



Lowell City Council

Parks & Recreation SC Minutes

Michael Q. Geary
City Clerk

Date: March 13, 2023
Time: 6:00 PM
Location: Mayor's Reception Room/Zoom (Hybrid)
375 Merrimack St., Lowell. Ma.

PRESENT:

Present on Roll Call were C. Mercier and C. Gitschier. 1 absent (C. Leahy). Also present were Conor Baldwin (CFO), Lisa Golden (HHS), Peter Faticanti (Recreation), Hayley Williams (Parks), Shannon Cohan (Parks), Austin Ball (Asst. CFO), Corey Williams (Asst. City Solicitor) and Kelly Oakes (Auditor).

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:

C. Mercier called meeting to order noting attendees and the motion referred to the subcommittee to gather information.

ORDER OF BUSINESS:

C. Mercier noted the current draft handbook regarding park use and stated that there was a need to set a policy to establish fees, set fees and collect fees in the handbook. C. Mercier stated the need to have a set standard. Mr. Faticanti outlined the current system of collection noting there is payment through the website but no ability to collect fees that have not been paid. C. Mercier questioned the manner in which permits are obtained. Mr. Faticanti outlined that process noting you cannot get permit until fee is paid. Mr. Faticanti noted there is an issue with groups using the fields without permits. C. Gitschier recommended that the handbook be changed into a policy manual which would outline best practices; including paying fees before fields are released. C. Gitschier noted there needs to be better communication between departments and may be best to move Recreation Department back under the Parks Department. C. Gitschier commented on waivers and reduction of fees noting they should be covered by ordinance which needs legal review. C. Gitschier noted the rules and policies need to be tightened and the basic tenant is that fees must be collected before permit is issued. C. Gitschier noted the fees are not covering the cost of running and maintaining the event so there must be adjustments to prevent using tax payer money to hosts these events. C.



Gitschier noted that any concession stand on City property belongs to City so they should have control over those properties. C. Mercier noted it was a complicated fix that needs information gathering to assist with resolution.

C. Mercier open meeting up to public; Robert Hunt (Friends of Tyler Park) and Keith Rudy (Board of Parks) addressed the body.

C. Gitschier noted handbook is broken down into six sections and the logical approach is to review each section and make appropriate updates methodically without rushing through it. C. Gitschier noted contacts need to be updated; polices need improvement and that distinctions must be made regarding what use goes with what park as there are many passive parks in the City. C. Mercier noted need to make the process easy to secure permit and pay fees for the parks. C. Gitschier noted the need to review waiving of fees process. Atty. Williams noted Council sets fees so they may not be reduced by Board of Parks; but the Board it appears may waive fees and that language can be developed through ordinance to streamline that process. C. Gitschier noted larger groups are not following polices and rules and leaving the site full of garbage. Ms. Williams commented on development of handbook and that it was strictly meant to be a rough draft. Ms. Golden commented on the payment process and its complications. C. Gitschier noted that City can develop a reimbursement tool for fees if needed. Ms. Oakes noted City can reimburse money. Motion by C. Gitschier, seconded by C. Mercier to have Parks and Recreation SC meet jointly with the Board of Parks at the Boards next meeting. Adopted per Roll Call vote 2 yeas, 1 absent (C. Leahy). So voted.

ADOURNMENT:

Motion "To Adjourn" by C. Mercier, seconded by C. Gitschier. So voted. Meeting adjourned at 7:36 PM.

Michael Q. Geary, City Clerk
