

City of Ellsworth
1 City Hall Plaza, Ellsworth, ME 04605

RECREATION COMMISSION
Regular Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 28, 2023 at 8:30 a.m.

1. Call to Order

Chair Marichal called to order at 8:34AM.

Members Present: Chair Eric Marichal, Vice-Chair Kathy Young, and Members, Josh Frost, Jon Stein, Kim Fitch, and Melinda Workman.

Members Absent: Daron Goldstein, April Clifford.

Staff Present: City Planner Matthew Williams, Assistant City Planner Elizabeth Littlefield

2. Welcome to Steve O'Halloran as the new City Council Liaison

City Planner Williams welcomed Councilor O'Halloran as the new City Council Liaison. Councilor O'Halloran stated that he was excited to learn more about Ellsworth's Recreation.

3. Adoption of January 24, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes

Member Fitch moved to accept the January 24, 2023 minutes. Member Frost seconded the motion. **The vote to approve the January 24, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes was unanimous (5-0).**

4. Discussion and determination of member resignations.

Chair Marichal explained that they have received two resignations from Commission members. Chair Marichal made a motion to add an agenda item to discuss and vote to accept the resignations. Member Frost seconded the motion. **The vote to add an agenda item to discuss and vote to accept the resignations was unanimous (5-0).**

Vice-Chair Young arrived shortly into the discussion, making the voting body now 6 members.

Chair Marichal explained that the first resignation letter is from April Clifford who needs to resign due to her new job responsibilities. Marichal went on to explain that the second resignation was from Daron Goldstein, who had not turned in a formal letter. City Planner Williams explained that he spoke with Member Goldstein who said he would bring in the letter that day. Member Goldstein owns and operates a restaurant which has gotten very busy, thus making him unavailable to attend meetings. Chair Marichal moved to accept the resignations of Members Clifford and Goldstein. Member Frost seconded the motion. **The vote to accept the resignations of April Clifford and Daron Goldstein from the Recreation Commission was unanimous (6-0).**

5. Review and Recommendation of Fiscal Year 2024 Budget.

City Planner Williams went through the budget explanation which he prepared for the members, going through each line item and explaining what it was used for. City Planner Williams went on to explain that the

Outdoor Movie program will be discontinued due to the organizer's lack of ability to continue the program. Vice Chair Young and Member Fitch volunteered to continue to program themselves and will work together on the program. City Planner Williams explained that the line item for "Beautification" will be removed from the Recreation Commission's budget in FY2025 since it is not technically a Recreation Commission responsibility.

Chair Marichal asked about when the external funding requests will be due. City Planner Williams explained that the Planning Staff will come up with a form for external funding requests and will post it on the City website. The due date for these requests will be March 8th. City Planner Williams said that he will send Chair Marichal a draft of the form and explanation language for his approval. Vice Chair Young stated that she would like to see some sort of reporting from these external organizations to ensure that the funds are being used for recreational purposes only. Member Fitch explained that several organizations already do this. City Planner Williams said that for the external requests, a special meeting will likely need to be held to interview the organizations, giving the members opportunity to question the organizations on the use of funds. There was some discussion as to whether interviews for all organizations would be necessary. City Planner Williams said that the organizations who have been previously vetted do not have to be interviewed again if the Commission did not think it was necessary. Chair Marichal agreed that groups who have been previously interviewed do not have to come back for another interview.

Chair Marichal asked about what was determined at the Council Meeting when they discussed where the budget requests should go. City Planner Williams explained that they Council determined that the process needs to be streamlined and City Manager Moshier and City Clerk Dyer will be working on creating a smoother process. City Councilor Stein said that the Council will be working on this issue so there is no more confusion as to which organizations request funds from which Commission.

City Planner Williams then moved on to the maintenance of Demeyer Field, stating that the amount is reflective of when a 3rd party company used to come in to treat the field. This company has not been doing it this year, City Planner Williams said he will look into getting another company in to treat the field. Member Frost brought up the fact that no one really knows who has the responsibility of treating the fields, which is why the City needs a Parks and Rec Department to handle these things. Member Fitch explained to City Councilor O'Halloran that the Commission has been trying to get a Parks and Rec Department for many years, but it has never passed in Council. Councilor O'Halloran made a comment about how there should be room in the budget for another position, noting that a Parks and Rec Department appears to be a significant need for the City. Chair Marichal noted that the Recreation Commission budget is the only budget that has stayed relatively the same throughout many years, while the City budget continuously grows.

Vice-Chair Young then brought up Winter events, asking if there will be a third event in addition to the Parade and Tree Lighting ceremony. Member Fitch said that maybe instead of adding another event, they should use the funds for adding more to the existing events, hopefully making them have a better attendance. Chair Marichal noted that the first year Ellsworth did a tree lighting, they only had a tree and lights. This previous year, they had lights and decorations for the tree, however there can be more done. Member Fitch said that there are several things they can do to "punch-up" these two events and make the season more festive. City Planner Williams said that there are many things which the Commission could buy which would be one-time costs, suggesting a generator for the tree lighting event and bringing up the fact that they have already purchased the fire pits which they will be able to use every year. Williams said that he will add some money to the Winter Events budget line in order to compensate for these new ideas and see if Council will approve it.

The Commission then went on to discuss the Ice Rink maintenance. Chair Marichal said that he has done some research into an “EZ Ice rink” system which the City could purchase and set up anywhere in town. Marichal said that Northeast Harbor has just purchased one of these. He gave some information about the rink, stating that it had higher walls than the previous ice rink and there is enough space for hockey and other ice sports to be played. Marichal explained that he already approached one potential funding source, who said they would be willing to donate some of the funds if their logo was put in the ice and on the side of the ice rink. Member Fitch asked if it came with a covering, since previously they have had to shovel the ice rink whenever it snows. Chair Marichal said that it did not come with a covering, but one could be easily purchased. Member Workman said that Northeast Harbor paid for their rink using a nonprofit which they have set up to fund projects such as these. She suggested that this is something that Ellsworth could do since it was very easy to set up a nonprofit and all of the property purchased would be turned over to the City permanently. Vice-Chair Young disagreed, stating that by creating a nonprofit and looking for donors around the community, it is taking donors from other charities and nonprofits who are struggling to come up with funding. Young suggested that the City could reach out to the Y or the School Department and see if they would be willing to purchase the rink and rent it to the City when they wanted to use it. Chair Marichal said this was a potential, however it would not prevent the Y or School Department from lending the rink to another municipality, thus making it unavailable for City use. Member Frost stated that there are already so many existing things that are in need of repair, and he is weary of spending funds on new items before fixing the existing items. Chair Marichal said that he would be willing to go to some local businesses and see if they would be willing to donate funds for the rink, so no City funds would have to be used. Marichal will bring the information he compiles to the next meeting.

6. Update from Council meeting regarding disbursement of funds from the Recreation Commission.

This item was discussed during the previous agenda item. City Planner Williams reiterated that the process for disbursement and requests for funds will be streamlined.

7. Discussion on potential ordinance updates to Chapter 31.

City Planner Williams said that he made the changes that the Commission asked of him last meeting. He explained that the number of board members was changed from 9 to 7, ensuring that a quorum will be more easily obtained. The term limits will remain 2 years. Member Frost asked about the historical language in the ordinance, asking if it can be removed. City Planner Williams stated that it should be left in so that in future, they will know how the Commission was originally set up.

Member Frost then asked about whether or not there are any term limits. City Planner Williams said that there are not currently any term limits, however the Commission can choose to add them. Vice-Chair Young stated that she liked the idea of term limits because it will ensure that no one person will be on the Commission for an extended period of time. Young also asked why 7 members was chosen when there are currently only 6 members. City Planner Williams explained that an odd number should be chosen for the amount of members and he did not want to ask a current member to step down. Young then mentioned that she would like a Zoom option for participating in meetings. City Planner Williams said that he can bring a remote participation policy to the next meeting for the Commission to vote on and potentially adopt.

Chair Marichal asked whether or not they should vote on the changes to the ordinance this meeting or not. City Planner Williams said that it is not necessary since he will be making some more changes and bringing it back for the next meeting.

8. Member Comments

Vice-Chair Young said that she wanted to confirm the Winter event dates so that she can plan some winter events around them. Member Fitch said that the tree lighting will be November 25th and the Parade will be on December 2nd with a rain date of December 3rd. Young said that she is planning on holding a “Winter Market” at Woodlawn which will be a new event.

Vice-Chair Young also brought up how many other events the City could be holding to attract tourists and engage the community like a 4th of July event. Young said that they could do more if they had more funding, which City Council would need to approve. Young said Council should invest more of the budget into recreation since it is of such high value to the community.

9. Staff Comments

City Planner Williams asked what date would work for the Commission to hold the special meeting to interview new organizations applying for funding. The Commission agreed that March 16th at 8:30AM would be the most convenient time.

10. Adjournment

Vice-Chair Young made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:01 a.m. Member Frost seconded the motion. **Vote to adjourn the Recreation Commission Regular meeting was unanimous (6-0).**