

Parks & Recreation Commission Regular Meeting
Thursday, December 14, 2023 - 8 PM at the JHCC

In Attendance:

Mike Jacobs (this evening's chair), Gene Calamari, Josh Dean, Aaron Drahushuk, Amy Listerman, Angela Reeve. Absent is Joanne Baecher-DiSalvo (chair). A quorum is in order.

Also in Attendance: Aaron Podhurst (Superintendent).

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order

Mike Jacobs welcomed Josh Dean as our new P&R Commissioner and thanked Aaron Golembiewski for his years of volunteer service to this board. Josh replaces Aaron G who stepped down in November.

2. Public Comment

None.

3. Old Business

- Approve November meeting minutes -
after clarifying the parks assigned to Aaron Drahushuk, the November minutes are approved.
- Zinsser Community Gardens - update
Aaron P and Brooks Ballard updated the Commission, pointing out that another community cleanup was held and well attended (15-20 gardeners). As a result of the two fall community cleanups, approximately 10 new plots were assigned and there still remain 10 plots to be reassigned. It is hoped that a couple of the larger unassigned plots can be subdivided. Brooks noted that there is one very large plot in the middle where we hope to figure out some drainage issues (gardeners are discussing if trenching could improve the drainage) and then this plot is large enough to be subdivided. Brooks shared he has been chatting with a few of the senior gardeners who have expressed that the annual upkeep, and carting of the tools and supplies is getting more challenging and they are wondering about the possibility of sharing plots (allowing them to share the tools and upkeep among a few of them, which would be more physically manageable). Commissioners thought this would be a great idea. Brooks expressed that the gardeners seem happy with the progress and Aaron P acknowledged that Nicole Higgins (Rec

dept) has been maintaining contact and staying involved with moving things forward at the gardens.

-Skate park - update

The Rivertown Skate Society (formerly HoH Skate) held a fall fundraiser (Big Air Skate Scare, Oct 22) at the commuter parking lot. Unfortunately, the group fell short of their fundraising goal for that event, which was disappointing as it is a significant volunteer effort to plan/organize and deliver these events. The skate group is trying to be creative in how to move fundraising forward.

Mike points out that our first discussions of a skate park started about 7 years ago when cost estimates were about \$55 per square foot. We can all imagine that the construction costs have increased. We perhaps need to go back to the Village and see if they would be able to commit more funds to this project.

Josh Dean points out that the skate group is exploring grants and notes that to really “move the needle forward” we will need a “big lift.” Josh has offered to go back to the contractors to see if he can get a handle on what more current costs/pricing for the project.

Gene again suggested the 9A parcel might be of interest to sell it back to developers – that could result in a “pot” of funds that could then be used to further projects that have been identified as a priority in the Village.

Amy asked if any new developments are earmarked for the Village where an “ask” of recreation fees might be a reasonable consideration.

To recap on the funding of the skate park project: The Village has committed \$150,000 and to date the skate group has raised \$50,000. The initial cost estimates (pre-COVID) were \$250 - \$300k.

4. New Business

- Upcoming/New Programs/Special Events

For complete details on current Recreation Department program offerings, visit: <https://www.hastingsgov.org/parks-and-recreation-department>

For young children:

>Basketball (ages pre-K & K) in conjunction with A1 Athletics (Tuesdays in January)

>Games & Activities (ages pre-K & K) in conjunction with A1 Athletics - an introduction to sports with a variety of age appropriate games and activities. (Wednesdays in January)

For school aged children:

>Afterschool Program at Hillside - Winter Session Jan 8 - Feb 16 - grades K-4th.

>Winter Break Lunch & Movie - (ages 5yrs & up) Dec 27 @ JHCC

For the community:

>12th Annual Community Celebration Breakfast honoring Dr. Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. (Mon, Jan 15) @ JHCC. This year's breakfast is being co-chaired by Raf Zaratzian and Lisa O'Reilly.

- Superintendent's report

Uniontown has been aerated and seeded.

Draper - exterior painting has been completed, and interior painting/repair work. Roof damage at the Historical Society - BoT approved those repairs are now underway. Mike (also on the Draper Park committee) noted that the area of bldg materials, old cars, trash, are on the radar to be cleaned up.

Hillside Tennis courts are still in use (unusually warm weather).

Village purchased trees in October (BYGO) and 6 are planned to be set at Mt Hope, two behinds the Hillside Tennis Courts, 1 going near the kiosk at start of path, 1 in the area by the tennis courts, and 2 in LeFurgy Park.

Seniors - calendar. Great presentation from Westchester County Dept of Transportation, nice wreath making workshop, dance recital (MK Kupillas dance came in), looking forward to winter concert and dinner at HHS.

- 2023 Parks & Recreation Department Accomplishments

Included as Appendix A to these meeting minutes, provided by Aaron Podhurst (Superintendent)

- Hillside Woods - update

The damaged section of deer enclosure fencing has been repaired. Discussions are still underway regarding the “deer drive.” Aaron P shared a draft of new signage noting “Hillside Woods Restoration Project.”

- Capital projects priorities -

Mike J and Aaron P facilitated a discussion as to our most recent listing of the Capital Project Priorities. In going through the list, Commissioners have identified some updates they would like to see noted before voting on the top 5 priorities for FY 2024-2025. As a result of tonight’s discussion, here are some items to note:

- 1- Skate Park - all Commissioners present felt this project should remain #1. As noted from this evening’s discussions, Josh Dean offered to research more current project costs/pricing.
- 2- Rowley’s Bridge Extension Trail - Commissioners noted this should drop out of the top 5, urgency rating remains low.
- 3- Dog Park - there was discussion as to whether this project should remain in the top 5. As Joanne pointed out at last month’s Commission meeting and in her email to the Commission this week, community interest in a dog park has seemed to drop off the radar. Amy pointed out that many residents regard Draper Park as an (unofficial) dog park and pointed out that many residents frequent Hillside Woods as a destination with their dogs. Angela noted that this Commission has long since discussed that to best ensure the success of the Hillside Woods restoration project, and to reclaim the field at Draper Park as Rec Dept programming space, that the idea was to create a legitimate (permitted and regulation) dog park so that we could more readily enforce the “no dogs off leash” at our various Village public spaces.
- 4- Uniontown basketball court & pickleball court - project has been completed and can be removed from the Capital Priorities list.
- 5 - Uniontown - create access to the back of the park - this project is near completion, noting there is still the issue of Veola and the water main that needs to be resolved.

Gene pointed out that some of the items further down on the list can now move up in priority (specifically those pertaining to the maintenance and upkeep of the James Harmon Community Center). These items are “low hanging fruit” in that they would be reasonable investments to preserve assets that have high value and usage in the community.

Feedback was shared from Joanne’s email. Commissioners acknowledged that Joanne has been asking us to think about MacEachron Park for some time now. That park could really use some thought and attention. Aaron P indicated to the

Commission that the Board of Trustees have identified MacEachron Park as an area to receive funding in the “Village Capital Plan, FY 2023-2024 to FY 2027-2028” See page 13 of the document, accessed on the Village website here:

https://www.hastingsgov.org/sites/g/files/vyhli7561/f/uploads/capital_plan_9-18-23.pdf

NEXT STEPS regarding the Capital Projects Priority List: Commissioners asked Aaron P if he could go through the priority list item by item to update the “status” column of each project. Commissioners are asked to come to January’s meeting prepared to identify and vote on the Commission’s Top 5 Capital Priorities for FY 2024-2025.

- Conservation Commission - liaison’s report

Amy Listerman (liaison) indicated that the Commission has not met yet. Angela asked if the area off of SMRP exit 12 (where the new trees have been planted) might be considered in the Commission’s Capital Projects Priorities (ie... fencing around the area to protect the new plantings from the deer). The question arose to who actually owns that land/parcel (?Westchester County) and Amy L offered to investigate.

5. Adjournment

December Meeting Minutes prepared by A. Reeve

December Meeting Minutes approved on: January 11, 2024

Appendix A - 2023 Accomplishments for Parks & Recreation Department

Special Events:

- **Rev Dr. Martin Luther King Jr Breakfast** (Jan 16) - A moving and inspiring celebration (virtual in 2021 - 2023). Heading up the event scheduled for January 15, 2024 are Lisa O'Reilly and Raf Zaratzian.
- **Downtown Egg Hunt** (Apr 8) - in conjunction with the Hastings PBA, Hastings children ages 3-8yrs old were invited to hunt for eggs throughout the Village (lawns at VFW Park, Hastings Public Library and Village Hall).
- **Village-Wide Clean Up** (Apr 22-23) -take pride in Hastings, a neat place to live!
- **Drug Take Back** (Apr 22) - in conjunction with the Hastings Police Department, and The WAY coalition, this semi-annual event has resulted in the collection of 178 pounds of unused medication to date.
- **Arbor Day** (Apr 23) - the trees we enjoyed over the 2022 holiday season were planted in the Village.
- **Spring Thing, Get Your Green On** (Apr 23) - hosted in conjunction with Destination Hastings and the Village Conservation Commission, the 2023 theme focused on green initiatives. Music, food, and many interactive activities for the whole family.
- **Memorial Day Parade** (May 28) - beloved Village tradition coordinated by Hastings Rec with special thanks to the Hastings Fire Department and all those who march together to honor the lives lost while defending out country.
- **Friday Night Pride** (Jun 9) - hundreds came to kick off June Pride Month and celebrate and strengthen Hastings as a community of love and equity.
- **Sunset Concert Series at MacEachron Waterfront Park** (Jul 11, 18, 25) - free Tuesday evening summer concerts always well attended and enjoyed by all.
- **Hastings on Jazz Sunday Afternoons** (Jun 4 - Aug 20) at VFW Park
- **Friday Night Live Oktoberfest** (Oct 13) hosted in conjunction with the Hastings Volunteer Fire & Ambulance Departments - Every year, this event seems to get better and better. Live music, food and drink, activities, and late night for shops and galleries.

- **Halloween Happenings** (Oct 21, 22, 27) - The Recreation Department is in high gear in October bringing beloved community events to the Village, including Annual Window Painting, Family Pumpkin Carving & Scarecrow Building, Pet Parade, and the Friday Night Live Spooktacular event featuring live music, food, trunk or treat, carnival games and activities.
- **Veterans Day** (Nov 11) - Veterans were honored with a ceremony at the VFW Park. This year, the Recreation Department worked with the American Legion to establish a new Hastings tradition. 50 beautiful military banners were created and displayed on the lamp posts throughout the Village. Each banner features a photo of a military member with the history of their service.
- **22nd Annual Terry Ryan Memorial Run** (Nov 12) - organized and run by the Recreation Department, over 150 runners participated this year.
- **Toy drive** (Nov & Dec) - as in years past, the Recreation Department supports the local Toys for Tots Westchester toy drive.
- **Hastings Holiday Celebration** - The Parks & Rec staff devise new and beautiful ways to adorn the Village in celebration of the holiday season. This year's message of hometown beauty and togetherness was conveyed with decorations at VFW Park and alleyway, including beautiful archways, a 12-foot tree featured at the Community Tree Lighting, and a special message. "What a wonderful world." displayed beautifully on (2) 8-foot wooden stands, with the song lyrics "I see friends shaking hands, Saying, "How do you do? "They're really saying I love you." The Recreation Department also sponsored a variety of December programs, including Drop & Shop Movie Nights, Family Movie Night, Hot Chocolate Sing-Along at VFW Park, Kids Holiday Boutique, Family Candy House Creations, Winter Sing-Along, etc.
- **The Kids Holiday Boutique** (Dec 5, 6) - a new tradition proudly organized by the Recreation Department and held at the James Harmon Community Center. This was an opportunity for kids to come to the Rec center and shop in the kids-only boutique for gifts for their families. In lieu of monetary payment, the kids were asked to "pay it forward" by pledging to commit to acts of kindness. Over 75 youth shoppers participated and a special thanks is extended to the anonymous donor who provided all the gifts.
- **Family Candy House Creations** (Dec 9) - After receiving a huge candy donation from the Temple's Halloween candy collection, the Recreation staff organized a fun family activity that was a huge success and will be added to future holiday celebrations.

- **Winter Celebration Sing-Along** (Dec 10) - this year's annual event featured Adam Hart and Justin Keller to lead us in an array of holiday favorites at the JHCC.
- **Holiday Pet Photos with Santa** (Dec 9) - a new addition to the Village's holiday celebration line up, pet owners were invited to bring their furry friends to visit Santa at VFW park for photos. The event provided much enjoyment for families, pets, and pedestrians passing by.
- **Sandy Hook Remembrance** (Dec) - in remembrance of the lives lost during the Sandy Hook tragedy of December 14, 2012, the Recreation Department presents a display of wooden doves bearing the names of the 26 souls lost with a banner saying, "Always in our Hearts."

Programs and Activities

- **Afterschool programs** - Hillside afterschool programs offer a variety of 3-4 programs a day, five days per week in a Fall, Winter, and Spring session. A new and popular program offering is HoH Spanish Lab for grades K-4.
- **Middle school programs** - included Mad Science, yoga, roller coaster design, and flag football. Feedback has been positive and we look to grow programming for middle schoolers.
- **Adult Painting Classes** - a fun new program offered to residents.
- **Pickleball clinics** - introductory clinics were very successful and future programming is being planned.
- **Hillside Nature Walks** - in conjunction with the Village Conservation Commission, a variety of nature walks, and series of events were planned and delivered to grow awareness and appreciation for Hillside Woods. Over 50 different activities/walks were delivered in 2023.
- **Little Kickers /Multi-Sports** - multi sport introductory program offered in a fall session and a separate spring session for children ages 2-4yrs old.
- **Village-wide Tag Sale** - we hosted both a fall and a spring tag sale with over 70 households participating.
- **Hastings Day Camp** - our beloved traditional day camp returned in full swing with use of the Hastings UFSD facilities and our Chemka Pool facilities. All

COVID restrictions having been lifted, the Rec Department was able to deliver a full array of engaging programming that served on average 300 campers per day. The Hastings Day Camp is permitted by the Westchester County Department of Health who acknowledge two successful inspections of the program and properties. 2023 was a safe and fun summer for all.

- **Youth Track** - both fall and spring sessions are consistently a popular and successful offering.
- **Hastings Rec Basketball program** - in early 2023, the Recreation Department bid “happy retirement” to Steve Tuber and Jodie Meyer for over 20 years of volunteer service in running the Hastings Rec basketball program. While they will be sorely missed, their weekends will be spent in the company of their dear grandchildren. The Recreation department thanks Jeremy Hopwood for stepping into the role of Rec basketball commissioner. The 2023-2024 season kicks off with 150 youth players.
- **Narcan training** - Narcan and Overdose Prevention training was held in conjunction with The WAY coalition. The training included how to identify the symptoms of an overdose, ways to prevent an overdose, what to do and what not to do when someone overdoses, and how to administer Narcan. Free narcan kits were provided after the class. This year, we also trained local business owners and their employees. This training is needed, and we will host more this coming year.
- **Self-defense class** - this 2-hour training taught participants (ages 16yrs and older) how to first avoid dangerous situations, as well as provided hands-on training with practical skills to defend oneself in a dangerous situation. More trainings will be offered in the future.
- **Coding Class** - The Recreation Department partnered with a local resident to offer coding classes and vacation camps at the JHCC. The program was popular and well attended.
- **Preschool classes** - a variety of themes are explored during our preschool classes that usually feature a story, followed by an age appropriate activity/craft.
- **Back-to-school movie night** - drop off program held at the JHCC where children could enjoy pizza and a movie with friends while their parents attended the Hastings Back to School Night events. The program was successful and Rec plans to offer these events in the future.

Seniors:

The Village's part-time Senior Advocate, Anne Russak, is busy year round planning and delivering a variety of programs, trips, and activities to our resident seniors. She additionally provides seniors with assistance with medical insurance, housing, or transportation needs and is a key resource for our seniors with their every day needs.

- **Exercise classes** - are offered weekdays year round and help to keep our seniors active and socially engaged with peers.
- **Current Events** - Led by Steve Pucillo, a group of ten to fifteen seniors meet weekly at the community center to discuss world/local topics.
- **Senior Walks** - fun weekly walks that occur at various outdoor locations in the Rivertown's (some examples include Tarrytown Lakes, Irvington Aqueduct, etc)
- **Transportation (Senior Van)** - transportation for weekly shopping trips, Rec sponsored activities and programs including our senior parties and senior luncheons.
- **Trips** - our senior advocate continues to come up with fun, safe new places for the seniors to visit (examples include lunch at Arthur Avenue, The Katonah Museum, or the Casino).
- **Senior Parties** - these highly festive affairs are always well-attended, full of laughter, have excellent entertainment, and fabulous food.
- **Informational Talks** - periodic guest speakers present information of interest to our seniors.
- **Are You Okay?** list - created by the Recreation Department after Superstorm Sandy. The list is continually updated and maintained and has served as a key resource for our Recreation Department to check in on our seniors during times of emergencies. During COVID-19, the recreation staff made daily calls to Village seniors providing a vital sense of connection during this time of isolation.

James Harmon Community Center

- **Blood Drives** - in partnership with the American Red Cross, the Village hosts community blood drives at the JHCC. Year to date, we have potentially impacted 822 lives!
- **Room rentals** - have resumed post-COVID and are available to rent for baby showers, birthdays, and more.
- **Meetings** - the JHCC serves as a key public meeting space for the community
- **Local organizations** - We continue to support local groups and organizations throughout the Village in any way we can.
- **Election Polling Place** - We continue to be a safe place for voting.
- **Support the Youth Advocate** - We continue to support the food pantry and the Youth Advocate Program (YAP) in any way we can.

Parks

- **Upkeep and maintenance**- the Parks Staff work very hard year round cleaning and maintaining the Village parks, playgrounds, ball fields, trails, and facilities.
- **MacEachron Park** - coir logs were installed to help reduce the erosion of the shoreline in addition to replenishing rip rap where necessary to stabilize the shoreline. Administration of DEC grant.
- **Hillside Woods - deer enclosure** - installed 5,000 linear feet of deer enclosure fencing that included two vehicle gates and seven "S" gates. The Parks staff have done repairs to the perimeter fence in the demo area at Hillside Woods.
- **Hillside Woods - storm water mitigation** - Sugar Pond / culvert repairs and storm water mitigation measures installed.
- **Hillside Tennis courts** - repaired and repainted all tennis courts. Installed new nets.
- **Riverview Park** - Parks staff painted / refreshed lines for the pickleball court as well as replenished the clay for bocce court.

- **Uniontown Park** - several improvements were made at Uniontown this year, including:
 - Establishing vehicle access to the back of the park by removing dirt and rock that allowed us to widen the path/road
 - Improving the drainage of the basketball/pickleball court
 - Installation of a stormwater infiltration system to catch water that runs off the hillside and prevent that from flowing onto the ballfield
 - Tree work included pruning and removing trees from the work/construction area.
 - Note, a superficial water main was discovered during the work which required an access road to be built.
 - Installed a new subsurface and asphalt.
 - The court was painted for both basketball and pickleball. (Full court basketball, two pickleball courts with movable nets).
 - Uniontown field improvements included adding clay, performing maintenance to the irrigation system, and aeration and seeding of the grassy areas.

- **Zinsser Park** - field improvements included replenishing clay, performing maintenance to the irrigation system, and aeration and seeding of the grassy areas.

- **Zinsser Community Gardens** - Parks crew provided initial clean up and the Recreation Department has established a partnership with some of the gardeners to help organize community garden clean up events. Plots that are abandoned or neglected are being reassigned to residents to make a significant reduction in the “wait list” for plots.

- **Quarry Park** - electricity was installed in the park, as was a water meter and backflow preventer for the irrigation system. A bicycle rack was added to the park entrance. The water bags on all the trees were filled.

- **Quarry Park Trail** - Maintenance and repair of the trail is ongoing. Landscaping and weeding is ongoing.

- **Tree plantings in the Village** - many trees were planted throughout the Village, some in observance of Arbor Day. The Parks staff water and care for the trees.

- **Chemka Pool Facility** - after a season of closure in 2022 as a result of tropical storm Ida damage, the Chemka Pool reopened in 2023 after significant upgrades and repairs, including:
 - New equipment in filter room
 - Built staircase for access to filter room
 - New chemical bulk storage transfer station installed.
 - Roof repairs were made to the bath house, including a living “green roof” installation.
 - Repairs were made to the wood culvert on the bath house.
 - Painted interior and exterior of the bath house, including all walls, floors, and the filter room.
 - New pool sign was installed.
 - New plantings installed at the entrance.
 - Leak remediation of the training pool and main pool which included a tiled perimeter of the main pool.
 - Repaired the main pool stairs.

- **Draper Park** - repairs and improvements were made to the interior and exterior of the Historical Society cottage and nearby Doll House (including painting, window repairs, patio repairs, carpentry).

- **Spotted Lantern Fly** - the Village hired and trained a seasonal employee to combat the spread of the spotted lantern fly through use of a battery powered backpack vacuum.

- **Purchased new field groomer** - the Village purchased a new field groomer with 50% of the funding being supplied by the Hastings Little League.