



# TOWN OF RANDOLPH, VERMONT

## Recreation Advisory Committee Monday, February 24th – Meeting Minutes Town Hall Conference Room B

### Meeting Minutes

#### 1. Call to order: 5:30 pm

##### **Committee Members Present:**

Kristin Chandler  
Larry Davignon  
Kristen Gage  
Kyla Grace  
Paul Rea  
Valerie Schoolcraft

**Absent:** Dalyn Luedtke

##### **Town Staff Present:**

Haidi Arias, Recreation Director  
Larry Satcowitz, Select board Liaison

#### 2. Public comment:

None

#### 3. Update on current programs and activities, Haidi Arias

- a. The town ice rink is not open due to the warm weather. The plan is to be open for a final day on Saturday, Feb. 29th, but with the predictions of warm temps and then snow, we'll see. The ice skating season may be over. Kristin Chandler asked about private rentals of the rink. Arias answered that yes, the rink has been used by local schools (for free) and Brunswick NJ/NY schools/churches have rented the facility for \$75. The staff has been great all season, as they went above and beyond and helped salvage the ice at night to make sure that the surface was smooth each day.
- b. Youth basketball ended on Saturday with a youth March Madness tournament. There are more than 30 kids heading to middle school next year, so it was great to see these kids off. Sarah Rea helped with music. It was a great event all around.
- c. Baseball registration has been extended to March 2.

d. Arias is working on the RFP for painting the town pool. This project is a top priority. Arias will not be at town meeting this year. Kristin Chandler and Kristen Gage will be there and are happy to answer any rec-related questions if they come up.

#### **4. Scheduled Items**

a. Harmony Park: David Palmer and Morgan Easton came to present planning updates of the proposed Harmony Park to the committee, beginning with a location update as requested by the committee at the January meeting. Palmer had surveyed the site and brought a conceptual drawing as well as photographs that show the new proposed location. What's now being referred to as Option #5 is a 40' x 8' area between the playground and the trees by the river that adheres to ADA guidelines. The installation would be 30' from the path, there would then be 40' of proposed instruments, then another 30' of open space on the other side. The distance from the tip of the balance beam (on the playground) to the start of the instruments is 13'. They would be situated right next to the trees.

Gage asked about the instruments' proximity to roots. Palmer answered that the closest point is 5' and added that the cement pads go down 6 inches below the surface of the ground and the posts go down 6 feet. There would be a total of six posts. Palmer thought it would be okay but asked Paul Rea's opinion. Rea answered that tree roots are typically the same size as the tree crown, which may present an issue.

Other handouts that were requested at the January meeting were presented. Warranty info: The manufacturer offers a 5-year unlimited warranty on parts and pieces. Chandler noted that in other communities, these instruments seem to last WAY beyond the 5 years. Palmer agreed and said that the return on investment for the communities is great. Morgan Easton attributed that to the warm and fuzzy factor.

Maintenance requirements? Once a month inspection. Palmer suggested that this would be a good project for the Sunrise Rotary Club to take on. Larry Davignon indicated that he thought the group would be willing to do so. Palmer also presented an estimate from Kolby Haupt for the site preparation and instrument installation. Sunrise would like to help with the installation as well. Arias asked if the posts would be mounted with backfill or cement? Palmer answered backfill.

Valerie Schoolcraft noted that the warranty would require the purchaser to cover all shipping costs and notify the manufacturer of any shipping defects -- she asked If the town would be responsible for that. Easton answered no, Palmer's group would be in charge of everything associated with the park until the time it's ready to be played on by kids.

Arias suggested that the logical next step would be for the committee to walk the area to gain a better understanding of what it would actually look like. Easton agreed. Arias worried about what looks to be such close proximity to the trees and wants to confirm that there is a minimum of 6-8 feet of clearance around the playground pieces as well.

Palmer asked if the committee felt ready to support this project. Davignon would like to walk the area. Arias agreed that she did not feel ready without walking it. The whole group agreed. Palmer wanted to get a walk-through scheduled, as his group is moving on several other pieces, including fundraising and speaking to the select board. So, he very much needs the Rec Committee to walk it and give this project their support.

The group agreed to meet at the playground on March 16th at 5:30 pm and then reconvene in Conference Room B at 6:00 pm for their regularly scheduled monthly meeting.

b. Dog Park. Community members Jane McConnell and Lisa Locke were in attendance to show their support for this project. Everyone on the committee, as well as McConnell and Locke, thought there would be a bigger presence based on the interest seen on Front Porch Forum and Facebook. Funding was a question/concern that a few folks had on the FPF thread, but there was a lot of positive interest. McConnell and Locke said there are lots of people interested in supporting the park, but they were just not able to come tonight.

Locke would love to see the park in the downtown area. Chandler asked if the group had any location suggestions. McConnell asked about VTC, and Locke asked about Branchwood. Arias has met with VTC about this project. In the proposed location, there's no parking, no place for parking, and no water. Aesthetically they don't like it. There's another potential site, but it's next to the memorial and events center. VTC suggested that this could potentially be sited near the orchard, but Arias isn't sure that's realistic because of the close proximity to the president's house. She said that VTC is open-minded about a project like this and indicated that if the dog-park group or the town came up with another site, they'd be happy to help fund it somewhere else. They are willing to keep talking about siting it somewhere on VTC's property, but it doesn't look promising. Arias said that after considerable research on this subject, she can't find a feasible site on town land.

Locke asked about Branchwood and said that town is a good spot for the park because people can walk -- not drive -- so parking isn't so critical. And she likes the idea of a park that's visible from the road so that it can attract more users. Arias said that the Economic Development group would like that area for downtown development. But this is an idea, too. She's willing to look into it more, but citizens will need to REALLY push for it and fundraise for it. Startup costs for the park are around \$20,000. Larry Satcowitz said that housing discussions for that site seem pretty serious, but he doesn't know specifics such as whether the development would be on both sides of the road or not. Arias answered that this could be a nice green space area if there is new housing going in there. Schoolcraft asked if there may be RACDC-owned land that would be appropriate for this park. Rea answered that the only possible location would be Salisbury Square, but that location is for housing as well.

Arias wondered if maybe a private owner would be willing to donate land for this purpose?

Chandler suggested that the dog-park group needs to get organized and do some more research.

At this point, Jim Sault entered the conference room, choosing to stand in the doorway rather than sit down. His concern was funding and whether or not tax dollars would be used for this project. He argued that this is rural Vermont and that people should pay for their own dogs' needs. A conversation between multiple people (Sault, Satcowitz, Chandler, McConnell, Locke, Rea, and Arias) about taxes and paying for the park. Sault asserted that Randolph is a rural community and that a dog park is unnecessary. That's a Burlington problem. He said people walk their dogs on his land (behind Mari Castle) all the time and it's fine. There is simply no need for a park, especially when projects of this nature fall back on the taxpayer every single time. Chandler said that the dog-park group is looking at grant funding, not taxes, as their source of dollars for the park. Sault argued that grant funding comes from the government and taxpayers. Satcowitz calmly stated that not all grants are public. Many are sourced through private funding. Rea countered the "rural community" argument by saying that many houses in town have no lawns. Sault contended that dog owners should think about these things when purchasing a home. He then left the meeting.

Satcowitz asked how much use a dog park in Randolph might have? Could the group do some research on other communities of our size to better understand the usage of their parks? How important of an amenity is this? Gage agreed.

Locke said that she used to use the ball fields in winter when they were fenced. She always cleaned up after her dogs, but the fence was removed because the rec director at the time (Marcy White) didn't want dog owners using the ball fields for off-leash purposes. Arias said that she has to remove dog waste from the fields all the time, which isn't her job. A clean field is necessary to keep kids safe. She did say that she would consider the ball fields if the baseball coaches and families are okay with it. Baseball is three seasons, so winter is the only time (November-February) it could be a potential site. She then suggested taking a road trip to Hartland and see their dog park. McConnell and Locke thought this was a great idea.

c. Winterfest Recap. Everyone on the Recreation Committee was there, either as an attendee or volunteer. Arias asked the group for their thoughts based on their varying experiences.

Chandler thought it went well and said the tubing was a well-oiled machine. There were plenty of volunteers, the lines moved quickly, and there was a good flow of people. Some issues that she saw: Chitchat held things up. Maybe put someone less popular than Ashley Lincoln at the end!! And starting about 5 pm, there seemed to be more intoxicated people around, which was concerning. The overall layout of the event was easy to navigate but maybe there could have been a big posted schedule? Gage agreed, she'd fielded multiple schedule questions from attendees in igloo village. Maybe by the selfie igloo would be a good location? Chandler also noted that volunteer parking passes were not being checked by the sheriff's department and that an older gentleman was allowing anyone to park in the Hargrace lot. She also said that volunteers needed a walkie talkie at the top of the tubing hill so that there could be better communication for grooming, etc. Her final thoughts were that volunteers should have been used for set-up, vendors should have had more beer (Rea agreed -- when he finished his shift at 6:00 the beer was gone!), and that the volunteer parking lot needed better lighting.

Gage agreed that the event went well. Her only comments beyond Chandler's were that some people were allowed to bring in coolers, she spoke with several attendees about smoking in igloo village, and that only one igloo volunteer was likely needed. Maybe the second person could be more of a floater for areas that needed added hands/eyes. Arias asked Gage what her 11-year-old daughter thought of the event. Gage answered that her daughter noted the lack of female sled-derby registrants and said that there wasn't a lot for mid-grade kids to do.

Kyla Grace agreed that the event didn't have a lot to do for mid-grade kids to do. She thought that the registration area could have had a better flow. When the buses arrived, things were chaotic. Maybe there could have been lanes for pre-registered people vs non-registered people? She noted that people loved the beer tent flooring, the heated lamps, and the taco & tater tot truck. She had been wishing there was more fire pit access for people to sit around.

Davignon had been stationed in the parking lot at RUHS. He noted that there was a lot of traffic from Rte 12 and that it was overwhelming for one person. He also had no relief from his shift and thought that they could have parked people closer together. He strongly suggested that they needed more people helping there. He thought the shuttling system worked well. The buses came at good intervals, regular enough that they weren't too crowded. He agreed that tweens at the event were bored. His final thought was that next year, they could give out registration forms at the parking lots to free up the registration area.

Everyone in the room enthusiastically agreed that it was a great event! Arias said that the bus drivers were all happy, and that the school has already said they'd be glad to do it again next year. Chandler and Gage both said that they would have been happy to come much earlier to help with set up if they'd known it was needed. All agreed that it would be good to have more hands-on deck in the hours leading up to the event next year.

Chandler and Rea thought that this would be a good volunteer opportunity for the RUHS ball teams. Gage suggested that TSA students would love to work this event to log their required community service hours. Arias thanked everyone for their contributions to the event and their feedback.

Rea then asked if the group could quickly debrief about the harmony park and asked if the group thought it made sense to take Option 1 (discussed at the January meeting) off the table? The group agreed. He also expressed concerns about the posts and piers as outlined by Palmer. The posts do not conform to the spec plans, which will invalidate the warranty. Davignon expressed concerns about the cement pads over the tree roots. Everyone agreed that the group needs a walkthrough to get a full understanding of the scope of the proposed park and its layout. Arias would like to get a letter from the Sunrise Rotary Club confirming that they are willing and prepared to take responsibility for the maintenance of the park.

## **5. Future Agenda Items**

Pool, more on the Harmony Park, Summer Programs

## **6. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 7:01 pm.

The March meeting is scheduled for the 16th from 5:30-7:00 pm beginning at the Randolph Town Playground to view the proposed site of the Harmony Park and moving (at 6:00) to Town Hall Conference Room B.