

**City of Ellsworth**  
1 City Hall Plaza, Ellsworth, ME 04605  
**RECREATION COMMISSION**  
Regular Meeting  
Tuesday, November 21<sup>st</sup> at 8:30 a.m.

**1. Call to Order**

Chair Marichal called the meeting to order at 8:32AM.

**Members Present:** Chair Eric Marichal, Vice-Chair Kathy Young, Member Kim Fitch, Member Josh Frost, Member Melinda Workman, and Member Ellerie Ezekiel

**Members Absent:** Member Jon Stein

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

**2. Adoption of October 17, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes**

Member Fitch moved to adopt the October 17, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes. Member Ezekiel seconded the motion. **The vote to adopt the October 17, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes was UNANIMOUS (6-0).**

**3. Update regarding Holiday Events**

Member Fitch said that the Tree Lighting Event would be on the following Saturday. She said that the tree is up and in front of City Hall. She also commented on how the Public Works Department drilled a hole into the ground so the tree could be free-standing this year, which is a great improvement. The tree would be decorated that day. Fitch then said that the Christmas in Ellsworth group had a lot of meetings with the Library, The Grant, Woodlawn, The Y, Ellsworth American, the City, and Heart of Ellsworth to make the event bigger this year. She said that there would be more vendors in the Parklet and there is even one food truck coming to the event. She said that the fire pits will be out again, the Lioness Club is providing cookies, and Flex-It Café is providing cocoa. Member Workman volunteered to help pass out cocoa at the event. Fitch said that there would also be other groups giving out refreshments as well. She said there would be ornament making, games, live music, and possibly an ‘open-mic’ portion of the event. She said that Wallace Events would be bringing lighting and speakers for the carolers and the actual Tree Lighting Ceremony. City Planner Williams asked if there was any sort of site plan showing where each of the vendors would be located. Fitch said that the Economic Development Director had put one together and the carolers would be on the City Hall steps, the vendors in the Parklet, and the City will have a table by the tree. Chair Marichal asked about the location for the vendors. Fitch said that they would be spread out in the Parklet and the City Hall Parking Lot. Williams said that Store Street would be closed to traffic on Saturday morning and a portion of the City Hall Parking Lot would also be closed off on Friday evening. Fitch asked if the fire pits had arrived yet. Williams said that they are arriving that day and he would need to get more propane than was used last year. Fitch said that there also may be a group doing smores, so the pits may be needed for that purpose as well. Marichal asked what time the event was taking place and what time he should arrive to help set up. Fitch said that the event was from 3-5 and he could arrive around 2PM to assist. Marichal asked about the raffle to choose who would get to light the tree. Fitch said that the City Clerk’s office is taking care of that aspect this year. Fitch said that there would be music until around 4:30 and then everyone would gather around the tree for the lighting at 5PM. Williams asked Fitch to ensure that the vendors knew that they were responsible for their own setup, and no tables or electricity would be provided. Fitch said that she has already made vendors aware and she would tell them again. Marichal said that The Y may need some more space than other vendors

since they are setting up games for people to play. Fitch said that they have planned for that. Williams asked if there was any discussion regarding a rain date for the event, but since it seems like it will be good weather it will likely not be needed. Fitch said that they do not have a rain date but are confident that there will be nice weather on the day. Fitch said that there would be a countdown to the lighting of the tree done by Chris Popper.

Fitch said that there was some interest in doing a Winter Carnival type event. She said that if enough people are willing to participate, they could get it done. She said that the first weekend in February would be the best time for an event like this. Williams said that the event was budgeted for so they can go ahead with the planning. Fitch said that that weekend was also the BANFF Film Festival so it would line up well and maybe attract more participants. Vice-Chair Young said that Woodlawn planned to do snowshoe races, a snow sculpture competition, makeshift sled races, and a pop-up market in the Barn. Fitch said that sounded good, but they would have to also plan for events that could be done without snow. Marichal said that it was important to have non-snow related activities as well, in case the weather does not cooperate. Young said that she was planning for that and also mentioned that their pond would be available for skating if it was frozen enough. Marichal said that he was in favor of holding this type of event and he thought that the Christmas in Ellsworth group should stay active and take it on. Member Frost asked if there was money in the budget for this event. Williams said that there was around \$8,000 budgeted for winter events and a portion of that could be used for this. Frost asked if there was a possibility of doing a fireworks show or something. Fitch said that this was discussed for some other events in the past so there should be some funding for it somewhere. Williams said that funding may have gone into the general fund since it was budgeted for past fiscal years, but he would look into it. Frost said that if fireworks were done around 4:30PM, it would be dark enough to be seen throughout most of downtown. He said that it would then encourage people to go out to dinner after the fireworks. Young asked about the possibility of an ice bar for the event. Fitch said that they would need to work with local businesses to set up something like that. Fitch said that she thought it would be best to start off small and build out from there, since this would be the first year that this sort of event is brought back. Young said that a lot of the events that she had planned for Woodlawn would be inexpensive and noted that she got some materials for the sleds donated by a local business. Marichal then discussed the need for another meeting with the Christmas in Ellsworth group and noted that the name should be changed if it is going to be planning events for the entire winter.

Fitch then brought up the decorations around the City for the Holidays. She noted that the Heart of Ellsworth group had said that they were going to decorate every other light pole in downtown, but have only seemed to actually decorate 8 of them. Frost said that the bridge was decorated as well and thought that they may have used more lights on the bridge than they had thought which is why they didn't decorate all of the poles they had said they would. Fitch said that was a possibility, but she has not spoken with the group so she is unaware as to the reason for this. Member Workman suggested that the City step in next year and take care of the downtown decorations or partner with this organization to help them next year. Fitch said that she would be willing to help if that organization asked her to and said that she would reach out to them. Marichal said that it would be a good idea to reach out to that group and offer assistance. He noted that they may be able to get all of the poles decorated this year if they work fast enough. Marichal then spoke about the lighting display in Merrill Park, saying that it looks good and he encouraged all of the members to check it out. Young asked if the Friends in Action group was involved in any of the holiday events. Fitch said that they were not very involved, but she would like to get them more involved since she thought they would be a group that would be willing to volunteer and help wherever needed. Young said that they should also look into getting more

volunteers for the holiday events. Fitch said that she was also considering involving the Rotary Clubs next year. Fitch then moved onto the buoy tree at SK Whiting Park. She said that it would be a wooden base with lights and there would be the decorated buoys hung onto it. She said that they would also like to move the sleigh up there so people can take pictures in it. She said that the sleigh had been stored behind The Grand for some time and they are unsure what to do with it. Young said that they would not be able to store it at Woodlawn. Workman asked where the sleigh came from. Fitch said that she did not know, it had been moved around a lot before it ended up at The Grand. She said it was now a concern since there are people who appear to be sleeping in it. Frost asked how large the sleigh was, thinking that there may be some space at the High School to store it. Fitch gave him the dimensions and he said that he would look into it. Young said that they should get rid of it if there is no use for it. Member Ezekiel said that it could be used as a photo booth or something. Fitch said that was the idea, they just needed to get it to SK Whiting Park.

Marichal then asked Fitch about the Parade. She said that the Parade would be held on December 2<sup>nd</sup> at 4PM. She said that, as of that day, they had 33 floats/groups signed up to participate but she is anticipating more. She said that she expects there will be around 50 groups participating this year. She said that some groups will line up at the Moore Center and the rest will line up behind the Mill Mall and meet the rest of the Parade at the end of Shore Road. She said that she is planning on having the groups go slower so there is not bottleneck or awkward breaks in the Parade. Marichal asked if there was a need for volunteers. Fitch said that they would need volunteers to help with directing people and traffic. She said that they have asked for more Police Officers to help with crowd control. She asked that anyone who wanted to volunteer reach out to her directly. She said that Chris Popper would be the Grand Marshall of the Parade and it will be streamed. She said that there would be two people from Star 97.7 emceeding the parade. She said that each float is going to be asked to provide a short blurb about their float/organization so the emcees will have something to talk about when each float goes by. Frost asked about the High School band. Fitch said that they are not going to be participating this year because of a scheduling conflict and the Parade is at night which makes it difficult for them to see and play. She said that they are looking into trying to find another band. Young said that Woodlawn has a lighting display in their driveway which is available to be seen from 5-7PM on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays. She said that there would also be a short walk through their Story Trail. Marichal asked if all of the events are on the Ellsworth American's website. Fitch said that they were. Fitch then asked Williams about how to make checks for the people that they will need to pay. Williams asked her to send him the invoices and he would get the checks for her.

#### **4. Update Regarding Asset Spreadsheet**

Assistant City Planner Ouellette began by explaining that she made a spreadsheet with all of the Recreational Assets that the Commission had visited on both of their Asset Tours earlier in the year. She said that there is a space for needed improvements and then a separate space for Commission members to put a "wish-list" of things that they would like to see in Ellsworth. She asked that the Commission members complete the spreadsheet for their December meeting and they could then work towards getting a chart of assets onto the City's website. She said that this would also assist in the budget process for next year which will be starting in the coming months. Chair Marichal said that this would feed into the Comprehensive Plan. He also said that the Commission should come up with their top 5 tasks that they would like completed next year and budget for those. He said that it may be easier to pick some low-hanging fruit to get accomplished. Marichal asked Ouellette to resend the spreadsheet to the members so they will all be able to access it. Ouellette said that she would send it out and asked the Commission to have it completed at their next meeting.

## **5. Used Athletic Equipment Sale Discussion**

Vice-Chair Young said that this is something that Woodlawn is preparing to go forward with. She said that they are currently working on logos for the event. She said that there would be a fall and spring sale and that the drop-off location for equipment would be the Woodlawn barn. Young said that The Y has some experience with events such as this and they are willing to help. Young also said that they will be inspecting all of the equipment that is donated before the sale on the weekends. She said that they would be looking for recycled recreation equipment that is season-specific. She said that they are looking for partners to figure out set-up. Chair Marichal said that The Y would be willing to help and suggested that there may be space at the Moore Center for a drop-off/donation location. Member Frost said that The Y's idea was more geared towards student/child equipment needs and suggested that the two work together to coordinate. Young said that she would coordinate with The Y and possibly share some donations between the two groups. She said they could get a group of volunteers together and use the sales of the equipment to go towards a fundraising opportunity of some kind. Young said that Woodlawn was looking to sale more recreation equipment as opposed to sports equipment. She said that she would talk to the school and Friends in Action and let the group know. Marichal asked if she would also reach out to The Y. Young said that she would and see how they would be able to work together. Marichal asked Frost if there was a need for a program such as this. Frost said that there was and the School gets donations of old equipment all the time. He said that some of the equipment is kept by the School for their Physical Education classes, but most of it is barely-worn athletic equipment that children simply grew out of. He said that a lot of the equipment that is donated can be reused. Member Fitch asked if there were any children who struggled with getting all of their equipment for school sports. Frost said that there are a few each year who need help, and the School tries to outfit them as well as they can. Fitch said that the Middle School may also have a need for a program such as this since students grow out of their clothes frequently at that age. Frost said that there would be a need for it at the Middle School as well.

## **6. Member Comments**

Chair Marichal began by saying at the December meeting, the Commission should start to discuss their plans for 2024 and the budget process for the upcoming year. He also said that there was no report done to the City Council as per the ordinance. Marichal offered to write one and submit it to the Council for their next meeting. City Planner Williams said that would be helpful.

Member Frost said that he met with the Rotary and The Y regarding the Rotary's desire to be a part of a community project. He said that the Little League was present as well. He said that the Rotary wants to do a project on Demeyer Field and it was decided at that meeting that D3 needs the most work and will be the focus of the project. He said that they were looking at possible reshaping the field so it is not as curved or maybe putting in two smaller fields for T-Ball for younger kids. He said that they also discussed lighting and turf needs for the field or maybe increasing parking capacity near the concession stands or bathrooms. He said that the scope of the project would be contingent on how much money the Rotary can raise. He said that the work would likely happen in stages due to the availability of funding. He said that the Rotary will be working with a local company to rework the field and come up with a plan. He said that fundraising would likely start to take place in early 2024. Member Fitch said that it would be a good community builder and would be good to see different groups working together.

Frost then went on to discuss the soccer team. He said that the soccer team has had great success playing on turf fields. He said that there was one game played on a real field that got dangerous because of the conditions of the field turning to mud. He said that they would like to see turf placed onto the soccer field in the middle of the track. He said that there is a group who is looking into that possibility and he would update the

Commission of any progress. He said that they were also considering moving the soccer games onto one of the High School fields for safety reasons. Given that the soccer field and track are right next to the road in a public space, there are those who have safety concerns. He said that there would be a feasibility study done to see how expensive each of these options are. He then discussed the needed improvements to the track itself, which is in such poor condition that it will likely just need to be replaced. Fitch said that they could also look into donations. Frost said that they are looking into Alumni donations as well as working with the City to see if any County ARPA funds are available. Vice-Chair Young said that the County has until the end of this year to spend their funds, so they should give some of the funds for this project. Frost said that they are also working with surrounding municipalities that use the track to see if they could assist with some of the funding for the new track. Fitch recommended that Frost also reach out to Downeast Horizons and The Y since they use the track as well.

Vice-Chair Young brought up a dog park. Fitch said that there was a group that was looking for a way to get a dog park in Ellsworth, but it is no longer active. Young said that it should be brought back. Member Ezekiel said that she would be willing to be a part of that group. City Planner Williams liked the idea of a citizen group since there are no dedicated Staff members for this type of project. He said that as long as they can get enough people to take care of the maintenance of the park, then it would be feasible. Marichal said that the Recreation Commission can also be a part of that working group. Ezekiel said that they should reach out to other organizations/individuals to see who would be interested in participating.

## **7. Staff Comments**

City Planner Williams discussed the location of the Ice Rink. He said that The Y does not want to be responsible for maintenance anymore and the ground at Knowlton Park is sinking, making it not ideal for a skating rink. He said that the Public Works Department does not have enough time to fill in the ground this year, so they may have to look at other options. The Commission discussed several ideas for new locations. Chair Marichal said that if the Commission were to purchase an EZ Ice Rink, they would be able to put it anywhere with a flat surface. He suggested that the basketball courts on Forrest Avenue would be a good location. Vice-Chair Young suggested the space behind the Maine Coast Mall near the Dairy Queen. Williams said that may be a possible location and he would discuss it with the owners. Member Fitch suggested that Williams reach out to Willeys about possibly using their tennis courts. Fitch also suggested the City Hall Parking Lot, but Williams pointed out that the public uses the parking lot for downtown parking and he did not think that removing parking spaces for the ice rink would be well received. Marichal suggested the parking lot behind Wilson Field, but Williams said that was not close enough to a water source to fill the rink and it was not in a central location. Member Frost asked how long the ice rink would be up. Williams said that it would be up until the end of February. Frost asked if it had to be in-ground or above ground. Williams said that the equipment they have right now is for an above ground ice rink but it does not necessarily have to be above ground if there was a suitable in-ground location. Marichal said that the public really wants the ice rink to happen this year, but they need a good maintenance plan. Fitch asked if grass was preferable. Williams said that either grass or asphalt would work. Young suggested offering assistance with the insurance for whatever location is chosen. Williams said that he did not think that would be cost effective. Young suggested that the Commission look at what other municipalities have done and mirror those. Marichal said that, in the absence of a Parks and Rec Department, there really needs to be someone who has the energy and enthusiasm to make these projects happen. Williams asked the Commission to send him any ideas that they had about location or maintenance of the ice rink. Frost suggested the location behind the Mill Mall. Frost also made the comment that sports fields would not be the best location since they need the grass to be healthy by the time the students use it for sports. Young said that possibly next year they could host the rink at Woodlawn, but she would need to see how much parking would be required. Marichal said that this year, they should just put the rink at

Knowlton Park despite the location. He said that they should come up with a schedule of volunteers to maintain the rink throughout the season. Fitch recommended reaching out to Jeff Wright and others who may be willing to help with the maintenance. Young suggested reaching out to service groups to see if they would volunteer. Marichal said that he would send out an email regarding the volunteer maintenance.

## **8. Adjournment**

Member Frost moved to adjourn. Member Fitch seconded the motion. **The vote to adjourn was UNANIMOUS (6-0) at 10:07AM.**