

City of Keene
New Hampshire

MUNICIPAL SERVICES, FACILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, May 25, 2022

6:00 PM

**Council Chambers,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Mitchell H. Greenwald, Chair
Randy L. Filiault, Vice Chair
Robert C. Williams
Catherine I. Workman
Kris E. Roberts

Staff Present:

Elizabeth A. Dragon, City Manager
Thomas P. Mullins, City Attorney
Kürt Blomquist, Public Works Director

Members Not Present:

All Present

Chair Greenwald called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM and explained the procedures of the meeting.

Chair Greenwald stated that this is the first City Council meeting since yesterday's horrific event school shooting in Texas, and he is requesting a moment of prayer for the children, their teachers, their families, and all the first responders. He continued that he urges everyone to contact their Federal Senators and Representatives and urge them to stop the sale of these military weapons and require background checks.

1) Thomas Powers – Renaming the Keene Recreation Center to the Brian A. Mattson Keene Recreation Center
Resolution R-2022-20

Chair Greenwald asked Councilor Powers to address his request.

Councilor Tom Powers, of 4 Partridgeberry Ln., stated that he has lived here for 35 years and knew Brian Mattson during that entire length of time. He continued that the MSFI Committee has a letter he wrote early last month, with an idea that has gathered a lot of support from friends, current City employees, and members of the public who worked with Mr. Mattson. The City has a process, developed by a prior City Council with forethought that there may be occasions when the City Council wants to honor folks in different ways. For a facility to be named in honor of someone, the individual must meet one of the following criteria in Ordinance O-1996-20: *“an individual who has had a major involvement in any acquisition of a development or a facility; a well-known community leader, either elected, appointed, or volunteer; an individual who has*

positively influenced a large populace of the city through a significant contribution of money, time, material, or land; an individual whose civic leadership or volunteerism clearly has contributed to the betterment of the city; or an individual who is deceased and whose personal attributes symbolized the principles and standards of a community organization.”

Councilor Powers stated that those criteria are in the City Code, and there is no question that Mr. Mattson met every one of them. He continued that he does not think there is a person in the room who has not worked with or for Mr. Mattson or been involved with something that Mr. Mattson handled on behalf of the City. Mr. Mattson came to work for the City after having spent time in the Air Force. He attended the University of New Hampshire (UNH) and Keene State College (KSC). When he was in high school in Gorham, NH, he worked with the Parks & Recreation Department. When he worked for the City of Keene, he always added a piece of humor to any event and was great at making people laugh. It would be hard to find any project in the City that involves children that Mr. Mattson was not a part of. People whose children have grown up in Keene likely have children who worked for Mr. Mattson at one of the various facilities or pools. Mr. Mattson was the type who was always trying to better the community. He was very involved with the trails, the Senior Center, and the Kiwanis Club.

Councilor Powers continued that there is no question in his mind, and in the minds of others he has talked with, that renaming the Keene Recreation Center to the Brian A. Mattson Keene Recreation Center is the right thing to do. He hopes the MSFI Committee agrees and that the City Council agrees next week.

Councilor Filiault stated that he thinks this is one of the best ideas that has been brought to the City Council in a long time. He continued that he grew up in the neighborhood of the Recreation Center, and to him as well as other children in the area, it was like a second home. He was in high school when Mr. Mattson started working there, and he felt almost like a stepfather to him and all the children in the area. Then when he grew older and became a City Council member, he remembers that Mr. Mattson was one of the first department heads to say in a budget meeting, “I don’t need this for this line item; I can return that money.” Mr. Mattson was a phenomenal person, and he thanks Councilor Powers for bringing this request, because he cannot think of a more wonderful name for the Recreation Center than one honoring Brian Mattson.

Councilor Roberts stated that when he was the president of the Senior Center, Mr. Mattson was there at every meeting, always looking out for how they could improve the lives of Keene’s seniors. He continued that Mr. Mattson would talk about how he was embarrassed he could not help the seniors more and was trying to find a way to integrate the private Senior Center into the City.

Councilor Workman stated that she did not have the honor of knowing Mr. Mattson personally, but she really respects the summary Councilor Powers provided of his accomplishments. She continued that she thinks this renaming of the Recreation Center is an excellent way to commemorate his legacy. She will be in full support of this.

Councilor Williams stated that he seconds Councilor Workman's words. He continued that he came along a little late and it sounds like he missed a wonderful man.

Chair Greenwald stated that Mr. Mattson was a very nice person with a good sense of humor. He continued that Mr. Mattson was also the Facilities Director, so he had a full plate of activities. He was never aggressive and was always a very nice person, with a nice family. He totally supports this.

Councilor Powers stated that something many people do not know is that if they ever wore Converse sneakers while playing basketball as a youth, it is likely Mr. Mattson made those sneakers. He continued that Converse sneakers were made in Berlin, NH, and working there was one of Mr. Mattson's part-time jobs between high school and college.

Chair Greenwald asked for comments from members of the public.

Arthur Trombly stated that he is a retired attorney. He continued that he first met and casually got to know Mr. Mattson when he was a young City Councilor on what was then called the Parks & Recreation Committee, but he did not get to know Mr. Mattson very well until years later when they both joined the Kiwanis Club. Mr. Mattson pushed for the Kiwanis Club to support the Special Olympics. The regional Special Olympics basketball tournament was held at the high school or the college, and Mr. Mattson wanted the Kiwanis Club to provide food. They did, and it was a great time. That is what really showed him Mr. Mattson's humanity and what a great person he was, because he noticed at those basketball tournaments that Mr. Mattson knew every child and their parents and details about them. It was not just a job for Mr. Mattson; it was who he was. He cannot think of anyone more deserving of this honor than Mr. Mattson, and is sorry that Mr. Mattson could not be here to see this.

Gary Lamoureux, of 47 Rockwood Rd., stated that he was a City staff member for many years and had the opportunity to not just work with Mr. Mattson, but to be friends with him. He continued that he and Mr. Mattson played basketball together, along with other City staff members. They had a great time together on and off duty. Right after Mr. Mattson passed, Joe Clifford approached him at Hannafords, quite emotional, and asked if there was something that could be done for Mr. Mattson. Mr. Clifford was an athlete with the Special Olympics and a firm believer that it would not have happened without Mr. Mattson. If there is a presentation for the dedication of the Brian A. Mattson Keene Recreation Center, he imagines that Mr. Clifford and others involved with the Special Olympics would like to be invited. He contacted the City Manager about that and was happy to learn that there was something in the works. Councilor Powers did a great job taking the lead.

Mr. Lamoureux continued that when he was 10, he lived on Ellis Court, right behind the Recreation Center; thus, it was not "like his second home," it was his first home. He spent a lot of time there and Mr. Mattson knew him by first name then and now. While attending camp at

the Recreation Center, with Dave Kyle and Julianna Bergeron as counselors, he (Mr. Lamoureux) used to make potholders. When he retired from the Fire Department many years later, Mr. Mattson found a weaving unit and a bunch of materials for making potholders, and gave that to him as a retirement gift, which is an example of Mr. Mattson's sense of humor. Mr. Mattson was a mentor to many. He was quiet, and never wanted accolades for anything he did; he just wanted the job done. Mr. Lamoureux continued that he thinks that is the type of person the City would be proud to name a building for. He is glad there is so much support for it, but like Mr. Trombly, he wishes there was a way to do this when people are alive to know how people feel about them. Maybe that is something the City can look at down the road.

Chair Greenwald stated that he hopes a list of names goes to the City Clerk to make sure all of these people are informed when the Resolution passes. He asked the City Manager if it is correct that a ceremony is being planned for the Recreation Center. He continued that he will hear from the next speaker.

Andy Bohannon, Parks, Recreation, and Facilities Director, stated that he had the great pleasure of working with Mr. Mattson from 1985 to 1994, then as a Building Supervisor and basketball official. He continued that he got to know Mr. Mattson through the Boy Scouts when Mr. Mattson's two sons were in Mr. Bohannon's troop and Mr. Mattson would often participate in camping trips and other events. Thus, Mr. Bohannon got to know him from a different perspective as well, and then later on, worked for him as the Recreation Programmer, and ultimately, he would call Mr. Mattson often for different things or see him in the grocery store. It was always that mentorship of never giving up and trying to find ways to help him or help the conversation with the Senior Center. He supports Councilor Powers' request to make this renaming happen.

Mr. Bohannon continued that when Mr. Mattson retired, some Parks staff members and Buildings staff members who knew him well said that what everyone knows about Mr. Mattson is that he was fair. In today's leadership experiences, it is often difficult to find someone who thinks about the bigger picture and is fair. Mr. Mattson was very calm, quiet, and fair to all of his employees and volunteers. He was community-minded, as everyone can see from hearing people speak tonight. He was a volunteer Little League coach, and took care of many Special Olympics activities. In fact, Mr. Mattson is part of the reason why Keene has such a strong tradition with the Special Olympics. Before Special Olympics was a big thing, Mr. Mattson made Special Olympics in Keene. He knew individuals who needed this type of program, and brought them on a bus to basketball tournaments in Hartford, CT and Laconia, NH, to get them involved. Mr. Mattson told him great stories about those trips.

Mr. Bohannon continued that the reason they are here tonight is to talk about the Recreation Center. The old Recreation Center that Councilor Filiault talked about was rather beat up, being a former jail and a small operation, but Mr. Mattson led a process, through 200 names on a petition asking for a new facility, and made that new facility happen. Those 200 people would say, 'yes, this is Brian Mattson's building.' Mr. Mattson talked about how that process occurred.

He was also involved with the Elks Club, always community-minded. He was an environmental advocate. Regarding the City's rain gardens and conversations about sustainability issues, Mr. Mattson made sure the Recreation Center had the first rain garden in the city. He wanted it as a demonstration site. Regarding the parks, Mr. Mattson led multiple projects. At that time, the applications were much easier than they are today. Ashuelot River Park is one of Keene's treasures, and is what it is today is because of Mr. Mattson's leadership. Mr. Mattson made that project happen. Ellis Harrison Memorial Park on George St. was another one of Mr. Mattson's visions; he helped get all of those tennis courts and playgrounds, to make sure that northeast corner had a park to play in. All the Goose Pond acquisitions, and the Stearns Hill acquisition, are others. Mr. Mattson was involved with all of these. Mr. Bohannon continued that he and Mr. Blomquist frequently talked about the trail system, and how Keene had a vision back then, which Mr. Mattson was a part of, in terms of making the trail system what it is today. That was the kind of leader he was.

Mr. Bohannon stated that he supports the renaming. He continued that the family is planning a memorial service at the Keene Recreation Center, at Fuller Park's pavilion, for June 11 at 1:00 PM. If it rains, the service will be inside in the multi-purpose room. Family, friends, and other guest speakers will reflect on Mr. Mattson's life. He will be missed.

Chair Greenwald asked if that is the same day and time as the dedication of the building. He asked if the Resolution will be voted on at a City Council meeting.

City Attorney Tom Mullins replied that the MSFI Committee has the Resolution before them tonight, which they can vote to recommend to the City Council. City Manager Elizabeth Dragon stated that her understanding is that it will be voted on next Thursday at the City Council meeting, but they were hoping to time it in conjunction with the memorial service at the Recreation Center so that it would be ready for presentation.

Chair Greenwald stated that it is very important to inform the City Council about this. He asked if there was any further comment.

The City Attorney stated that he wanted to say that when he first got to Keene, he had the opportunity to work with Mr. Mattson for a few years, and Mr. Mattson was one of the most pleasant people he has ever met in his life. He continued that Mr. Mattson was a wonderful person.

Councilor Williams made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Workman.

By a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee recommends the adoption of Resolution R-2022-20.

2) Charles Redfern – Request for Signage Identifying Trails

Chair Greenwald stated that the Committee has a communication from Chuck Redfern regarding signage identifying trails. He continued that Mr. Redfern is not present tonight, and wants to be here to make a presentation regarding the signage. He asked for a motion.

Councilor Workman made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Filiault.

By a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee placed the item on more time.

3) Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Greenwald adjourned the meeting at 6:26 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Edits submitted by,
Patty Little, City Clerk