

City of Ellsworth
1 City Hall Plaza, Ellsworth, ME 04605
RECREATION COMMISSION
Regular Meeting
Thursday, January 4, 2024 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 Josh Frost, Member Melinda Workman, and Member Ellerie Ezekiel

Members Absent: Vice-Chair Kathy Young, Member Jon Stein

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

2. Adoption of November 21, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes

Member Fitch moved to adopt the November 21, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes. Member Workman seconded the motion. **The vote to adopt the November 21, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes was UNANIMOUS.**

3. Recap of Tree Lighting & Parade Events

Member Fitch said that the efforts that the Board and Staff put into the Tree lighting event was great. She said that the live music was a big hit and people really enjoyed themselves. She said that she believed that there was still room for more vendors. Member Workman said that she was thankful that there were other vendors who were giving out hot chocolate since she ran out at her stand. Fitch said that the vendors representing the School did really well and got a lot of money in donations. She said that she would like to see more savory options for food, noting that there were only sugary options. Chair Marichal said that he would have liked to see some sort of soup or coffee given out at the event. He also said that the live music made the event livelier and was very impressed with it. Workman suggested that there be some music before the live band began which people could listen and sing along to. Marichal said that the carolers were still not loud enough for everyone to hear and suggested that there be a change to the speaker system. Fitch said that they could add more speakers. City Planner Williams said that it may not be a matter of more speakers, they may just need to alter the placement of the speakers so the entire group of people would be able to hear. Workman commented that there were too many speakers before the tree lighting and she thought that there should only be one speaker. She said that the crowd got bored during that portion. Marichal suggested that they make some sort of pamphlet with all of the sponsors and people who they would like to thank, that way there wouldn't need to be so many speakers. Fitch said that they could also do some sort of poster ahead of time, noting that there were some in the past but one was not done this year. Fitch also suggested putting the actual lighting in the middle to the event so people could stay after if they wanted to. Marichal agreed and said that there were people who would have liked to stay after the tree was lit, but everything was taken down right after. Member Frost said that one vendor was using a generator, which was very distracting because of the noise. Fitch said that she was aware of that as well and they will work to coordinate electricity better next year so there will not be a need for generators. Frost said that there should also be more lights on the tree. Williams said that some of the lights were burned out due to all of the rain and wind, and that he replaced a lot of the lights after the storm events. Fitch suggested looking into a lighting sponsor for next year, noting that they could come and set it all up and it would not use any City Staff time. Marichal said it would be good to not have to have Public Works take time out of their schedule to get the lights on the trees. Member Ezekiel said that having the

mailbox to Santa was a big hit with the children, as well as the raffle for a child to light the tree. Fitch suggested that they reach out to Wallace Events and see if they could assist with the lighting.

Marichal went on to discuss some complaints from citizens regarding the lack of lighting on the light poles on Main Street. Fitch said that all of the poles need to be upgraded since most of them do not work. She said that Wallace Events used to help but their Staff person who knew how to no longer works for them. She said that Heart of Ellsworth did spend some money to upgrade the poles but recommended that the City also look into this. Marichal suggested that the Recreation Commission work the lighting upgrades into their budget for the next fiscal year. Fitch agreed and said that the lights need to be working for next year.

Fitch then discussed the parade event. She said that they got lucky with the weather and that it was not too cold. She said that she has received a lot of positive feedback regarding the parade and she was very happy with how it went. She said that there was no bottleneck and the split set-up location was helpful. Workman suggested that individuals with dogs be at the beginning of the parade route at Knowlton Park instead of on the street, noting that a lot of dogs seemed stressed out and were probably better off using the Park. Marichal asked Fitch if there were more floats than last year. Fitch said that there were 53 floats this year and 48 last year, so there was an increase of 5 floats. Ezekiel said that the community really seemed to enjoy the lights and the music, saying that it made the event more lively and festive. Fitch said that people who participated got more into it this year than the year before and said that she believed they would continue to up their game in following years. She also said that a lot of the participants and public were in favor of keeping the parade at night. She said that she was not happy with how the live stream went, noting that it was not going for half of the parade. She said that they need to test the equipment ahead of time next year. Frost said that it was so dark that a lot of people had difficulty seeing the floats as they went by. He said that he thought the route was good and noted that there were a lot more people on School Street than he anticipated. Marichal said that next year when the light posts are fixed, that may solve the lighting issue. Fitch said that one of the long-time residents in Ellsworth said that this parade was the best parade Ellsworth has ever done. Workman suggested designating some parking for the elderly who would like to come but are worried about the parking and finding somewhere to stand. Frost said that the headlights on some of the trucks were distracting and detracted from the lights in the parade. He also said that if the parade was during the day, they would be able to get more High School participation. Fitch said that she was worried that there would not be a lot of participation regardless of the time of day the parade is held. Marichal suggested that the Commission engage with the High School early on in the planning process so they can be sure that they would be involved. Frost said that they should schedule the parade with the High School in mind. He also noted that a lot of the sports teams are sponsored by local businesses, so having those teams in the parade can also help highlight more of the community. Fitch asked if the issue was regarding the date of the parade or the timing of the parade. Frost said that it was the timing of the parade and noted that the School needs to know ahead of time so they can try and get as much participation as possible. Fitch said that they can coordinate better with the schools, but she thought that the parade should be kept at night since that is what the majority of the community likes. Frost said that there was a lot more that the school could do and he would like to work together more. Fitch agreed and said that it is nice to see a lot of the community groups working together and that should be highlighted.

Fitch said that she received a lot of messages from business owners on Main Street who were seemingly unhappy with the tree lighting event taking place on Small Business Saturday. She said that there were a lot of angry and rude comments made about how the event detracted from business. Workman made a comment

that this event was for the whole of the community and that Ellsworth is more than just Downtown. Fitch said that she did do some research into the event and it used to be held on a Sunday at SK Whiting Park. She said that got complaints from business owners because they wanted it to be on Saturday so they can be open for business. She said that the businesses should capitalize on the high amount of traffic in Downtown during the event. Marichal said that event could be really good for businesses since there were more people in the area than earlier in the day. He also said that if the business owners have concerns then they should be coming to the Recreation Commission, not sending messages to only one member. Workman said that the event was good for all Ellsworth residents and that is who they are there to serve. Ezekiel suggested that Small Business Saturday be included on the program and there be some marketing which encourages residents to shop at local businesses before the event. Workman said that she liked that idea and said that there are a lot of different things that businesses can do to capitalize on the event. Marichal said that they could invite the Main Street business owners to a meeting and they can express their concerns. Workman suggested that business owners think about participating in the event and staying open later in the day in order to get more business during the event. Marichal agreed and said that this event is really an opportunity for business owners. Fitch said that she encouraged the business owners to attend Recreation Commission meetings and hoped that they would come.

4. Update Regarding Asset Spreadsheet

Chair Marichal went through the process and his idea for the Asset Spreadsheet. He said that he hopes to compile a larger spreadsheet for the website and the Comprehensive Plan that includes all of the Recreational Assets in the City. He said that a lot of municipalities have recreation information on their websites and it would be beneficial for Ellsworth to do the same. Most of the Commission members had not completed their spreadsheets as of the meeting date. Assistant Planner Ouellette said she would resend the template again and asked that all members submit their completed spreadsheets to Marichal. Marichal said that this would be a useful tool and mentioned that there were some assets that he did not know were in Ellsworth until he took on this project. He said that many other community members will likely be in the same situation. Member Ezekiel agreed and noted that many people do not know about Indian Point, for example, because there is no signage currently. Marichal asked all of the Commission members to have their spreadsheet completed by the next regular meeting on January 16th.

5. Update Regarding Winter Carnival

Chair Marichal asked Member Fitch if there was realistically enough time to pull off an event like this. Fitch said that the Christmas in Ellsworth group was unable to meet to discuss the event and that there really is not a lot of time. She said that if there is snow then there can be some events at Woodlawn. Marichal said that they can make a small schedule with some events on it. Fitch said that the dates for the event would be February 2nd through the 4th to line up with the BANFF Film Festival. She said that the Grand sells out of tickets every day of the festival and that it would bring a lot of people to Ellsworth that weekend. Fitch said that she would need to see what Woodlawn has prepared and asked if there was a possibility of doing some sort of fireworks display. City Planner Williams said that there is money in the budget for a winter festival and that they could use the funds on fireworks if they wanted. Member Frost said that they could use the softball field to launch the fireworks. Frost also noted that there were a lot of events during the 2019 Winter Carnival and that the Commission should try and make this a bigger event again. He said that maybe the Commission could work with the Y on some events. Fitch said that they would likely not be able to pull off a large Carnival this year since they only have one month to plan, but recommended that the Commission announce the date for the 2025 Carnival early so they can get more participation. Williams said that the Commission can make

purchased for the 2025 event now if they know what they would like to purchase. Fitch said that she could try and get the Christmas in Ellsworth group to meet again and start planning for 2025. Member Ezekiel said that they should see if there is going to be snow that weekend and announce the Woodlawn events if it is feasible. Fitch said that they could so some sort of save the date for 2025 and also announce any events that are taking place at Woodlawn this year. Frost asked if they still wanted to do a fireworks show. Williams said that they could do fireworks if they wanted to. Ezekiel said that they could talk to business owners and let them know the date of the fireworks so they can market towards it. Fitch said that she could coordinate the fireworks and that she would get a quote for a 10-minute show. Williams said that they can decide on what they want to actually do for the event at the next meeting on the 16th.

6. Discussion Regarding the Ice Rink

City Planner Williams asked Chair Marichal if he got any volunteers for maintaining the Ice Rink. Marichal said that there were only two people who reached out and offered to help. Member Fitch suggested that they reach out to Jeff Wright who was someone who used to maintain the Ice Rink. Member Frost said that they have not missed any ice skating weather yet since it has been so warm and rainy. Marichal said that he spoke with Matthew Montgomery from The Y and he said that some of the boards would need to be replaced or the rink would need to be smaller than it was in previous years. Williams said that he would reach out to Montgomery and have a discussion. He said that they will be getting the rink set up this year. Marichal talked about the possibility of moving the rink to the pickle ball courts, but that would not be an option for this year.

Williams then said that he had a sample of a new type of rink material that could be skated on without ice and also used for roller skating and roller blading. He said that Waterville has this installed in one of their facilities and he reached out to see how they liked it. They told him that they liked the rink, but some people say that it is different to skate on which takes some adjustment. Frost asked how they cleared the snow off of the rink. Williams said that it was just with shovels. Marichal said that obtaining a rink like this would extend the skating season. He said that he thought that the pickle ball courts would be the best location for this type of rink.

Marichal said that they have to have some sort of ice rink this year. He said that they need to set the boards up and if the rink has to be smaller this year then they can accommodate that. Williams said that they can look into companies or other sponsors for obtaining the new type of rink. Frost asked why Public Works was not responsible for putting up the rink. Williams explained that Public Works has a lot on their schedule and also acts as a full maintenance crew for the City Facilities, which is above and beyond what normal Public Works Departments do. He said that The Y has taken care of the ice rink because they have the availability and resources to do so. Frost said that the weather is so unreliable that an outdoor ice rink is not able to be used for more than 2 months out of the year. He also said that if it is warm or raining one day, it can close the rink down for several days until it freezes up again. Member Workman asked when the rink was usually set up. Marichal said it was usually in late November or early December depending on the weather. Williams said that they can look into sponsorships for the new rink and he could organize a trip to Waterville to see the rink that they have. He suggested that Marichal invite the two citizens who volunteered to maintain the rink to join the group on that visit. Marichal suggested that the Commission look into purchasing a battery powered snow-blower, saying that it would be much easier for volunteers to operate. Williams said that he could look into grants for that equipment.

7. Member Comments

Member Ezekiel gave an update on a potential dog park. She said that Something to Wag About has gotten permission to lease more land next to their existing facility. She said that they are planning on building a dog park in that new land. She said that people will bring their dog's information to City Hall and then get a pass

to use the park. She said that they are very excited about this new opportunity and she would provide more details once they are available.

8. Staff Comments

City Planner Williams talked about the idea of having an “Outdoor Recreation Repair Fair” where people can bring recreation equipment and have it repaired for free. He said that there was a company which he and Economic Development Director Richards met with and they said that they could come to Ellsworth and set up for a day to repair any equipment that the community would bring to them. He said that they could work the event into their next budget cycle. He said that they would come for one day and would not charge the public any fee for their work. He said that they would like to have the event in Harbor Park and have recreational and outdoor organizations come and table. He said that the Recreation Commission could even create a booklet with all of the recreational assets and give that out to people who attend the event. He said that they could also invite businesses who sell recreation equipment to come and give demonstrations of their equipment. He also talked about the possibility of inviting a food truck as well. He said that they could do two events, the first in May or June which would cost \$400. He said that there would be a larger event in the fall that would cost \$1,000. He said that they could coordinate with Woodlawn and have the fall event at the same time that they do their used equipment resale event. He said that way, someone could purchase used equipment and get it repaired for free on site. The group liked the idea and said that they were okay with using \$400 from the miscellaneous budget for the spring event. Williams said that he would budget for the larger event when he did the budget for FY25. He said that he would also like to try and get a mix of businesses and nonprofits to participate in the event.

Member Frost asked if the budget would be discussed at the next meeting. Williams said that it would. Chair Marichal said that his report to the City Council is almost complete and said that it could be presented to them in February. Frost asked about the date for the February meeting, stating that it was during school break and wondered if the date could be changed. Williams said that he would put it on the agenda for the meeting on the 16th.

9. Adjournment

Member Frost moved to adjourn. Member Workman seconded the motion. **The vote to adjourn was UNANIMOUS at 10:07AM.**