

**RECREATION MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
FRIDAY, May 15, 2020, 7:00 AM**

Pursuant to Gov. Baker's Executive Order dated March 12, 2020 modifying the requirements of the Open Meeting Law, the Recreation Master Plan Steering Committee, to ensure the safety of all participants, held its meeting remotely via Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82645128553>, Meeting ID: 826 4512 8553.

Members present: Alex Cobb, Trevor MacDonald, Michelle Callanan, Kristin Barbieri, Melissa Crocker, Charlie Hipwood, Mark Ferris, Ben Polimer, Mike McGrath, Pete Foley, Christopher Fitzgerald.

Members absent: John Powers

The meeting started at 7:05 AM.

Resident Comments: None

Minutes: The minutes from the April 10 meeting were reviewed and approved.

Updated School Committee warrant article for feasibility including field hous and middle school pool.

An updated article was circulated prior to the meeting (Attachment 1). Mr. Cobb explained that the article was written to better-show the full scope of feasibility being sought. Many projects have already been identified in the School Facilities long term plan for maintenance and upgrades. The language for the Recreation Master Plan (RMP) items have a clearer reference to the intent of those projects within the Master Plan; feasibility of these projects is intended to explore in more detail, which was also referenced within the RMP. Mr. Cobb also explained in more detail how the other projects identified in the article were related.

A discussion took place regarding the potential for the article to get pulled prior to Town Meeting (still no date as of this meeting), parts of the bill being removed or amended, if School Committee might change depending on the political environment, timing, etc.

Motion: To support the School Committee warrant article requesting a sum of money for feasibility studies at the High School and Middle School Campuses.

Motion - Mr. Cobb, second - Mr. Hipwood.

Roll call vote: Mr. Hipwood – yes; Mr. Cobb – yes; Ms. Barbieri – yes; Ms. Crocker – yes; Ms. Callanan – yes; Mr. MacDonald – yes; Mr. Ferris – yes.

Motion carries unanimously.

Discussion on Op-Eds in local media critical of the RMP

Ms. Barbieri and Ms. Crocker discussed an opinion letter that they submitted to the Town Crier in rebuttal to a previous letter from Finance Committee that was critical of the Master Plan, which can be read in the May 14, 2020 edition of the Weston Town Crier.

The RMPSC further discussed a desire to meet with the Select Board and formally present the RMP to the town, and perhaps drafting an article on behalf of the RMPSC to explain the RMP, better explain the process that was taken, and highlight the major conclusions. Mr. Fitzgerald was tasked with getting a spot on a future Select Board agenda and Mr. MacDonald was asked to work with Mr. Fitzgerald in drafting an article for the local media.

Burchard Park Maintenance

A memo to the RMPSC requesting maintenance assistance at Burchard Park was circulated prior to the meeting (Attachment 2). Baseball had to refund all enrollments for the spring and did not get any sponsorship money because of COVID 19 and therefore has limited funds to keep operating. The maintenance contractor for Burchard Park has cut back drastically on what is being done out there.

The request is currently being circulated among the appropriate management areas within the town, potential hurdles include being so far along in budgeting for FY 21. Options were discussed including using town staff and/or volunteer staff to help with various items. Mr. Fitzgerald and Mr. Polimer were asked to continue pursuing this through Town administration with a goal of having a more robust role for the town by FY 22.

Field and Grounds Report – Mr. Polimer presented the field and grounds report available in Attachment 3.

Next meeting – Friday, June 19, 7 AM.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:32 AM.

Attachment 1: Warrant Article

ARTICLE xx: APPROPRIATE FOR HIGH SCHOOL/MIDDLE SCHOOL CAMPUS MASTER PLAN STUDY

To appropriate a sum of money to pay costs for a series of feasibility studies at the High School and Middle School Campuses, as well as all incidental costs related thereto, to be spent under the direction of the Town Manager, the money so appropriated to be transferred from available funds (free cash); or take any other action relative thereto. These studies will include a clear distinction between basic infrastructure requirements that are “level service” in nature and improvements that are “discretionary” and go beyond level service. The results of each of these studies will be provided to the town so that residents can have sufficient information to make clear choices.

Article xx Explanation:

This article proposes funding for a series of interconnected feasibility studies for properties under the control of the Weston School Department. The High School and Middle School campus is served by a wastewater treatment plant and has wetlands on several parts of the property. Any renovations, changes or proposed additions need to take these limiting factors into account. The School Committee and School Administration believe that these feasibility studies are the most responsible way for the Town and Facilities Department to plan for the maintenance and potential improvement of this important town asset. In the past, residents and the Finance Committee have asked for more visibility on what major projects may be coming down the pike. These studies will help provide this transparency.

These studies are a result of several factors: the need to plan for long term renovations of the High School and the Middle School, unsafe traffic and parking conditions at both schools, and other ideas and concepts that were generated by the Recreation Master Plan Steering Committee’s new 10-year Master Plan. This Committee is a standing committee charged by the Select Board with updating and publishing a new Master Plan every ten years. This committee includes elected representatives from the Recreation Commission and the School Committee, as well as youth sports representatives, town and school staff and At-Large members appointed by the Select Board. These are feasibility studies – they are not formal proposals nor are they requests for design or construction funds. Weston residents will have multiple opportunities to evaluate the design and potential costs of any projects that result from these studies. The new Master Plan can be found here: <https://www.weston.org/1342/Recreation-Master-Plan>

Projects include but are not limited to:

“Level Service” items that would include:

A - Renovations of the High School gym, locker rooms, auditorium, music practice rooms, offices and cafeteria. The auditorium is due for renovation at some point in the next several years. The high school gym locker rooms do not meet current needs and standards. Coordinated planning for this wing of the High School is prudent.

B - Renovations of the current Middle School pool, gym and locker rooms. The pool was constructed in the late 1960's with a major renovation in 1990 and other minor repairs over its lifetime. The Recreation Master Plan Steering Committee engaged Weston & Sampson to conduct a facility assessment of the pool as part of the Recreation Master Plan. They concluded that the pool is reaching its life expectancy and will most likely require approximately \$100,000 to \$300,000 in reinvestment within the next several years to keep it in compliance with code requirements and to meet the needs of the Town.

C – Adjusting traffic patterns to resolve congestion and safety issues. Increasing parking capacity and pedestrian safety for school and town usage. Supporting handicap parking needs. Evaluating the feasibility of solar canopies over certain parking lots. Evaluating the possibility for electric vehicle charging (including school buses.)

D - Creating a driveway loop behind the Middle School with handicap access and parking to improve access and increase the utilization of four natural grass fields - 7, 8, 9 and 10 on this map: <https://www.westonschools.org/high/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2017/03/AthleticsFieldMap.jpg>

“Discretionary enhancements” which could include:

E – Location, sizing and massing of a new, larger pool with a separate diving well. The Recreation Master Plan Steering Committee identified a need for a larger facility to handle current demands from the high school and recreation (Red Waves) teams. The high school team is large and is forced to practice in two shifts after school. The diving team regularly practices in other facilities due to crowding. The Recreation program also practices in multiple evening shifts. The later start time at the high school and the middle school have pushed these Red Waves practices even later into the evening for these elementary-aged children.

F – The possibility of locating a new multi-purpose “field house” building on the campus which could include indoor courts (basketball, tennis, pickleball) and could also be used for baseball, lacrosse, soccer and indoor track. The Recreation Master Plan Steering Committee did not identify an immediate, high priority need for a facility like this but noted that this could be a building that residents might demand in the future. During the master planning process in the fall of 2019, evening sports were cancelled as a result of EEE (Eastern Equine Encephalitis.). The School Committee was approached several years ago by a private donor who was interested in funding the construction of a facility like this on the campus. The School Committee believes that it would be prudent to spend a small amount of feasibility money to determine whether it would even be possible to locate a facility like this on the campus, or whether another location would be required. The Master Plan also recommended investigating whether indoor facilities at local private schools and organizations can be used to accommodate the unmet needs of school and Town-based youth athletic teams, ideally as part of the Town’s Payment In Lieu of Taxes/Services In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT/SILOT) initiative.

The feasibility of utilizing the existing wastewater treatment plant in conjunction with these renovations, changes and potential improvements will be considered. Each of these feasibility studies

will be considered within the overall long-term maintenance and renovation plans for the High School and Middle School.

This article has been recommended by the School Committee and the amount to be requested under this article is \$100,000.

Attachment 2: Memo re: Burchard Park.

To: Recreation Committee Master Plan Steering Committee
From: Charlie Hipwood
Date: May 7, 2020
Re: Burchard Maintenance

Burchard Park History

Burchard Park ("Burchard") was created in Phase 1b of the previous Recreation Committee Master Plan. Construction began in September 2007 and was completed in July 2008. The total cost of creating 3 new baseball fields, 2 new softball fields, and the snack shack/bathroom facility, tennis courts, and a basketball court came to approximately \$2.52 million and was funded by private donations. Additionally, private donors purchased lights for Burchard at a cost of \$160,000, but Weston Little League donated them to the high school baseball facility.

In addition to baseball, softball, basketball and tennis, Weston residents use Burchard for hiking, dog walking, biking, and other recreation on a daily basis. Burchard is also a frequent host site for high school cross country meets, regional baseball tournaments, and some private baseball practices (which generate revenues of approximately \$9000 per year).

Burchard is owned by the Town of Weston with a conservation restriction. Burchard is managed as a recreation facility per a memorandum of understanding between the Conservation Commission and the Recreation Commission.

Burchard Maintenance

The 7-acre park was created with private funds and is largely maintained by Weston Little League. The Town of Weston maintains the parking lot, the basketball court, the tennis courts, and trash removal. Weston Little League maintains all the grass, the playing surfaces (infields), fencing, dugouts, the snack pavilion, bathrooms, and other items including the electricity and water costs.

1. Approximate annual costs for general maintenance include:

- \$30,000 for mowing and spring/fall cleanup
- \$2500 for watering
- \$1200 for electricity

2. Additional projects and related expenses incurred since 2017 include:

- 2017: \$24,500 in improvements to field 3 and general aeration
- 2018: \$11,500 in improvements to infields and general aeration
- 2019: \$5,500 in improvements to infields and aeration
- 2020: \$2,500 to upgrade watering system (\$10,000 in additional projects put on hold)

Little League and Comparable Youth Sports Leagues in Weston

Weston Little League charges registration fees and sells sponsorships to local organizations to fund the maintenance of Burchard. Currently, registration fees are in line with youth Lacrosse and Soccer at approximately \$200-250 per player per season. Baseball is the only youth league in Weston that sells sponsorships.

Primary field usage and expenses:

1. Baseball and softball have a 7-8 week season in the spring, which accounts for approximately 75% of Little League's revenue and use of Burchard. At the older age groups, there are a few baseball teams that use Burchard in the summer and fall. Baseball and softball also use Cherrybrook, Bogle and Burt fields on occasion along with the varsity softball field at the high school in the spring and fall for the older age groups. Expenses incurred by Weston Little League are mostly related to Burchard as described previously.
2. Lacrosse uses the high school fields during an 8-10 week period in the spring. There are also some games in the fall for the older age groups. Lacrosse pays for time and material for lining some fields at the high school and purchases bags of grass seed for traffic recovery.
3. Soccer uses Alphabet field for the younger age groups and the middle school and high school fields for the older age groups. Soccer also uses the Brook School and Field School fields for some practices and games. Soccer has its primary 10-week season in the fall and a secondary 10-week season in the spring with slightly fewer participants. Soccer pays for time and material to line fields (school and recreation), water at Alphabet and Brook School, goal setup/breakdown, irrigation maintenance, and trash removal. Soccer also pays for extra turf work at Alphabet, which can vary from \$7,000-14,000 per year depending on maintenance need.

Recommendation

Weston Little League is the only organization in town that currently maintains one of the public parks. While the model of Weston Little League maintaining Burchard worked in the early years in which there were limited expenses related to field maintenance, the model is no longer sustainable. Costs to maintain fields that are now 12 years old cannot be met without raising registration fees substantially higher than other comparable youth sports.

Burchard maintenance is especially problematic in 2020 with registration refunds and loss of sponsorships due to COVID-19. Weston Little League will incur all the costs associated with the annual maintenance of Burchard with limited revenue. Several maintenance projects scheduled for 2020 and beyond are now on hold.

The #1 priority of the 2020 Recreation Committee Master Plan is maintenance of Weston's indoor and outdoor recreation areas. Instead of building new fields, Weston Recreation is focused on maintaining existing assets.

It is my recommendation that the Town of Weston take over responsibility for the annual maintenance of Burchard Park in 2021 and charge Weston Little League for use in a similar manner as soccer and lacrosse.

Additionally, the 2020 Master Plan should include approximately \$15,000 per year for aeration and repairs to infield playing surfaces, fences, player benches, spectator seating areas, and other one off items. With regular maintenance by the Town of Weston, Burchard will continue to be a recreation destination for many years.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Charles C. Hipwood', written in a cursive style.

Charles C. Hipwood
Recreation Committee Master Plan Steering Committee Representative
Weston Little League

Attachment 3: Field and Grounds report

Fields and Grounds Coordinator Update- May 15th, 2020

- Fields closed. Staff has closed, locked gates, installed barriers, signs to all facilities.
- Contractor applied lime to all sports fields on April 21st. 34 acres of lime. 330, 50-pound bags applied.
- In house application of some fertilizer to fields. Field School Field, Alphabet, Field 6- all needed fertilizer due to turf/soil conditions. All other fields and lawn areas have not been fertilized.
- Field School Field was sand topdressed with sand/calclined clay mix, deep tine aerated 7" deep on May 5th.
- School grounds reduced staff to part time on April 14th. Returned to fully staffed on May 5th.
- Seeding wear spots on fields from fall 2019 traffic.
- Recreation grounds on very limited staffing, mowing fields/lawns as needed.
- Helped moving office equipment, furniture, technology to put Case House back online.
- Started adding loam and seeding next to school sidewalks, driveways to hold pavement in place.
- Meet with vendors on possible spring/summer work. Includes road work, fence repairs.
- Interviewed by Sports Turf Managers Association on dealing with COVID-19.
- Participating on weekly zoom meetings with industry experts on sports turf issues, lawn and landscape problems/solutions during the public health emergency.
- Had NESTMA board of directors meeting via Zoom on April 21.
- Started reviewing end of year purchases.
- Coordinating agronomics for Case Park for spring applications.
- Signed contract for permitting an NOI for hydroraking HS Pond.
- Participated in nationwide town hall meeting via zoom for parks, recreation and K-12 facilities on April 28th and May 12th.
- Irrigation systems have been started up, done with in house staffing. Some minor repairs, nothing major as of yet. Some issues will be addressed by contractor.
- Meet with Con Com Administrator on status of HS front entrance. Brainstormed ideas for possible renovations.
- Coordinating with vendors on a modified schedule for spring work, including fertilizer applications, aeration, etc.
- Continued working with national group editing chapters for national best management practices for sports fields.
- Started our yearly assessments of school playgrounds for safety, and insurance.
- Continuing working new Case Campus buildings and wayfinding signs. Installation is 75% complete.

- Proctor Field, Pastor Park, Field #6 Irrigation construction started June 7th, 2019. Irrigation was started, contractor fixed any issues. They finished the majority of the punch list. Waiting on As Built to closeout project.

- Working on department 20-year tree and site evaluations for all outdoor town facilities. This includes drainage, pavement, tree pruning/removals, stone walls, etc.

-School grounds continue to move equipment/setups for custodial staff, IT Department, Music Department, Food Service Department, Physical Education Department, waste water treatment plant deliveries, CH construction, school in- service workshops. Will continue regular moves for the district.