

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MARCH 22, 2004
WORK SESSION MINUTES
"APPROVED"**

Present: Thomas D. Hartnett, Chair; George F. Dillon, Jr., Vice Chair; John L. Saball, Clerk; Peter S. Cunningham, Member (left at 10:30 a.m.); Virginia C. Wood, Member (left at 11:00 a.m.); Administrative Officer Jean E. Kitchen

The meeting was called to order at 9:15 a.m.

Work Session with Recreation Department

Ms. Liza Judge, Recreation Director, Recreation Commissioners Ms. Kerri Strauss and Mr. Neil Cotoni, Mr. Steve Webber and Ms. Valerie Jenkins were present for the work session.

Mr. Cotoni stated the need to eliminate the recreation programs which lost money. Mr. Cotoni stated the Swim Program, Misc. Camps and Kids Kick make money; the Kids Kick has over 200 participants.

Mr. Cotoni had an idea to establish a "Friends of the Groton Recreation" with a separate board and create a Recreation Gift Fund at discretion of Recreation Commission.

Ms. Jenkins stated the need to be very careful regarding the raising of funds, check with Christine Collins.

Mr. Cotoni suggested they could look for sponsorship for T-shirts. Ms. Jenkins stated that was not a problem and suggested they could have the company directly pay for the shirts.

Ms. Strauss stated she had spoken with the President of Soccer Club they were figuring out how much owed to Town.

\$17,823 - Expense (program)

\$39,319 - Earnings

\$22,000 - Net Income

Total Town budget is \$34,000 (salary plus 7,000 expenses).

Adult exercise was a loser, most loses came from payroll.

Ms. Strauss talked about expanding the Recreation Commission and has people interested. She noted the Recreation Department had more expenses than the budget covered.

Ms. Jenkins reviewed budget sheet (enclosed herein): \$21,373 current deficit - no receipts, coming in for past seven (7) weeks, the last turnover was 7 weeks ago. Ms. Judge is currently holding \$2500; Ms. Jenkins is holding \$3000 in invoices (of which \$2100 is late bills); need to add \$3300 to deficit. True deficit is \$31,000 and approximately \$5600 is uncollected. Therefore there is a \$25,000 deficit.

Mr. Cotoni noted the Recreation Department needed to come up with a refund policy.

Ms. Jenkins stated they couldn't have operating costs come out of revolving account.

Ms. Judge noted she needed the Recreation Commissioners to help otherwise she can't do it alone.

In reply Mr. Hartnett stated she could not rely on Commissioners to always help. Ms. Judge, when suggested by Ms. Kitchen noted the senior program personnel can't do input. Mr. Cotoni suggested students could input information into computer (i.e. quick books).

Mr. Hartnett stated they would need to revoke revolving fund and make them a Town Department; next year may be too soon.

Ms. Judge stated last year she ran over \$100,000 worth of programs.

Mr. Dillon stated the Recreation Department is competing for the same programs with other organizations within Town, maybe we shouldn't have department. Ms. Judge noted other towns have a full recreation department.

Mr. Hartnett stated maybe it's time for Town to vote to see if Town wants a Recreation Department.

Mr. Webber asked what would we need for a Recreation Department?

Ms. Judge stated they would need a registrar (office help) at 20 hours a week and approximately, \$18,000 expenses and \$50,000 payroll.

Mr. Webber stated he felt personally the Town should have Recreation Department, but as a member of the Finance Committee he hated to see a deficit. The Town would need to vote to cover the deficit.

Mr. Hartnett stated the need to come up with a plan to make Recreation a Town Department and suggested the Park Department and Country Club be part of the plan.

Mr. Dillon stated the public needed to feel confident in Recreation, i.e. better controls. Mr. Saball stated the decision needs to be offered to the Town.

Mr. Cunningham felt that one of the fundamental purposes of a Town was to provide programs for its citizens and he felt there was support for Recreation. Ms. Wood didn't see Recreation as a function of Town government.

Ms. Jenkins stated there are other programs out there, we are not dependent on our Recreation Department: Twomi Center, Country Club, Youth Hockey, and Town Soccer. She felt it wasn't a necessity but an additional need.

Mr. Cotoni felt the Town needed a Recreation Department and programs for teens and the Town would do a disservice if not available. Ms. Strauss stated recreation provides other options besides athletic programs. Mr. Hartnett agreed it fills in a gap and stated there is a need. Mr. Webber stated the focus should be on kids and teens not adults.

Ms. Judge stated if Recreation decided to go ahead they would need support from Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Dillon stated they would not get support today from him, as they need to show plan and how it would be implemented.

Mr. Hartnett stated interest in selling Recreation department to Town and not to force it on someone else.

Ms. Wood asked what if they go ahead with Kids Kick and flag football; swimming is available at Country Club, which is another competing program.

Mr. Hartnett asked how could you justify Ms. Judge's salary for two (2) programs?

Mr. Webber asked if the Town got rid of department wouldn't some programs be picked up by others.

Mr. Hartnett noted the Kids Kick would be picked up by Soccer and Twomey Center could pick up other programs.

Mr. Dillon asked if others pick up Kids Kick and other programs, what programs offer?

Ms. Judge explained the Recreation Department is not just about individual programs it is about offering good High School and College jobs, social experience, and the ability to have programs offered in Town. Do you think it has social value?

Mr. Dillon stated this year other choices needed to be made, i.e. looking at schools, reducing budgets. Recreation would need to defend its plan and be and be convincing to go forward.

Ms. Wood moved to cover extra expenses in Ms. Valerie Jenkins's memo dated March 21, 2004, \$3,270 - not to exceed \$4,000. Seconded by? Unanimous vote.

Mr. Hartnett stated he would take responsibility to collect money for Holofcenter ice rent and money that is owed.

Ms. Jenkins stated the vendor had not sent a bill before it was asked for. Mr. Hartnett asked Ms. Jenkins to pay the bill.

Ms. Wood stated the need for Recreation to put a together a budget for Town Meeting showing - programs, expected revenue, anticipated deficit and it needs to be convincing.

Mr. Hartnett stated the Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen needed to be convinced on a plan. Ms. Wood stated they may want to have two plans to fall back on.

The Recreation Department will present the Board of Selectmen with a budget by Thursday, March 25, 2004.

Ms. Strauss will check with Youth Soccer regarding amount of money owed to the Town from the concession stand.

Meeting adjourned at 11:10 a.m. on a motion made by Mr. Dillon Seconded by Mr. Saball. 3 in favor, 2 absent (Cunningham and Wood).

Approved: _____
John L. Saball, Clerk

Respectfully submitted,
Kathleen Newell, Office Assistant
For Jean Kitchen, Administrative Officer

Date Approved: May 3, 2004

Attachments (3): Balance Sheet; Program by Program Year Comparison, and Handout from Recreation Department