

BROOKLINE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Capital Subcommittee
**Report on FY2022 Recreation Department Operating Budget,
Recreation Revolving Fund and the Golf Course Enterprise Fund
March 16, 2021**

The Capital Subcommittee of the Advisory Committee met via Zoom on Wednesday, March 10, 2021, to review the FY2022 Recreation Department budgets.

In attendance were Leigh Jackson, Recreation Director; Justin Lawson, head golf professional; Jonathan Lewitus, Assistant Director; Tyler Radicioni, Resource Manager for operations and facilities; Gerry Kelly, Business Manager; John Bain, Chair of the Park & Recreation Commission; Nancy O'Connor, Vice Chair of the Park & Recreation Commission; Wendy Sheridan, member of the Park & Recreation Commission; Melissa Goff, Deputy Town Administrator; Erin Gallentine, DPW Commissioner; and members of the Capital Subcommittee (Carla Benka, John Doggett, Harry Friedman, Amy Hummel, Carol Levin, and Pamela Lodish).

Leigh introduced the mission of the Department of Recreation which is to enhance the quality of life through enriching experiences which support the mental, physical and social health of the Brookline community.

The Recreation Department's goal is to stay agile and be the best at what it does. Staff is focused on the quality of their programs and on the experiences of the customer. Brookline's Recreation Department has one of the biggest recreation programs in New England. COVID was devastating for recreation, however, Recreation staff has enthusiastically responded to the challenges that COVID has brought to their department.

General Fund - The Recreation Department started its cost recovery philosophy in 2012 and continues to make good progress with it. It is working on its accreditation which it started in 2021. It is a 5-year project. Staff began using a new customer focused software called Amelia. It was rolled out in January and is running smoothly

General Fund increases are utilities, up by \$3,093 which includes higher electricity costs and an increased use of gasoline. The department is doing its best to stay as close to budget for the Recreation Revolving Fund and hopefully will close the year in the positive.

Re their summer camps, they ran one of the only summer camps in the region last summer and had zero reports of COVID. They had protocols for every one of their facilities and programs.

Revolving Fund - The FY22 budget for the Revolving Fund shows a decrease in personnel of \$169,687. Due to COVID they eliminated two recreation leader positions and transferred the aquatics supervisor to the General Fund. Services show a decrease of \$15,000 (a combination of decreasing cleaning services by \$34,000, and increasing credit card, printing and software services expenses). Supplies increased by \$5,000, training by \$10,000, utilities by \$10,000 and capital for computers by \$5,000.

Golf Enterprise fund – Golf always gets a lot of attention. The golf course had a successful FY2021 season and created a safe socially distanced place for residents to play. They had a fully remote payment system and moved the check-in station outside. They added two full-time staff in 2021 (assistant golf professional and equipment maintenance) and are anticipating a successful spring season. Another accomplishment in FY21 was a program for selected tree removal for safety and aesthetic reasons.

Increased Enterprise Fund – Personnel increased by \$43,000 (full time up \$10,751 and seasonal part time up by \$32,000). Services increased by \$26,659 (software license, rentals, handicap tournament fees and processing fees increased and consulting and golf equipment maintenance decreased). Increased landscaping expenses were included in the adjusted budget in November 2020 and will continue for several more years.

A golfer pays \$60 to compete and it costs the town \$30 so it is a bit of a moneymaker. Credit card fees are only going to go up, and Justin Lawson, Head Golf Professional, is looking at possibly passing along the credit card fees to the purchaser. They use point of sale software that is popular with other municipalities. With COVID and more dependence on the use of credit cards, it has allowed the golf course to operate payments more efficiently.

Supplies increased by \$54,000 (Pro shop supplies \$38,000, agricultural supplies up \$50,000 for chemicals, sand, loom, and flowers and trees; equipment maintenance supplies decreased by \$19,000, meals and reception supplies decreased by \$8,000 and recreation supplies decreased by \$5,000). The supply increase has to do with the potential to sell merchandise during the US Open in June 2022. The Recreation Department makes sure, in consultation with the DPW's Division of Parks and Open Space, that the products used are green and approved by the Town of Brookline. Utilities are estimated to increase by \$3,600.

The Recreation Department is looking forward to a time when things will feel a little more normal. They are keeping things simple and focusing on quality programming. They strive for excellence with everything they do and with the goal to have a good experience for their customers. The new software they brought on in 2021 has made it easier for golfers to register and play.

When focusing on community, their keystone partners are the Parks department, the Senior Center and the Brookline Public Schools. The Department has shared agreements with Park School, Dexter Southfield, Beaver Country Day and Winsor and because of the high demand for sports, they will continue to work and cultivate these relationships. They continue to work on building a good customer experience – it doesn't happen by accident; it happens by design.

Re programming, there is a potential for overlap with programming offered by the Public Library and by Recreation. The two departments engage in conversations to compliment rather than duplicate services. In 2021 the Recreation Department didn't offer senior programs due to COVID and had to lay off the recreation leader in charge of that. Their programs differ - motor skills and as much movement as possible are components of the Senior recreation programs, compared to more passive classes offered by the library. Leigh expressed a desire to hire back staff to run senior programs again. Last week she went before HR and the Select Board to request this.

Erin Gallentine joined the Zoom call to talk about the ice-skating rink. In 2019 there was a catastrophic failure of the chiller. There was a reserve fund transfer for mechanical improvements including converting the electrical panel to accommodate the large mobile refrigeration units that service rink and to bypass plumbing. The rink's floor had to be drained of calcium chloride brine, the system was flushed and calcium chloride was replaced with propylene glycol.

This winter the department initiated an efficient pre-registration process in collaboration with the Health Department and was able to get many skaters and ice hockey players back on the ice. Reportedly, the ice was better than it had been in years. The ice rink provided much needed relief to be outside and safe and was a bright spot during COVID.

The rink now has an annual leasing cost for the refrigeration component of \$122,000 and this expense is in the DPW budget and is renewable for up to five years.

Two days before the rink was scheduled to close for the season (on March 1), staff noticed that there was melting on the ice and subsequently discovered a problem in the piping under the slab. They shut the system down and ended the season two days early. The next step will be to pressure test the system after the rink's ice completely melts. Hopefully there will be a simple fix and a broken poly pipe can be found and replaced.

The rink has reached - or perhaps is passed -the end of its useful life. An Ice Rink Task Force has been formed and the Park and Recreation Commission has approved an RFP for a Feasibility Study. In addition to the current site, two other sites will be explored for a test fit for a skating facility. The RFP will be put out to bid by the Chief Procurement Officer and the process of selection and subsequent study will begin this spring. The Commission is considering the possibility of partnerships as a way to finance and cover the costs of operating the facility. The Planning Department will continue to be consulted as to site options and other considerations.

The members of the Capital Subcommittee requested information on the all-in costs of operating the facility as well as revenue sources. It appears that the rink closed on budget for FY 21, even taking into account electricity costs that were higher than budgeted. Any losses for the operation of the rink will be covered by the Revolving Fund.

In future years Leigh would like the town to consider moving some of the expenses for the operation of the rink to the general fund, as is done for the Kिरrane Aquatics Center. Members of the Capital Subcommittee also requested expense and revenue information for the pool. Erin will provide DPW's expenses related to the two facilities.

Leigh referred to the creation of a Golf Course Master Plan and her hope to increase the use of the golf course for those who do not play golf. She and her team are cognizant of the fact that the location is underutilized. There are currently two bocce courts on the premises that were installed with the idea that they would attract seniors in particular but they remain underutilized. Recreation staff is looking into extending the use of the facility past the golfing season and exploring the possibilities of Nordic skiing, snowshoeing, and sledding. Movie nights on the driving range, ice cream socials, and music venues are also under consideration for other times of the year. More people seem to be exploring the property (walking dogs and riding bikes on its paths were given as examples) and staff is looking forward to finding ways to increase the appeal of the facility for a larger range of uses.

The last topic of the hearing was the contract for food and beverages at Putterham and VineRipe, the current vendor, which has had the contract for more than 10 years. With the expiration of the current contract in the near future, an RFP was issued, but there were no responses. The RFP was followed by an RFQ, which received three responses. Under the auspices of the Chief Procurement Officer, a Selection Committee was created (Leigh, Justin, Mike from golf course and two Park and Recreation Commissioners) and all three potential vendors were interviewed. All vendors had merit and one rose to the top. VineRipe was not recommended by the Selection Committee. In response to questions from the subcommittee, Leigh acknowledged that change can be hard and that she believed the process was both fair and difficult.

Implementing a Master Plan will help to create a more inviting dining area in the clubhouse. Some minimal things will be done now and hopefully more will be done later. The kitchen needs to be upgraded. The facility, with or without a seasonal tent, could be a destination site for weddings, reunions, retirement parties or other large group occasions. The Master Plan will also include a comprehensive Capital Improvement Plan for all of the facilities.

By a vote of 6-0, the Capital Subcommittee recommends approval of:

1. \$1,058,391 for the FY 22 operating budget of the Recreation Department
2. \$3,879,930.82 for the FY 22 Recreation Revolving Fund
3. \$2,009,493 for the FY 22 Golf Course Enterprise Fund

Capital Subcommittee
March 11, 2021
FY 22 CIP Request – Public Safety

RADIO INFRASTRUCTURE

Recommendation: \$900,000 (Revenue Financed)

The Police Department's FY 22 CIP request for \$900,000 represents the third annual payment of a five-year lease/purchase agreement for upgrading police and fire radio channel infrastructure. The upgrade program began two years ago when the system's copper circuit connections could no longer be supported by Verizon and replacement parts were no longer available for the 25-year-old equipment. The new system and equipment has a life expectancy of 12-15 years.

The process, although slowed down by the pandemic, is proceeding and the subscriber units – portable, hand-held radios, and mobile radios installed in the departments' vehicles - are now "in the field" and working well. The Town will own the equipment by FY 24 at which time the maintenance cost is projected to be \$52,000.

By a vote of 4-0, the Subcommittee recommends Favorable Action on the request.