

**TOWN OF STOWE
RECREATION COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
February 5, 2025**

The Stowe Parks and Recreation Committee Board met February 5, 2025, at the Stowe Arena starting at 5:00 pm.

Members present: Lyn Goldsmith, Ryan Thibeault, Matt Frazee, Brett Loomis, Forrest Shinnars, Julian Roscioli-Barren, Deb Drinkwater

**Agenda approved
Minutes approved**

Waterbury Skate Park

Josh Merson from the Waterbury Skatepark Coalition was present to discuss their efforts to raise funds to renovate the Hope Davey Skatepark. He said they are about \$25k from their fundraising target and plan to begin construction in June 2025. They are seeking private donations and wanted to share information regarding the project as they hope Stowe Recreation and others will have interest in future programming.

Rec Path Benches and Picnic Table Program

RC recommends revising the existing procedures for donating benches and picnic tables on the Rec and Quiet Paths.

The existing policy is problematic as it requires contacting the original donors of existing memorial benches and tables, but there are no Town records of these donors or any way to contact them. There is a waiting list of 19, so it will be easy for Matt/Kelli to reach out to notify those on the list about what is available and get the new management system started.

New benches would be commercial grade and would start around \$2K, which is significantly more than the \$200 that donors who previously participated in the memorial bench program experienced. So, going back to the original list of donors, even if it was readily available, could trigger sticker shock.

There is no operating budget capacity to replace high-priority benches and tables, so we would have to submit a capital request for the FY 26 budget.

Under the new program, we could create a dedication program. However, it requires new software, which costs \$2500 annually, which is very expensive. MF and Kelli are trying to reconfigure the existing system to run the program and match table and bench donation opportunities with donation amounts that cover the complete cost (purchase, shipping, installation, concrete foundation).

Forrest Shinnars suggested an auction format, with a minimum bid of the cost of the bench, and

then trying to spark a bidding war to maximize revenue. The extra revenue would go to the Rec Path Fund.

The Town would control the locations of what benches and tables are available, so specific requests from donors would not be allowed, but they could wait for a location and type to become available. Get a bench for the life of the bench, and then the Town would start over.

Benches/Tables are commercial grade. MF recommends using Kirby Built as a vendor. They come with a 50-year warranty, post-consumer recycled plastic, and stainless steel bolts.

Under consideration, should benches and tables be uniform, or should donors be able to design their own? It would require a process for unique proposals that the SB would have to approve. (An example is the Bear Bench)

Question about placement of tables along the path, including placing 2 or 3 around the river where the 2 p.m. dog group meets daily. MF will consult with RC to identify new locations, which would require revising the existing Town policy because there is no inventory of tables or benches. MF will work with RC to create an inventory with a map to show locations and request Town approval for new locations, such as the placement of the dog group.

MF will create a final language for how the Recreation Commission will run the program for review at the next meeting.

Forrest Shinnars made the motion seconded by Ryan Thibeault:

The Recreation Commission recommends the Selectboard adopt the amended Bench/Table Policy. Passed unanimously.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE POLICY

The FAP allows for scholarships to attend Rec programs and activities for people who qualify under the Vermont Income Eligibility Guidelines (free/reduced lunch/milk program). Currently, the Town gives 5500 per year for the operating budget, with the Bunny Libby Memorial Fund giving an additional 5K.

It is limited to \$500/per individual per household, which does not cover even half the \$1300 tuition—no other assistance to someone who qualifies. MF recommends an amendment to the existing policy to change limits from \$500 to \$650 per individual per fiscal year (represents households that are eligible for 50 percent of tuition cost) and to \$800 (represents households that qualify for 65 percent) for families that are eligible for 100 percent.

In the future, those percentages will remain as tuition fees increase, so they will not have to be revisited.

Brett Loomis made motion to increase limits to appropriate amounts, seconded by Forrest Shinnars. Passed unanimously.

FIREWORK RAIN DATES

Typically, the rain date is the day after, but this year, the 4th is on a Friday. The vendor has no availability on the Saturday or Sunday, the 5th or 6th. There is no other possible vendor.

SB mandates that the fireworks are held on the 4th, so it would require a motion to ask them to move to the 3rd.

All rec staff are working on the 3rd for summer camp, so there are no resources to move the fireworks to the 3rd.

If we move to the 3rd with the 4th as a rain date, we would be charged an additional 10 percent. 13K cost, so an extra \$1300. If we cancel due to weather on the day, then we owe 10 percent as well. MF and the Chief of Police make the Go/No Go call based on public safety considerations.

If the vendor cancels, then we do not owe the 10 percent.

Forrest Shinnars made the motion seconded by many on the committee and adopted unanimously to select the 4th as a do-or-die for fireworks with no rain date.

PICKLEBALL/MEMORIAL PARK

Capital projects do not require town vote. The SB has authority to advance as long as there is no need for Bond money. The SB has approved \$320K for the preliminary design phase and has indicated that they would be in a position to issue bid documents if public opinion at Town Meeting is favorable.

The SB wants use Town Meeting to gauge public opinion about Memorial Park and its 10M price tag. While it is theoretically a non-binding conversation, if Town Meeting attendees are against the Park then the money will go into limbo, same as the \$175K fix for the pickleball court resurfacing and repair. If the Park Project seems to be something that will happen within a year or two timeframe, then no spend on pickleball courts. If Park Project seems 5+ years away and or lots of local resistance to a 10M bond, then there would be a case for the \$175K bandaid spend on the courts.

Harry Shepard will lead presentation at Town Meeting. Rec Committee has recommended that Matt Frazee support him with this public presentation. Matt Frazee asked for Rec Commissioners to attend the special meeting and speak out as well.

RC discussed talking points about the Park and need to work with stakeholders to develop a community engagement strategy heading into Town Meeting:

- Need not a want
- Traffic patterns
- Current state of memorial park embarrassing
- The Selectboard thinks enough of the plan that they put it that there is support for this project

Rec Commission will meet for a Special Meeting on THURSDAY FEB 20 @ 5PM to receive feedback from Matt Frazee about the Town presentation and work with committee to agree on talking points and a strategy for civic engagement going into Town Meeting,