

PRINCETON BOARD OF PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSIONERS

A meeting of the Princeton Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners was held on March 25, 2021 remotely via Zoom.

- Present: Dr. Cahill, Dr. Nosker, Mr. Young, Mr. Burt, Ms. Rogers & Dr. Frawley
- Also Present: Mr. Moorhead, Ms. Paulucci, Aidan McChesney & Andrew DeLuca
- Absent: Ms. Germaine, Mr. Koontz, Mr. Williamson & Mr. Stentz

Public Comment

- Prior to the start of public comment, Mr. Moorhead read the following statement:

Good evening to everyone and welcome to the Recreation Commission meeting. For those that don't know me, I'm Evan Moorhead the Assistant Director of the Recreation Department.

I would like to offer a brief statement in regards to the Hilltop Turf Project as I know that we have many here from the public tonight, likely with an interest in that particular topic.

The proposed installation of an artificial turf field at Hilltop Park has generated much discussion in the public realm, some of it supportive of the project and a lot of it opposed to the idea. And I want to assure everyone that all of that input has been heard, whether it was through phone calls, emails, letters in the newspaper or in online media outlets, or via statements at public meetings in recent weeks. All of it has been heard. In particular, I want to acknowledge productive meetings in recent weeks with the Campbell Woods HOA board members including Chris Johnson, Paul Reiss and Xiaohua Lin, our meeting several weeks ago with Copperwood Management led by Bob Hillier and Jerry Castafero and last night's meeting with the Environmental Commission and their Chairperson Tammy Sands and while we haven't had direct meetings with Princeton Community Village, we've certainly received input from their residents in recent days, as well.

Following last night's Environmental Commission meeting in which plans were discussed by that Commission to develop an ordinance banning artificial turf fields on municipal property, the municipal staff of both the Recreation and Engineering Departments have been directed by interim municipal administrator, Bob Bruschi, to stop working on the Hilltop Park turf project effective immediately. Administration does not believe it is appropriate to invest additional staff time or resources into this project until this matter is more fully resolved at the council level.

Based on where things currently sit, the understanding by the staff is that there is ultimately no avenue for moving this project forward.

At this time municipal staff will be redirecting their time and efforts to other areas, which for the Recreation Department includes multiple high priorities such as readying the municipal athletic fields and restrooms for their annual spring opening, getting Community Park Pool ready to open for Memorial Day Weekend, working on an exciting menu of summer offerings for Princeton youth and hiring someone to fill our open Program Supervisor position.

So with that being said, I realize that there may be those here that no longer feel the need to attend tonight's meeting or to comment about this project and I'll give those folks time to leave if they so choose. Should anyone wish to remain and offer public comment, we will begin to do in a moment. Please raise your hand through the function on Zoom if you are interested in speaking and then we will begin to call on you one by one. While, the staff and commissioners will not be engaging in any dialogue in regards to the Hilltop project, all comments are welcome and will be included in the public record. As we have a full agenda, I would ask that you please limit all comments to 3 minutes or less. Thank you.

- Jeff Bergman (Princeton resident) – Opposes artificial turf and believes that resources should be put into enhancing natural grass fields. Mr. Bergman expressed his opinion that the process should never have gotten to this point as the topic of turf continues to be brought up and then ultimately shot down, thereby wasting time and resources.
- Paul Reiss (Board Member - Campbell Woods HOA)
- Jon Durbin (Mt. Lucas Rd and past president of Princeton Little League) – Reminded everyone that there is still a field shortage problem and it is not going away.
- Chris Johnson, (Board President – Campbell Woods HOA) – Appreciative of the dialogue that has been had in recent weeks with municipal staff regarding this project and expressed his desire to continue to work together to come up with a solution to Princeton's athletic field shortage problems.
- George DiFernandino, (Health Commission) – expressed his support for the Environmental Commission's proposal to ban turf on municipal property.
- Jo Butler (Hibben St.) – Expressed her gratitude to the staff for the time that they put into this project. She pointed out that artificial turf is present at all high schools in Princeton, as well as the university and that Princeton residents continue to use those fields. Ms. Butler also brought up some of the inaccuracies and misinformation about the project that have been circulating.
- Nancy (Scott Ln) – In favor of a special designation that would limit Hilltop Park's use to organized athletic groups.
- Alice Artzt (Princeton resident) – opposed to artificial turf.
- Bairy Suri (Princeton resident) – expressed her opinion that artificial turf is dangerous and that Princeton's leaders have a scattered environmental policy.
- Jeffrey Wu (Princeton resident) – Expressed his opposition to the turf field. Mr. Wu was not present to start the meeting and did not hear Mr. Moorhead's statement.
- Geoffrey Hill (Copperwood resident) -

Activities Report

In addition to the activities in the agenda packet, Mr. Moorhead reported on the following:

- **Day Camp Update:** We are not offering day camp in 2021 and an email has gone out to the day camp community. We already delayed our decision 4-6 weeks past our normal registration start date but we could not wait any longer. Staff needed time to work on alternate plans and we wanted to get information out to the public, as well. Mr. Moorhead discussed several of the major hurdles that led to the decision not to run camp:
 - **Lack of indoor space:** This was a major issue and there has been no response from the public schools to date regarding whether or not they would make space available to us

for use during inclement weather. Even if we had indoor space, the idea of sheltering 250+ kids indoors this summer with current health concerns gives us great pause.

- **CP Pool:** One of the main if not the main attraction of day camp is the daily trip to the pool. Given current restrictions that are in place, it would have been impossible to accommodate 250+ kids at one time in our pool complex while also being open to the public. In particular, we had concerns about processing kids through the locker rooms (which are enclosed and tighter confines) in a safe and efficient manner.
- **Communal lunches:** There did not appear to be a safe and efficient way in which to facilitate 250 kids eating together each day. It would be impossible to have 5 or 6 kids sitting shoulder to shoulder at every table with masks off eating lunch.
- Mr. Moorhead reiterated that the safety of our participants and staff is our number one concern.
- In addition to the activities in the agenda packet, Ms. Paulucci reported on the following:
 - Continuing to work on a menu of different activities such as; magic camp, chess program, coding class, fashion class, and more.
 - The programs are going to be in smaller durations, with fewer participants; however, the department wants to offer programs to all different age groups and at different times of day.
 - Ms. Paulucci will keep the commission up to date on logistics and specific details as the programs come together.

Director's Report

Mr. Moorhead reported on the following:

- **Recreation Office:** PRD is now open to public from 9am – 5pm; M – F as of 3/22. PRD is still the only municipal department (other than police dispatch) that is open to the public full-time.
- **Princeton Tennis Program Lease Update:**
 - Lease formally approved at the 3/22/21 council meeting: 3-year term with up to 3 renewals
 - Work is underway by a contractor to pressure wash and then repair cracks at the CP courts. PTP will pay this bill (total of \$20K) which will cover the entirety of their contribution for '21.
 - PTP spring season begins at CP on April 26, 2021.
- **Pool Maintenance Update:**
 - The covers are off both the dive well and main pool. Maintenance staff is working to drain the pools and clean the liners
 - Mainline Commercial Pools will be on site the week of April 5 to begin work on inspecting and repairing the seams on both the main pool and the dive well. This is a routine repair that the manufacturer recommends every 7-8 years. This is the first time we are doing it with this pool.
 - We will look to bring American Leak Detection back out once the pools are filled and the pumps are running to inspect for the dive well leak.
- **Mowing & Turf Management Contracts:** Both contracts were approved at 3/22 council meeting. Contractors to begin work in the coming weeks.
- **Program Supervisor position:** We received 19 applicants for the open program supervisor position. Of those 19, we interviewed eight (virtually). We are bringing back four finalists in April for second round, in-person interviews. The staff feels that it is extremely important to our

process to meet these individuals in-person. Our goal would be to have someone in place by early May.

- **Municipal Administrator:** Marc Dashield is retiring effective 4/1/21. Bob Bruschi, former municipal administrator, has returned in an interim role for several weeks. Search for the permanent replacement is ongoing and council has indicated they hope to complete their search by month's end.
- **Seasonal Employment:** We are currently taking applications for Pool Customer Service (Ms. Caines will be conducting interviews soon); Seasonal Maintenance and Lifeguard positions (roughly 60 guards are returning from last year)
- **CP Pool Update:** As of today, covid restrictions for outdoor public pools remain the same as in 2020. Staff anticipates changes to those restrictions, but we do not know when the state will announce those changes and to what degree restrictions will loosen. Mr. Moorhead indicated that for the time being, staff is in a holding pattern until the state releases an update. We learned from last year not to get too far ahead of ourselves with our decision making when there are still so many unknowns. At worst, staff anticipates that they can replicate last year's model of operation (Daily admission only) but the preference would be to return to a membership model if restrictions loosen. Staff is preparing for both contingencies.
- **Athletic Fields:** PRD Maintenance staff has been hard at work to get the fields ready for the spring. Both soccer clubs are starting up in the next few days. Baseball, girls' lacrosse and flag football are all starting after Easter. The Princeton Public Schools have requested to use CP South and the Smoyer Park baseball field for their middle school program starting April 12.

Old Business

- **Hilltop Park Project:** Discussion was held

New Business

- **Spring 2021 Program Fees**
 - Dr. Frawley made motion a motion to approve the Spring/Summer 2021 program fees, seconded by Mr. Burt and approved. Discussion was held.

Communications

Communications shared in agenda packet

Approval of Minutes

- Dr. Cahill moved the minutes, seconded by Mr. Burt and approved. Mr. Young abstained.

Approval of Bills

- Dr. Frawley made a motion to approve the bills, seconded by Ms. Rogers and approved.

Next Meeting Date

April 22, 2021