

City of Keene
New Hampshire

MUNICIPAL SERVICES, FACILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, November 23, 2021

5:30 PM

**Council Chambers,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Janis O. Manwaring, Chair
Randy L. Filiault, Vice Chair
Bryan J. Lake
Robert C. Williams
Andrew M. Madison

Staff Present:

Elizabeth A. Dragon, City Manager
Thomas P. Mullins, City Attorney
Rebecca Landry, IT Director/ACM
Andy Bohannon, Director of Parks,
Recreation, & Facilities

Members Not Present:

All Present

Chair Manwaring called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM.

**1) Repurposing of Wheelock Park Campground – Parks, Recreation, & Facilities
Director – Designation of a Site for a Community Dog Park & Proposal to Build a 9-
Hole Disc Golf Course**

Chair Manwaring welcomed Parks, Recreation, & Facilities Director, Andy Bohannon, to speak to this matter.

Director Bohannon recalled that in October, this Committee heard from both the dog park and disc golf groups. Since, Mr. Bohannon noted that he has had many individual meetings with members of each group and walked the property. He said that since the dog park group had started working toward the Council request that they become an established non-profit organization. When looking at the map, Director Bohannon said it occurred to him that both activities on the former campground site could work. He recalled the Wheelock Park Concept Plan created in 2014, which the consultant called an “Uncle Tom plan, where Uncle Tom came in and did this and that,” and the park was never really laid out properly.

To repurpose the campground with the goal of long-term future growth and success that everyone could enjoy, he decided a professional consultant should be contracted to ensure it is done right. He contacted the City Manager regarding the opportunity to use \$40,000 from the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for a concept plan for the repurposing of the campground, including what to do with the remaining electrical and water hook-ups as well as parking needs. The consultant would provide a drawing of how the campground could accommodate both the

dog park and disc golf or determine that it could only accommodate one use. This would include a public input process. Director Bohannon recommended that the Committee authorize the City Manager to do all things possible to expend the funds from the CIP and to create a concept plan for repurposing the Wheelock Park campground and to accept the communications from both petitioners as informational. In doing so, this would remove both items from more time, though Director Bohannon said that both groups would be involved in the process because accommodating both uses would be a win-win for the City.

Councilor Filiault asked if Director Bohannon had an idea of whether there would be space for both uses on the site, despite this being preliminary. Director Bohannon said that a consultant could determine it is possible, or not; there must be adequate space to run the dogs and there are safety considerations with disc golf. He thinks professional advice is the best course of action.

Councilor Williams supported this and said that if the dog park did not work out at this location, then the east side neighborhood would welcome a dog park at Robin Hood Park in the former amphitheater space, though it would be smaller.

Councilor Lake asked whether the scope for this consultant should include other parts of Wheelock Park in case there are opportunities. Director Bohannon replied that he did not believe that was necessary and thought it important to focus on repurposing the campground. However, if the consultant suggested another area, he would return to the City Council with those concepts. Director Bohannon said the park is solid now and there is nothing more he wants to add to it other than repurposing the campground for future City needs.

There were no public comments.

Councilor Filiault made the following motion, which Councilor Madison duly seconded.

On a vote of 5–0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, & Infrastructure Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to expend funds from the Capital Improvement Program to create a concept plan for the repurposing of the Wheelock Park campground to include both a dog park and disc golf course, and recommended that the communications from both the dog park and disc golf petitioners be accepted as informational.

2) Authorization to Acquire Easement – Beaver Brook – Russell Park – Parks, Recreation, & Facilities Director

Chair Manwaring welcomed Parks, Recreation, & Facilities Director, Andy Bohannon, again to speak to this matter.

Director Bohannon said the City was nearing completion of the design phase for Russell Park and a requirement of the NH Department of Environmental Services is ensuring that the City has acquired property rights along Beaver Brook in the vicinity of the park, from the bridge at

Harrison Street to Water Street. Along the Brook at this location, the City needs property rights from five or six abutters for invasive species management, control, and monitoring related to the permit requirements the City will need for the next five to seven years. He recalled that both Councilors Manwaring and Williams were on the design team and therefore knew this met all criteria set in the active and passive recreation management plans. He said it is a great design for climate resilience and sustainability. With this final permitting and easement step, the City would be issuing the request for proposals for construction in early December for construction to begin in spring 2022.

Councilor Williams thought it was important that this happens due to the pervasive invasive Japanese knotweed problem at that location. He said clearing all that plant material on City property would be for naught if they do not on the other side of the Brook, where it would continue spreading from. He appreciated that this was being addressed as a part of this project.

There were no public comments.

Councilor Filiault made the following motion, which Councilor Madison duly seconded.

On a vote of 5–0 the Municipal Services, Facilities, & Infrastructure Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate acquiring property rights for the Russell Park project.

3) Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Manwaring adjourned the meeting at 5:46 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katelyna Kibler, Minute Taker
November 23, 2021

Additional Edits by,
Terri M. Hood, Assistant City Clerk