

City of Ellsworth
1 City Hall Plaza, Ellsworth, ME 04605
RECREATION COMMISSION
Regular Meeting
Tuesday, October 17th at 8:30 a.m.

1. Call to Order

Chair Marichal called the meeting to order at 8:30AM.

Members Present: Chair Eric Marichal, Member Kim Fitch, Member Jon Stein, Member Melinda Workman, and Member Ellerie Ezekiel

Members Absent: Member Josh Frost and Vice-Chair Kathy Young

Staff Present: Matthew Williams, City Planner and Elizabeth Ouellette, Assistant City Planner.

2. Adoption of September 19, 2023 Regular Minutes and September 26, 2023 Asset Tour #2 Minutes

Member Fitch moved to adopt the September 19, 2023 Regular Minutes and September 26, 2023 Asset Tour #2 Minutes. Member Stein seconded the motion. **The vote to adopt the September 19, 2023 Regular Minutes and the September 26, 2023 Asset Tour #2 Minutes was UNANIMOUS (5-0).**

3. Discussion regarding Halloween Foot Parade

Member Fitch began by explaining that The Y used to do a Halloween Parade which began at Angelos and went to the City Hall Parking Lot where the trunk-or-treat event was held. She said that the trunk-or-treat was moved since there was too much traffic in that area, and the parade has since fallen away. Fitch said that there are several Downtown business owners who want the parade to come back. She said that there was a safety concern with the children having to cross High Street and suggested lining up at SK Whiting Park instead to avoid that crossing. She asked who would make the decision to allow a parade to happen again. City Planner Williams said that there will be additional police and staff on Halloween night directing traffic to help children cross the street safely and he is not opposed to a parade, but he would be unable to organize it in this short amount of time. He said that if Downtown business owners want to organize it, there is no permission needed from the City.

Zachary Ames, from the Y, said that the Y would not have the capacity to coordinate a parade this year, however he will bring this idea up for next year. He said that the trunk-or-treat at the Y facility will be taking place again this year. Williams suggested holding the parade before the scheduled trick-or-treat timeframe (3 to 5 on Halloween), that way the police and added crossing guards will be present and be available. Williams said that they would not be able to close down any portion of Main Street for this event, but said that if the children remain on the sidewalk, the parade could happen without issue. Fitch said that she would relay the message onto the business owners and see if they would like to coordinate a parade. She also said that the Recreation Commission should be a part of the planning next year, if the event should happen again.

4. Update regarding Holiday Events

Member Fitch said that the “Christmas in Ellsworth” group has reformed and they held a meeting to begin planning the Holiday events. She said there was a very good turnout and they discussed the tree lighting ceremony and all of the different responsibilities that different members will take on regarding the planning. She said that they plan on trying to get more vendors for the tree lighting ceremony this year. She said that the Heart of Ellsworth group will be relocating the trees they have on Main Street to the City Hall Parking Lot as decoration, as well as installing wreaths on light poles in the area. She said that the bridge would also be decorated. Fitch announced that the Chamber will be having a “buoy-tree” at SK Whiting Park where

community members will be able to purchase a buoy to decorate and put on the tree. She said that the profits will be donated to the SPCA in memory of a citizen who recently passed away. Bar Harbor has done this type of event in the past and they reached out to the Ellsworth Chamber to see if they would be interested in doing on as well. Fitch also said that the Ellsworth Public Library has a lot of Holiday events throughout the season. Regarding the tree lighting, Fitch said that the Parklet would need to be closed down the night before as opposed to only a few hours beforehand. She said that last year, they had to try and find the car owners who had parked in the Parklet and get them to move their cars so they could decorate. Chair Marichal said that the revamped Christmas in Ellsworth group had a lot of good energy and there is better communication between all of the various groups involved. Fitch said that they had another meeting the following day.

Marichal asked City Planner Williams about the tree for the tree lighting ceremony. Williams said that he and other members of Staff went to see the tree and it looks good. He said that the Public Works Department was thinking of drilling a hole where the tree usually goes so they do not have to worry about getting the stand ready every year. Williams said that the hole would be covered up once the tree is removed and uncovered when needed. He said that he does not know the timeline for that project, however the funds would come out of the Recreation Commission budget. The Board liked this idea. Fitch said that the Christmas in Ellsworth group is also thinking of ways that they can expand on the Holiday events, even adding some into the New Year. She said that they want to expand to encompass all holidays during the season.

Fitch then moved on to discuss the Holiday Parade. She said that because of the timing, the High School students will not be able to participate. She said that this date has been set and announced for some time, therefore they cannot change it. She said that next year, they were considering switching back to a daytime parade so the High School can participate. The Board discussed the possibility of alternating between daytime and nighttime parades, however Fitch said that, in order to get full participation, it would need to be in the daytime. She also said that a representative from Wreaths across America reached out and asked if there was any way that the convoy could be somehow incorporated into the parade. She said that this would be a huge logistical undertaking and would require the date of the parade to change, so she did not think it was a feasible idea for this year. Zachary Ames said that Wreaths across America would be changing their route this year and ending at The Y's gymnasium for an indoor ceremony to accommodate elderly participants. He said that potentially, in future years, there can be some kind of coordination so they can all be part of the parade.

Fitch asked Williams what kind of licenses or permits the different food vendors would need. Williams said that they needed to get a mobile food vendor license from the City Clerk, but most food truck operations already should have those. Member Ezekiel asked how many vendors were present at the event last year and how many the Commission was hoping to get this year. Marichal said that last year there were 8 vendors and they were trying to get as many as they can fit in the space. Fitch said that there were some food vendors, but also some other organizations. Marichal said that the Chamber will be putting out an advertisement for vendors to participate. Member Stein asked if they were just looking for food vendors. Marichal said that they were looking for all kinds of vendors, and some have activities planned at their booths. He said that they would like more activities to keep kids occupied for the duration of the event. Fitch said that they are also adding live music to the event this year and Hancock County Technical Center will be having a cookie decorating station. Fitch asked Williams if they could get more lights for the tree this year. Williams said that they have already gotten them. Stein said that he would be able to bring some stage lights from Fogtown for the event. Fitch then said that they are looking into the possibility of horse and carriage rides for the event as well.

5. Used Athletic Equipment Sale Discussion

City Planner Williams said that they should table this agenda item until Vice-Chair Young and Member Frost are present since they are the ones who have information to share on this event. Chair Marichal agreed, but added that there is a potential location for this project. He said that they will be discussing it with the Y further.

6. Discussion on possible Knowlton Park Upgrades.

Chair Marichal began by explaining that a member of the public sent an email to the Commission asking about the possibility of constructing a covering for the stage at Knowlton Park. He said that he is in favor of this idea and that they may be able to rent out that space for more once it is completed. Member Fitch suggested looking at the stage at Woodlawn, commenting that they have a good covering that the Commission may want to consider. She said that she was also in favor of this idea and said that it may encourage more weddings to be held at the park. City Planner Williams said that the funding for this would come out of the Knowlton Park budget, not the Recreation Commission budget. He said that there are also a number of other projects which need to be completed at the park so it is now just a matter of prioritizing funds. Fitch suggested finding a sponsor for the covering, saying that there are many businesses who may be interested in contributing. Marichal said that he could put out some feelers with members of the business community who he knows and encouraged the other members of the Commission to do the same. Fitch said that this would be a great benefit to Knowlton Park.

Member Workman asked about the splash pad. Williams said that some of the equipment needs to be fixed and updated, and that Public Works was aware of the issues. Marichal commented that there are a lot of surrounding municipalities that have installed new playgrounds. He said that the Commission should look into how they got funding for the new equipment. He also noted that some of the equipment in Knowlton Park will need to be replaced in the very near future. He suggested that the Commission look into maintenance costs and factor those into the budget next year. He stressed that a maintenance plan would be the best way of ensuring that the equipment is used to its fullest extent before it needs to be replaced. Member Stein asked if there are any grants which would be available for this type of equipment. Williams said that Staff has been looking into grants, however, given the amount of workload, it is not a high priority at this time. Fitch said that perhaps there can be a grant found that could replace all of the equipment in Knowlton Park. Zachary Ames said that many grants that have to do with playground equipment are regarding safety precautions. He said that there are some grants for the acquisition of new equipment, however they are less common than safety grants. Marichal said that they could look into altering the playground to better accommodate those with disabilities. Stein asked Ames if The Y employed a grant writer. Ames said they did. Stein suggested that the Commission contract with this grant writer to look for grants since Staff cannot devote the time to it. He said that would be a good solution until a Recreation Director or other Staff member was hired to assist with grant writing. Member Workman suggested looking into potential college programs where they assist organizations in finding and writing grants. She said that one existed in the UMaine system previously, however she was unsure if it is still active.

Williams then moved onto the Ice Rink in Knowlton Park. He said that they have all of the equipment that is needed to install the rink and they are working with The Y to coordinate a good time to install and then open the rink. He said that they are also discussing maintenance plans for the rink. Workman asked if there are benches near the rink for kids to put their skates on. Marichal said that there typically were a few benches near the rink. Marichal then asked about how to best maintain the rink and deal with any refilling that needs to happen throughout the season. Williams said that there is a water pump in the shed near where the rink is set up and they can refill from there if needed. He also said that he will confer with the Water Department to see if there is a more efficient way to achieve this. Marichal said that they could get some volunteers to sign up and assist with the maintenance. He said that all they would need was for some member of Staff to handle the

sign-ups and be provided with minimal training to learn how to shovel and maintain the rink. Williams said that he would look into it.

7. Member Comments

Chair Marichal said that there was a meeting with himself, Member Josh Frost, The Rotary, and The Y regarding a potential Demeyer Field project. He said that there were very good discussions. He asked if he could have a map of the parcel with all of the fields included to see how much space they really have to complete a project. He said that they want to do a big project, but they are still in the planning phase. Marichal asked City Planner Williams if there were any restrictions on that lot. Williams said that he would look into it and get back to him.

Member Stein said that there was a meeting with Matt from the Y regarding the Y's future relationship with the City. He said that the goal is to have a more structured agreement with the City and the Y. He said that, specifically, there would be more clarity regarding where the Y is spending the money they get from the City. He said that there would hopefully be some sort of contract in place which designates funds for different purposes. He said that he thought it would bring more clarity and transparency into the process which is needed. Stein also mention that the Y said that they have more capacity to take on projects and events and they would like to be more involved in the City. Marichal noted that this may help while the City does not have a Recreation Department. Zachary Ames, from the Y, said that they are excited for their relationship with the City to get stronger and he reiterated their desire to be more involved.

Member Fitch brought up a citizen concern regarding the basketball courts on Forrest Avenue. The citizen expressed concerns with the noise that comes from the courts, saying that there are children who listen to music while playing basketball. She said that she knows that this is a Council issue as well, but wondered what the Commission could do, if anything. Williams said that there is nothing that should be done at this point, commenting that noise mitigation efforts have already been taken by the installation of noise cancelling barriers on the courts. Marichal said that he is aware of the panels and he thought that those panels are the best mitigating effort the City could do. Williams said that this citizen can call the Police Department if they believe the noise is too loud, but made the comment that the noise ordinance does not go into effect until 10pm. Fitch agreed with Williams and Marichal and did not think that there needs to be any further action taken.

Marichal welcomed Member Ezekiel to the Commission and said that they were excited that she agreed to join. Ezekiel thanked him and said that she was excited to be a member.

Member Workman said that Knowlton Park is always a concern of hers, making a comment that she would like more cameras in the area. She said that she called the Police Department whenever she sees something that is not okay, but the individuals typically leave before or right as the Police arrive.

Marichal asked Williams about what to do with all of the information gathered in both of the asset tours. He offered to create some sort of online form for each of the assets where the members can put in their comments and recommendations. Williams said that would be the helpful. Marichal said that he would send out the form. He also suggested that the information be made available on the website and given to the consultants who are working on the Comprehensive Plan.

Member Stein asked if the washout on the access road to the Branch Lake Public Forest had been fixed. Williams said that it had been repaired already and the issues are not reoccurring at this point.

Fitch asked about the Christmas tree and how it would be obtained. Williams said that the Public Works department will cut it down and transport it for them. Marichal asked if the City had to pay for the tree itself. Williams said that they would not, and the tree is a donation from a generous member of the public. Fitch said that she would be in touch with the Commission members regarding more Holiday planning.

8. Staff Comments

There were no additional Staff Comments.

9. Adjournment

Member Stein moved to adjourn. Member Workman seconded the motion. **The vote to adjourn was UNANIMOUS (5-0) at 9:33AM.**