



# Town of Burlington

Burlington Park and Recreation Commission

Minutes of Special Meeting

January 6, 2021

- **Call to Order**

Meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm

Commissioners also present: Delano, Dolzadelli, Mayes, Ronalter, Simonds, and Director Twomey

- **Minutes of November and December Meetings**

- November 12, 2020 Minutes approved (Ronalter, Delano) (Approved Unanimous)
- December 10, 2020 Minutes approved (Parente, Mayes) (Approved Unanimous)
- December 15, 2020 Minutes approved (Simonds, Dolzadelli) (Approved Unanimous)
- Motion: Move Johnnycake Mountain Park Discussion up to the next agenda item. (Dolzadelli, Parente) (Approved Unanimous)

- **Johnnycake Mountain Park Discussion**

- Chairman Stawartz: Apologized for any emotional comments that offended anyone. However, those comments should not take away from the actual facts that were brought to the meeting. Many of the comments made were based on facts regarding the handling of past practice and what has worked. Chairman Stawartz felt that things need to be straightforward. The Charter specifically states that the Town of Burlington hereby creates the Parks and Recreation Commission to establish recreation facilities and recreational programs for the residents of the Town of Burlington. Chairman Stawartz requested to understand how the BOS are interpreting the charter from Selectman Shafer.
  - First Selectman Shafer: Selectman have not officially had an opportunity to get together yet to discuss this. He has been able to speak with a few selectmen separately. Going into the meeting Selectman that First Selectman Shafer spoke with were very much supportive of what PRC had said in their letter and hoped things turned out different in the meeting, the tenor turned out differently. There would have allowed for a smooth transition to allow for PRC to do what you do best. There was no disagreement with that. Shafer was not able to talk with 2 of the selectmen, so he cannot give a decision. Residents asked First Selectman Shafer what the decision was prior to this meeting, Shafer replied saying they gave 2 meetings to residents to hear their input. They would like the Selectman to be able to reserve their next meeting to discuss this. Shafer believes the way forward from his point of view is a hybrid for an advisory group.
- Chairman Stawartz asked for everyone on the PRC commission to give their opinions on this matter.
- Pam Simonds: Acknowledged Chairman Stawartz apology, but was not offended, however some of the phrasing should have been different. Believes PRC needs to be involved in this effort because that's what we were created for. PRC is an open forum in which the public is welcome to come. We want citizens input. Commissioners are citizens as well. We want to hear voices from all sides. The concern regarding adding another subgroup is that it will result in less productivity. This is what PRC is here for and built for. IF everyone is in the room at the same time we can come to a compromise. PRC should be able to take this on and bring people into the meetings.
- Eric Mayes: Appreciates that apology that Chairman Stawartz gave. He wasn't offended but appreciates that things did spiral into a way we didn't want. Agrees with Simonds that PRC was created for this. There have been a number of things over the past couple of years that have been put to the side. Including the referendum. The referendum was for active recreation. The survey that was given stated a lot of passive recreation with active recreation uses. The commission is in a great place to use these tools, and the voters to move forward with this project. If residents are added to the committee, they should not have any affiliation with the property or surrounding properties, where they can directly benefit from it. Although they may have a passion for the property, they should not be the ones speaking for the entire town.



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- Chairman Stawartz brought up the referendum question. Should the Town of Burlington purchase 57.995 acres of land located at 130 Johnnycake Mountain Road in Burlington for \$1,675,000.00 for active recreational use or related municipal purposes? (Showned document: Votes: Yes 805, No 526)
- Liz Delano: Agrees with Simonds and Mayes. Delano was born and raised here. Her favorite memories are hikes throughout town. The group of PRC are a true representation of the town. We represent all facets. We joined because we are so passionate about it, maybe to a fault. Our only motive is to make our Parks and Recreation more enjoyable for all residents. The committee with the conjunction of the citizens can make a beautiful park. PRC can create a park that encompasses all the needs for the community. PRC is capable of making this.
- Jimena Dolzadelli: Was a resident of Johnnycake. Feels why the residents are concerned. Likes the idea of a hybrid to bring a balanced roster of PRC members, Johnnycake Residents, and Non-Johnnycake Residents. The town or the area may have changed quite a bit in the last 4.5 years, so their opinions may have changed. We need to be open to listen to their needs and fears. There needs to be an aggressive timeline where things need to happen, so that this doesn't take another 4.5 years. At the BOS meeting, Jimena was shocked at some of the comments that were made. We are all here to do the same thing.
- Christa Ronalter: When members go through the process of getting on a commission, members are vetted through the BOS. PRC members have gone through that process. Maybe add 3 residents to the group, to compromise with Twomey being a liaison. We need to move forward for the betterment of the town.
- Bill Parente: The focus of the referendum was for athletic fields. We recognized we have a shortcoming of fields. We have plans for 1 field and have had multiple locations on where to put it. We are here through the charter and BOS to create the facilities. We have an open forum that people can come to. We are not trying to slip things through. If you make this referendum as specific as you can, all issues go away. Putting fields should not offend anyone.
- Director Twomey: Understands the criticism and feedback that we've gotten. It has been 4.5 years and I feel the frustration as well. We are all on the same page, it's just a matter of how we get it done. Twomey like Tom Finan's comments at the last BOS meeting. He came to every design meeting originally and said that residents could only speak at the top of the meeting. Twomey said that does need to change. The meetings have to incorporate more public comment and feedback. Twomey does believe PRC should be able to lead the discussion with residents included.

- **Public Comment**

- Dwight Harris: Curious what is a good size building for park equipment? Because 10,000 square feet seems to be too much. You have to go before Planning and Zoning and it would be good to have as many people on board as possible. Adjacent property owners have some priority rights with development. Dwight does not believe anyone is against a playing field. It's wrong to assume people don't want playing facilities. What does establish mean as far as the charter? Do you have the credentials for the design? I think you may have credentials for programming, but not for design. People want transparency. Public Works is saying that they need 10,000 square feet. I do think you need to include more people. You would be more successful. Ice Skating is an active activity, and you don't have a good program up there. You need to have a transparent process now to avoid problems later. We could get 50 signatures to call a public meeting. It would be helpful to note what went wrong with the first meeting, will help. Posting minutes on time would also be helpful. Dwight was unable to prepare for this meeting due to the minutes not being posted. Shutting out the public is not the right answer.



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- Director Twomey acknowledged that the minutes were late. Due to being out sick with COVID, the minutes were not posted on time.
- Paul Stawartz: One of the reasons why the last design committee wasn't as successful, is that the whole PRC was not included in the last design. And that is a frustration that the entire commission feels. That's what we are here for. We are here to represent the group. The commission was not included as it should have been. Everyone on our commission is well intended. The exclusion they felt during the last design is what we'd like to change moving forward. In terms of expertise; using past practice such as creating Malerbo. We created a forum for everyone to come and speak. All organizations were able to come. We're able to work with engineers and town staff to make this work. We know the BOS will have the final say. We wouldn't overstep our bounds on what we know or don't know.
- Jen Thompson: If you choose to keep Johnnycake passive, Lacrosse still doesn't have a home. And that is pretty frustrating. If it does remain that way, can we adjust how fields are split up. We have equipment stored in multiple different locations, and that's fine for a start-up, but our league is no longer a start up. I was hoping that Johnnycake would be a home for lacrosse, but I'm hearing that may not be happening.
  - Director Twomey: Our hope is to make Johnnycake a home for lacrosse. We talked about 1 field during phase 1, but in all of our drawings we had 2-3 fields up there. The storage that Dwight had mentioned wouldn't just be for public works equipment, but also for parks and recreation and Lacrosse. Just like Malerbo houses equipment for soccer and Nassahegan for baseball, we would like for there to be space available for lacrosse. It doesn't work for a large league to have equipment in multiple different locations.
  - Jen Thompson: How can we allocate field space better until the fields are built?
  - Twomey: It will come before this commission again, and we can work on that.
  - Bill Parente: We are still able to have town staff and departments heads involved to help especially with Land use boards and commissions. It won't just be the 7 of us sitting at the table making the plans. It's never been like that and won't work. Do we have numbers from lacrosse?
  - Twomey: I just requested that from all leagues, so I will have numbers in the next couple of days.
  - Jen Thompson: Yes, I have numbers and information from Chris that I can forward you as well.
- Twomey: Wants to clarify regarding the maintenance shed. We have always said we wanted to use Barn C for maintenance equipment. We are using the existing building, we are not trying to build it bigger. It will be used for Public Works, Parks and Recreation and Lacrosse or sports. We are not moving Public Works up to Johnnycake.
- Stawartz: All members will be at the next meeting for BOS. Ted you'll be talking about Johnnycake design at your next BOS meeting on Tuesday?
- Shafer: Yes. We are working on getting data points collected as well. Shafer is working with Superintendent regarding numbers of kids moving into town. Also working on info from real estate brokers. I think you're on the right track with this discussion. I'm interested if you have any other data points that should be considered.
- Stawartz: I think tonight was about seeing where the dust settled from last meeting and you're able to see everyone on our commission's opinion. 56.51



## Town of Burlington

- **Financial Report**

- Currently at 40% of budget
- 100% revenue returned to town

- **Winter Programs**

- Santa Letters: 108 Letters done this year
- Santa Caravan: 97 children came. Thank you to the library and fire department!
- Holiday Light Winners: Listed on our website. Average scores were used to make a fair contest. Next year, we will look to include more posters in common areas around town.
- Candy Cane Caper: Will use more visible candy canes next year. 11 participants.
- Brush and Pallet: Penguins for winter, Valentines day painting coming up
- Ski Club: did not run this year due to less interest in a scaled down version of the program
- Red Cross Babysitting: Online now
- Gymnastics Classes: Virtual online starting in February
- Virtual Art Ventures Classes: Online starting in February
- Take Home Kits: Working on this for different themes, for pick up and take home
- Juke Box Bingo: Date TBD, for Burlington and Harwinton Residents
- Photography Class online: Working on this.
- Project Graduation: Community Raffle is coming out soon! Look Out!
- Region 10 CWC: Meeting tomorrow at 4pm for teens on zoom, virtual focus group to understand how COVID has effected underage substance abuse.
- Winter Carnival: Cancelled due to Covid, unless things change rapidly.
- Director Twomey discussed the winter programs. All programs can be found at [myburlingtonrec.com](http://myburlingtonrec.com)

- **COVID 19 Updates**

- DECD sector rules: organized team sports still on hold until January 19<sup>th</sup>
- Spring sports need to start registration process. As long as the state is allowing play, Burlington will allow play following sector rules, and Town Policy Covid Rules that are very similar to fall 2020.
  - Eric Mayes: Trying to avoid mass refunds for soccer. Getting the updated waiver from the town is big so it's online before registration. CJSA still has to give more info for the spring season as well. Organizations are just trying to open registration.



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- **Any Other Business**

- Jimena Dolzadelli: Why do we not have a facebook page?
- Twomey: We do have an Instagram account. Social Media is a goal for 2021. I'm starting off with Instagram, and will funnel into Facebook as I get comfortable.
- More discussion followed.

- **Adjourn**

- Motion to adjourn (Mayes/Simonds), unanimous, 8:24pm

Respectfully submitted, Tricia Twomey