

Park & Recreation Commission Larz Anderson Skating Rink Task Force Meeting Minutes
8/20/20

Park and Recreation Commission	Meeting Minutes
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Date: August 20, 2020, 12:30 PM

Place: Zoom Webinar

Commissioners Attending: John Bain, Nancy O’Connor, Wendy Sheridan, Antonia Bellalta and Jim Carroll

Commissioners Absent:

Task Force Members Attending: Jeff Thibault, Avi Urbas, Priscilla Karnovsky and David Driscoll

Task Force Members Absent: Julie Jette

Non-Voting Task Force Members Attending: Bob Little and Paisley Boney

Non-Voting Task Force Members Absent:

Staff: Erin Gallentine, Parks and Open Space Director, Leigh Jackson, Recreation Director, Jessica White, Parks and Open Space Assistant, Gerry Kelly, Business Manager, Assistant Director of Recreation, Jon Lewitus, Michael Bartlett, Parks and Open Space Operations Manager

TOPIC	KEY POINTS/DISCUSSION
Chairman’s Welcome Approval of Minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> W. Sheridan opened the meeting. Jim Carroll moved for approval of August 6, 2020 minutes. Seconded by Avi Urbas. All favor.
Discussion of Jack Kirrane Ice Rink Deficiencies/Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> W. Sheridan stated that she is excited to bring this conversation further and have an open, honest robust discussion. W. Sheridan introduced D. Driscoll to the task force. He is the newest member of the task force. E. Gallentine welcomed everyone. She stated that we are going to talk about the rink deficits and opportunities. A spreadsheet was sent out to the task force to jot down the problems and or the way the rink is not serving existing user groups. She stated that W. Sheridan will go through 5 general options for repair, improvements or replacements. She stated that there may be other options the task force or public may want to bring up. M. Bartlett is going to talk about the conversations he has had with several refrigeration companies to get a sense of what it would take to have a temporary refrigeration system at Larz. E. Gallentine will talk a little about the conversations she has had with ice consultants about feasibility study and where we are in trying to flush that out The rink, warming hut, facility and operations deficiencies and opportunities were detailed. E. Gallentine tried to capture some of the themes. In terms of the rink there are struggles with hours of operation due to weather, hockey

	<p>accommodations, and seating/area for teams, safety glasses, netting, and variable ice qualities on both the big and small ice. In terms of the warming hut, big picture it is not large enough to accommodate user groups and all uses that are needed. There is also privacy issues and lack of locker room space that was identified. She stated that in terms of the facility, accessibility and inclusion getting up to the rink and the overall facilities being accessible and inclusive were identified. She stated that not enough ice time is a huge problem, it quickly sells out. She stated that there were comments about the slippery conditions, flooring, circulation around the rink being tight, crumbling edges. There is no use for nine months there so inefficient in terms of Town needs, limited storage and lighting, signage and parking improvements that are needed. She stated that from an operations standpoint the facility currently operates at a loss from the Recreation Department and there are high maintenance costs associated with the facility. She stated we are going to have to take a good look at OSHA and EPA compliance. She stated there were comments about confusion around the closure policy, skate rentals and skate sharpening hours. She stated that the garage door height for the Zamboni area needs to be thought about moving forward.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avi Urbas wonders if it is helpful to understand the cost structure of running the rink or is that something the task force doesn't need help with. W. Sheridan think it is very important that we understand the cost structure of the facility and the operating and management cost. L. Jackson is not in attendance today, so she thinks it is something we will need to understand and discuss at the next meeting. She stated that for this meeting it is important for the task force to understand what the different options are from a bigger picture, to try and determine what the community wants/needs and then dive into associated costs.	
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<p>Review of Options for Ice Skating Rink Repair, Improvement or Replacement</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Temporary system/ice at existing facility 2. Renovation of existing facility 3. Renovation and Upgrade of existing facility 4. Relocation of Ice Rink at Larz Anderson Park 5. Relocation of Ice Rink elsewhere in town-indoor skating rink facility 6. Relocation of Ice Rink elsewhere in town-part of larger athletic complex 	<p>Option 1-Replacement of the Refrigeration System Develop a refrigeration matrix which will compare multiple options for replacing the current M&M package. It will compare chillers on the basis of capital cost, efficiency, maintenance cost, longevity, redundancy, rebate potential, type of refrigerant both primary and secondary, and software compatibility. Analyze and report on the condition of all components of the refrigeration system including the chiller, condenser, ice floor. This was talked about last week. It include no other upgrades, it just get the ice surface up and running.</p> <p>Option 2-Replacement of the Refrigeration System in Place with Improvements to the Rink and Warming Hut Analyze the condition of the refrigeration system as noted prior (Option 1) and also analyze what other facility improvements we would recommend, including but not limited to, dasher board system, lighting, rubber flooring, glass seating, safety Also analyze and recommend upgrades/improvements to the ice rink’s warming hut. Develop cost estimates for all of the identified improvements</p> <p>Option 3-Creation of a Covered Rink In Place Analyze the potential for constructing a cover for the existing rink at Larz Anderson Park. This will include an analysis of the structural capacity required for the cover, lighting changes, and other required improvements created by adding the cover. Develop cost estimates.</p> <p>Option 4-Creation of a Covered Rink in a New Location Analyze the potential for constructing a covered rink in an alternate/new location. Develop cost estimate with all components necessary to operate the rink.</p> <p>Option 5-Creation of an Indoor Rink Provide a cost estimate and corresponding ice rink layout for a new indoor ice rink. The estimate will identify all components necessary to operate the rink, as well as, the size of the site necessary to build the facility with parking and amenities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P. Boney wonders if it is too early to talk about which option is the best until you have an assessment on what it will cost to do the various other options and the potential income. He thinks you are talking about things without 	
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	<p>knowing what it actually means. E. Gallentine stated that if no one wanted a covered rink that would be something that would need to be known now. W. Sheridan stated that if this task force and community thinks it is an opportunity to think bigger to serve the community, than we consider it, do the homework and then ultimately we would move onto consultants/feasibility studies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• N. O'Connor stated that we know that we do not have a quick fix. She thinks that this is an opportunity for the task force to right something that isn't perfect. She thinks that there has been a group who have always wanted a covered rink, she is not sure how restricted we are at the top of the hill in regards to article 97. She isn't sure we can do option 3 because of restrictions. She thinks it is an opportunity for the task for to figure out what to do, either to keep the rink in place by itself with no cover, keep putting money into it and dealing with the weather or rebuild with the roof. She stated that there is a constituency who wants an outdoor pool and a working group has been formed to determine a location for such pool. She stated that in her mind it's a possibility for these facilities to possibly mirror each other. She knows it's down the line and doesn't solve the 20/21 season but believes that we need to think about the future and have a rink for the community that is covered.• J. Bain stated that with all the deficiencies in the current rink, he feels that if we put the money in we have the same rink with the same problems. He feels that we need to step up and see what it would take to put in a rink that would serve the community way better than it does now. He thinks that would be a new covered facility in his opinion at the point.• D. Driscoll stated that the parallel he would draw is that when the golf course went to look at different options, they realized a great return on investment is a driving range. He doesn't know the economics, but based on the fixed amount of money they put in he can tell that it was worth it by the amount of people he sees out there when he drives by. He stated that from	
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	<p>that perspective, you have facility that is dormant for 7 months and he wonders what the economics would look like if you operate the facility year round 11.5 month like the rest of the hockey world. He stated that there lies your opportunity and where the cost benefit lies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• P. Karnovsky wanted to echo what D. Driscoll is saying. She stated Larz was never a proper hockey rink. She stated that you can't ignore the fact that there are no boards and basic hockey safety. She stated that we need to understand what is realistic in this day and age to make a skating rink a hockey rink.• David Driscoll stated that to the point earlier that 800 thousand is a lot of money, but maybe it's worth spending more to have real income to offset that. He stated that if you look at this as a business, than you can use that as a guiding principal and that will dictate which scenario the task force goes after.• J. Bain stated that it really is a public skating facility and hockey rink doesn't fit the bill. He would rather peruse spending more money to get an 11 month facility.• A. Bellalta stated that if we are trying to improve this ice rink, her perspective would be not just the improvements to the ice rink itself, but also the community/spectator areas that aren't really sufficient for hockey and or spectators., she stated that the area is confined by the historic walls where the rink is right now. She stated that option 4 is the most attractive to her, if it is possible.• Avi Urbas stated that he works in municipal budgeting and understates how scarce resources are. He stated that if you are looking at it as a straight ROI perspective, than it is really hard to argue with the logic that going with a new indoor rink is better for operations and revenues. He would say that rinks like Larz are hard to find, they are special and different. He thinks that it is important to decide as community that Larz is sufficiently special in its current configuration and that we want to invest and keep it going. He would encourage the task force to not move to dollar and cents, even though that is where he tends to go. He stated	
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	<p>that rinks cost a lot to operate, and he believes a lot of the things being talked about now are not really problems/deficiencies but rather are operating costs to run a rink. He stated that we should expect costs to come up. He stated that whatever we decide he thinks it would be helpful to exit this telling the community that here is the way we are addressing reoccurring costs. He thinks 800 thousand is significant, but believes that it is part of what it takes to operate a rink. He thinks that maybe grants partnerships and working with other communities there is a way to do both. His personal preference is to look at options of investing in Larz the way the typical operating costs and replacement cycle would be to keep that cherished asset if we can, to look at cost of a new rink and to look and see what funding opportunities are out there to support one or the other, or possibly both.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• W. Sheridan she stated that maybe there are two options worth investing the time and effort to research, because it has become more clear to her that you have love of outdoor recreational skating from the general public that makes Larz magical and you have competing problems for user groups that the facility can't meet their needs. She wonders if there is a way to do both. She stated that maybe we look at options 4 and 5 deeper, but on top of that you have an immediate problem of what happens now for all these user groups. She wonders if there is a way to provide temp ice to buy the time to do work for options 4 or 5• J. Carroll thinks if we are going to look at an open air ice facility, he feels that there is absolutely no reason to change from Larz. It makes no sense to develop and have the same problem in another location. He has no idea what a successful operating hockey rink looks like financially. He would like to see a case study on that. He would think that the only other place in his mind that makes any sense to put a new facility would be at Putterham Woods. He stated that it would be most plausible place to put a new facility.• Bob little stated that in the 22 years that he has been sending hockey teams to skate in the	
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	<p>morning at Larz, he has noticed that the number of days missed have increased. He stated that for the past 3-5 years they missed half the season due to weather and he feels that the task force needs to consider the viability of an outdoor rink with climate change. He thinks that as the climate changes and we continue to get warmer, he wonders if it makes sense to consider an outdoor rink any longer. He hates saying that, he finds it to be such a special place. He worries about the future of outdoor skating.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• N. O'Connor stated that everyone has their fond stories and memories of skating at Larz. She learned to skate at Larz and spent every weekend there throughout her youth as well as her children. There is no doubt in her mind that it is a magical place. She stated that for 50 years she has been hearing we need a covered rink. The loss of ice time has been an ongoing problem. She stated that even though it is a magical place for skating and youth program/partner/ games, it is all important but it makes her wonder if there is a way to keep something at Larz in combination with another amenity. She understands that it will take some creative designing. N. O'Connor stated that in the hockey season if you try to rent an hour of ice anywhere in the area, it is practically unheard of. She stated that it is highly valued. She stated that it is a unique place and if we had an ice rink with available time, the hours would not be available for as long.• W. Sheridan stated that to get those hard core facts/numbers it would take that next phase/feasibility study, but she thinks before we get there the task force needs to figure out of the option of 4 or 5, what is the directions the task force wants to go in J. Carroll thinks it worth perusing, to him it's the ultimate solution he just doesn't know all variables• D. Driscoll stated that he thinks the task force needs to consider that fact that no one has any idea what CV19 will do to municipal budgets and in his opinion he would find it to be hard pressed to take/spend money with something	
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	<p>that has a quick expiration. He thinks you can justify something long term.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• P. Boney stated that if we find the right piece of land and it can be developed, he feels that you won't have to put a penny in because you can do it with a partnership. He stated that the partnership would manage and operate that facility. J. Bain thinks a partnership is a great idea, as long as Brookline has the upper hand.• P. Boney stated that we could take a few holes (1 and 2) away from the 18 hole golf course to build rink facility. N. O'Connor and P. Boney discussed Putterham woods. J. Bain stated that the rounds are increasing and he would hate to see an 18 hole course golf course in Brookline go away.• P. Karnovsky stated that people love to go Larz to and experience the essence of being outdoors• B. Little wonders if there is ever a chance that private entity would manage a facility we say built in the woods and at the same time would need to keep an outdoor rink at Larz and running it as part of the deal then we can take it out of Erin's hand. P. Boney stated that it is all math.• E. Gallentine did put call in to the Edge Sports Group and they are open to having a discussion about what all the different models could look like. However, ultimately it would need to fit their financial model and Brookline's recreational needs. It is definitely an avenue to look at and she has started conversations.• J. Bain would state that no one on the Task Force would like to see Larz go away, but there is no room for expansion and there is no room for what we need/want. He would like to see it stay• A. Bellalta questioned what it would take to freeze the ice on the lagoon at Larz Anderson for recreational skating until we get a rink up and running. She stated that setting is more like frog pond with open space around it for spectators to be entertained also P. Karnovsky stated that it is a rink on top their concrete water play.	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • W. Sheridan stated that Larz Anderson is two things right now, it is outdoor for recreational skaters that can also accommodate hockey but not a perfect situation. There are lots of differences and problems having hockey at Larz Anderson that has been documented. She stated that the other side if you compare to frog pond it is just more just recreational skating outside for a healthy lifestyle. She stated that when we talk about possibility of doing both she thinks there may be some give and take. She stated that with an outdoor rink that we talk about wanting to maintain, she thinks we need to figure out what is the most important aspect of maintaining it. • Avi Urbas agrees and stated that during non-winter month that space could be used for other things ie. Roller blading. He would ask whether or not it might make sense to understand the world of comparables for outdoor rinks. He wonders if there are a group of rinks that can be looked to that are not in Iceland that could potentially serve our needs here considering the weather. 	
<p>Temporary Refrigeration System/Ice at Existing Facility</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M. Bartlett stated that over the past several weeks we have reached out to various companies that are in business of putting rinks together. <p>He stated that over several weeks we reached out to various companies -American Refrig., Everything Ice, Cimco, Aggreko, Advanced Sporting Technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide different service types <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Turn Key (Temp chiller/ tie in to existing mechanical systems/Slab refrigerant) • \$125,000 range 2. Temporary chiller package rental <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$67,500 + \$12,000 Set up costs • Does not include mechanical hook up costs/glycol 3. Temporary rink mat system rental <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$84,150 + Temp Chiller + Mechanical • J. Bain stated that it sounds to him that the turn key is a better deal if you look at the costs of the other set ups. M. Bartlett stated that for the first year it makes sense to look at a turnkey solution 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• W. Sheridan stated that the budget to operate the rink this season needs to be looked at. She feels that the rink budget is long overdue for a thorough analysis. It appears to her it hasn't been reviewed in a long time, and feels the rink should not be operating at such a loss. W. Sheridan would like to have that item on the agenda for the next meeting.• W. Sheridan asked M. Bartlett if there is a possibility with funding to have the rink up and running for this winter. He replied with a yes, he said that they are looking at putting in 40 percent less temporary rinks than in past years because of Covid19. He stated that because of that the equipment does not seem like it will be an issue for them.• W. Sheridan feels funding would be major issue, and feels if it is not in town capacity we need to take the opportunity to see how or if we can fundraise. She also thinks that we need to look to see if we can make a partnership happen. She stated that besides the above costs we need to look into operation costs.• Carla Banks stated that she wanted to point out that the Advisory Committee with approval of Town Meeting did set aside a chunk of funding in the reserve fund for the coming year. She stated that certainly there will be demand starting with schools and where else Covid19 will take us, but in terms of funding temporary accommodations for skating it could be a possible funding source. Her only concern if this does get to reserve fund, there will be questions on what happens if there is another lock down in the state. She stated that regardless of the conditions funding is scarce, so there could be reluctance to spend money on something we may not get the full value for it.• Avi Urbas stated that until we get into the options mode for long term this slide is really speaking to annual operating costs and he feels like until we get into option for future he hopes this cost is absorbed by the budget in some manner. He knows it is not easy to do, but there is somewhat of a community expectation that the asset/service is provided. He does know that a lot of the user groups that are on this call are	
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	<p>expecting their operations to be up and running, but he thinks folks will be looking to the task force to provide an interim solution.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B. Little stated that he wanted to mention that that usage will change because of Covid19. He stated that logistics at the rink because of Covid19. He stated that to coach hockey or have skating in a safe way, we are going to have rearrange a little bit. E. Gallentine stated that she has been thinking about the warming hut, and stated that we currently not allowed to permit any gathering over 50 people per order of the Governor. She that we need to look at how the Department of Health and Human Services might regulate the operations of the rink. W. Sheridan stated that they are both great points made by E. Gallentine and B. Little. She stated that one great point on the optimistic side, is she feels that there could be an increase in demand for an outdoor facility. She stated that it could be a benefit for this particular winter. • Wayne stated that he has a vested interest both on a personal and community level. He stated that the work the task force is doing is very important. He completely agrees with W. Sheridan, he thinks having an outdoor facility lends itself to better usage. Michael Bartlett and W. discussed of the three options is there any indication which of the options might give better ice. W. agreed that we need to look at comparable rinks, and stated that a most recent example is Wellesley on how work with both public private partnerships. • P. Boney stated that we need to evaluate this short term rental. • The task force members are in agreement that the temporary ice refrigeration option is desirable and worthy of additional research. 	
<p>Research Required, topics and Content for Next Task Force Meeting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • W. Sheridan will work on the upcoming agenda with E. Gallentine and L. Jackson. She would like to focus on evaluations of these temporary solutions and also working with the Recreation Department on operating expenses. She would also like to brainstorm regarding a partnership. 	
<p>Adjourn</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • W. Sheridan moved to adjourn. Seconded by N. O'Connor. All in favor. 	

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Next Meeting: September 3, 2020 Location: Zoom Webinar

A true record

Attest Jessica White

Date: 08/20/20