change. She will let A. Vecchio speak to how	
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those numbers ended up in there. A. Vecchio stated the question of what it would cost to replace the rink came up at the first meeting. She stated that JLG architects hadn't done any specific analysis on that, tossed out a rough number and it was brought up after the draft report was released. She stated that the Ice Rink Task Force and the feasibility study was focused on a new facility that addressed not only the existing mechanical issues, and life safety measures that must occur at the Jack Kirrane Ice Rink should it remain open, but also about how do we offer more reliable ice for a longer period of periods information is in one place and it is a very large document.

- A. Bellalta stated that the report was very thorough. She has a sensitivity to this site, and of course, the ice rink and she wants to see if this moves forward that there is an appropriate merge of our current day world and the historic aspect. She was surprised to see that at this point the project just includes the money that is needed to build the ice rink. She doesn't think that this project is complete unless it includes the restoration of the Italianate gardens. She would somehow put a number on that and she just thinks that the community will be really unhappy if this project moves forward just with an intervention of doing an ice rink and not paying attention to the rest of the top of the hill. She thinks that will make it or break it. W. Sheridan Ames stated that she recalls a number for that in a previous meeting. N. O'Connor stated that it was her understanding from the beginning is that the Italian garden restoration would be a different project. A. Vecchio stated that N. O'Connor is correct and stated that it's the reason why it was not included. It was included to the extent of making it accessible and recessing, but to what was included in that space and what that looks like ongoing

	<p>maintenance was a whole other project and was not within the scope for them. A. Bellalta stated that once you take that ice rink out of there, something has to be done, and that is usually part of a project. Even if it's seeding and cleaning the walls. A. Vecchio stated that the walls, seeding, and paths are included.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A. Urbas stated that the report documents our Task Force. He feels that his job is thinking about funding projects from a user x standpoint. He feels that the next and most important step is to help to find a use case. He agrees with W. Sheridan Ames about chapter nine not having the next steps. He thinks that programming is too premature to look at numbers of construction costs and maintenance costs in isolation without understanding what the usage of the facility would be. He stated that we've talked a few times as a group about what could the year-round uses be and what we could do with programming. He feels that we need to be able to explain what the year-round use will be and how do we justify not one but potentially two rinks, which he supports and is grateful for. He stated that the groups and the community say they want to keep an outdoor rink and we know that an indoor rink is necessary because of weather and seasonality issues, but he wonders what does that looks like. He feels that before we go too far down any recommendations for the next steps around what he would call nuts and bolts, which are permitting and traffic, he feels that we need to try to understand how this will be used, what the volume would be, and how it can benefit the most number of community members as possible. He would love to see the next steps focus on that work. He did see numbers around \$1.8 million for the Italianate Gardens in there. He stated that somebody also referred to the maintenance relocation and he thinks it's	
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	<p>important that those costs are itemized separately.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A. Vecchio stated that the chapter nine recommendations are under the chapter 12 section where they talk about programming and revenue. A. Urbas feels that the report is great and so much work was done. He does feel like that chapter 12 and that one on construction, might need to be combined into a use case, financial justification type of look, and maybe not in this report, but the next.• Jette is in agreement with A. Urbas on this. She thinks the report is extraordinarily well done and very comprehensive. It captures the process and the Task Force conversations very well. She thinks it's easy to miss that we have a lot of conversations about year-round use, but knows that we didn't come to any conclusions and understands why the report didn't emphasize that. She thinks it's just worth noting that and feels that the next steps need to see what programming looks like.• J. Carroll stated that the report is fantastic. He stated that he looked at the enormity of the report, there is so much work that went into this to embark on this large project and so many unknowns. He sees that there are so many potential obstacles and he wondered how far we intend to go with the next steps. He looks forward to seeing what the next steps would look like and what the obligation of the Town will be.• J. Bain stated that the report looks great and he appreciates all the comments.• A. Vecchio presented the Task Force with a recommended Next Steps Slide. The slid inside the big categories and the numbers behind them indicate how many next steps were included in each section. There are next steps related to design standards, establishing and documenting	
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	<p>zoning and permitting construction cost estimates, and then establishing the annual operations and maintenance budget.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• W. Sheridan Ames stated that despite this being a massive comprehensive document, it is extremely complicated. This is an unprecedented project for the Town of Brookline because we're taking a problem of solving the future of skating in Brookline, but we're also solving a historical lack of recreation facilities and building or proposing that we have a shared-use year-round facility. She stated that our work is to bring a recommendation back to the Park and Recreation Commission. It's easy to start with what's in this report, and all of these categories on the screen right now and recommended next steps, but there may be things that we want to recommend that are missing from these recommended next steps that we might want to prioritize. She is proposing that as a Task Force each of us select one of these categories to work on in preparation for our next meeting, to dive deep into to bring back to the task force. Then at that time prioritize the list. W. Sheridan Ames stated that it is worthwhile to look at the umbrella categories, and see if we can identify areas of particular interest for each task force member to do more homework on in preparation for our next meeting.• A. Urbas stated that he would be particularly interested in articulating the need, so he would be happy to focus on anything related to what's now in maintenance and operations under programming or year-round, or construction costs. He views them all as an umbrella and is happy to help in any or all of those.• W. Sheridan Ames stated that when she thinks about the process, she does feel that there is a missing category that's missing. She feels that it is a priority if this facility were to be built to	
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	<p>think about sustainable design, which might not be identified here, but she does think that particular topic should come up as one of the recommendations back to the Park and Recreation Commission. However, she feels that we do need a little guidance here because this has not been done before. She feels that we all have to speak up now to help guide the next steps to get to where we need to be to make the recommendation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• P. Karnovsky stated that she does not feel that she is qualified to do a deep dive into any of these essential parts of this project. She stated that she is qualified to give her reaction.• W. Sheridan Ames stated that she is not asking any of the Task Force members to be the consultant or expert at any one topic here. This will require outside consultants. She stated that as a Task Force, we do need to make recommendations and prioritization the next steps. She just really wants to spend time reading the proposed next steps from the consultant and or focus on one of these recommended next steps. That way when the Task Force gets together and tries to establish priorities, there are a few of the members that each have studied the steps more closely. She knows everyone is a volunteer, but this is over a 200-page document and it is a lot to comprehend. She is just trying to take a big document and give everyone an assignment that can help the discussion. She stated that we could also decide that and agree as a Task Force that this use case and financial justification is the necessary next step. And if we as a Task Force, feel comfortable that that is the next step, then that can lead the discussion on the recommendation to the Park and Recreation Commission and we can outline all of these consultant recommendations as part of it.• A. Bellalta stated that we have received a lot of	
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emails saying that they were not informed of this process, so she feels the next round is really to have a conversation with the community and inform them properly. She would take all the concerns that have come up, see if you can get through those things, educate the public and try to get those approvals before we go into designing any further. She thinks that without those things out of the way, you don't have any movement forward. She stated that we don't have a project here. W. Sheridan Ames stated that her goal is not to say we don't have a project or we have too much to navigate. She 100% agrees with A. Bellalta. A. Bellalta stated that to her the next step is public education and chapter 10 recommended the next steps zoning, permitting, and historic. W. Sheridan Ames stated that instead of giving them all these next steps and saying we have to prioritize all this at once, we still need a road map. W. Sheridan Ames agrees with A. Bellalta that all of these are equally important, but they have to be funded and they all have to be studied. W. Sheridan Ames stated that we can educate the public on the process to date, but there is still so much work to be done in terms of the project in general, from zoning to cost estimates to traffic. A. Bellalta stated that she wouldn't even bother about those until the first piece is done. She stated that are we have always listened to our abutters very clearly. She feels that there are concerns with the historic aspect, climate change, and traffic.

- J. Jette stated that she has no particular expertise and any of these but she would be willing to get as familiar as she can with the zoning and permitting. W. Sheridan Ames stated that it is just looking at the report from KMDG and being familiar enough to speak about it if there is a question based on what's in the report.
- A. Vecchio stated that each of these

recommendations that are wrapped up in the conclusion is coming from these other chapters. She feels that when W. Sheridan Ames is talking about folks coming to the next meeting prepared to discuss, it will consist of rereading that next chapter and thinking about if this needs to happen earlier and the progression or does it need to happen later in the progression. She stated that we don't have funding for any of the next work. She thinks it is a general concept in reading through and then helping to guide the discussion with your peers at the next Task Force meeting.

- J. Carroll thinks it would be a good idea to maybe reach out to the Climate Change Advocacy group between now and the next meeting and have an informal chat with them just to see where they're at.
- D. Driscoll echoes everybody's sentiments. He agrees that if we each take a deep dive in a particular area, perhaps we team up and we'll understand the granularity and also some of the objections have been raised he thinks are very valid. There are others though, he thinks that will be refuted by the facts. He stated that it's a lot to digest at once.
- N. O'Connor is curious if has there been any other departments or staff from other departments that have been involved or become familiar at all with this. A. Vecchio stated that the Building Departments, the Planning Department, including the Sustainability Division, the Economic Development Division, and the Preservation Division, have all been notified about the RFP, and then about the draft report and the final report as well. The whole process has been led by Parks and Open Space and Recreation Department. She stated that many of these next steps that are recommended will require support from other departments. All of those departments listed provided comments

	<p>on the draft report as well at a staff level.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A. Urbas stated that getting support for this project is going to be essential because it has to be funded by the community. He thinks before we bring in groups, who have additional information to provide, he thinks W. Sheridan Ames needs us to go through the chapters to focus on the next steps and what next steps are missing. He thinks the whole group supports moving forward with the project, he certainly does but he doesn't feel he can articulate it well without the additional information. He feels that some of that is in the next steps. He feels like we can focus on that first, then we can start reaching out to other groups to see how they would help us with the second phase.• W. Sheridan Ames stated that maybe it makes sense to create a document of the recommended next steps and of missing potential missing next steps the Task Force can really evaluate and then further categorize them and then at the meeting we can try to prioritize them. She wants to be very clear that when you prioritize something, it doesn't mean it's more important than another step, it is an order of operations. There is no disrespect intended on prioritization of next steps. The last step may be most important for a certain part of the community, but we've got to start somewhere. She stated that we may not all agree on what the recommended order of the next steps is, and that's fine, too. That's what this is all about.• P. Karnovsky thinks our next step is to speak to the Friends of Larz Anderson. This is not just a project for skaters. W. Sheridan Ames agrees and thinks that maybe we have a comprehensive list of user groups, Partner Program, and interested parties. This is for the entire town and there are a lot of groups that will have a strong opinion .P. Karnovsky stated that that is an exciting town adventure.	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• W. Sheridan Ames is willing to work on putting together a document of recommended next steps and maybe identifying some things that were brought up today that aren't included in the KMDG's recommended next steps and then sharing that with the Task Force. A few Task Force members did mention areas that they would be interested in studying a little further in the document and becoming more familiar with the language that they used. She stated that once the list comes out please let her know if you would be interested in diving deeper, and for the next Task Force meeting we will talk about all of these.• A. Urbas wonders if there is a way for any of the next steps that require outside input to maybe move the ball forward on figuring out what it could cost to do some of that. W. Sheridan Ames will defer to A. Vecchio and L. Jackson on that. However, she stated that at the same time maybe when we have these recommended next steps we also include who should be included as part of those recommended next steps in terms of the relevant town, staff and departments. She stated that the recommendation from the Task Force may go to the Park and Recreation Commission, and then it may be in the Commission's hands to push those next steps forward.• L. Jackson stated that she would like to see that list prioritized and then we can monetize that priority list. A. Vecchio stated that she is happy to coordinate with the appropriate staff and or boards and commissions again. In order to move forward and to get a better understanding of costs or some of that work, we are going to need input from other boards, commissions, and staff groups.• W. Sheridan Ames thanked everyone for being here.	
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Adjourn	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting Adjourned	

Next Meeting: Location: Zoom Webinar

A true record

Attest Jessica White

Date: 2/16/22