



Town of Medway  
**FINANCE COMMITTEE**  
155 Village Street  
Medway MA 02053

Tel: (508) 533-3200  
Fax: (508) 533-3201

February 8, 2017 – 7:00 PM  
Sanford Hall, Town Hall  
155 Village Street

Present: Frank Rossi, Chair; Dan Doherty, Ellen Hillery, Meghan Hoffman, Jeff O'Neill, Michael Schrader (7:16 PM).

Absent: Rohith Ashok, Vice Chair; Todd Alessandri, Clerk; Jim Sullivan.

Staff Present: Carol Pratt, Finance Director; David D'Amico, Acting Director, Department of Public Services; Sean Murphy, Parks & Recreation; Shirley Bliss, Facility Permit Coordinator.

Others Present: Glenn Trindade, Chair, Board of Selectmen.

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At 7:02 PM Chairman Rossi called the meeting to order. A quorum of members was present.

**Discussion/Review – Parks and Fields:**

*The committee reviewed spreadsheets for each athletic field as well as field summary information.*

Present: David D'Amico, Acting Director, Department of Public Services; Carol Pratt, Finance Director; Sean Murphy, Parks & Recreation; Shirley Bliss, Parks & Recreation.

Chairman Rossi explained that there has been misinformation about how the synthetic turf fields were funded. He stated that there were three appropriations coupled with bond issues.

Regarding the revenue documents previously distributed, Mr. Rossi expressed concern that some of the numbers did not seem to add up and wanted clarification. Mr. D'Amico reported that historically there was some difficulty in reserving a field, and people had to connect with the scheduler. At that time, they kind of piggybacked on a system used by the high school and tried to make it work. Now the Town uses some scheduling software which helps streamline things. Payment checks can now be matched to the appropriate invoice for accounting purposes. This scheduling program came online in July 2016. It

was noted that some of the income generated in the previous fiscal year often does not come in until the next fiscal year.

Chairman Rossi expressed concern that there was a \$15,000 discrepancy in the revenues vs. bookings. Mr. Murphy pointed out there is a profit of \$226,000 for a two-year period. Mr. D'Amico clarified that the discrepancy is in the timing of invoices tethered to payments coming in after start of the new fiscal year.

Chairman Rossi asked if there a written policy of procedures that Parks follows? Are the rates published? Mr. D'Amico responded that the rates are posted online, noting that there is a difference in rate for in-town groups vs. non-Medway, also field charges, etc. A multi-day tournament might be negotiated at a different rate.

Continuing, Chairman Rossi referred to the February 2015 agreement signed by the Board of Selectmen, Parks and Schools which clearly states that the high school and in-town groups are given first preference. The usage policy posted online clearly states the same priority. Mr. Murphy responded that he did not know that there was actually a vote to change it, but the Hanlon field sometimes gets handled differently. At that time, it was kind of first-come, first-served process. Chairman Rossi opined that, because the taxpayers paid for the fields, the policy on booking and priority of service should be clear. Mr. D'Amico stated that the predominant concern at the time was that we try to have the youth groups use the practice fields, and the high school groups wound up monopolizing fields and paid no attention to schedules. Chairman Rossi asked if the Parks Commission voted to change the priority usage policy of the three high school turf fields.

Mr. Doherty noted that it seems that this agreement was reached in anticipation of the new synthetic turf field. Mr. D'Amico noted that the priorities have evolved in such a way that the most revenue comes in to help pay maintenance cost and the eventual replacement of the turf. Mr. O'Neill stated that is "the crux of it, setting aside money for the replacement when there were no funds for it". Mr. Murphy theorized that it is a matter of defining priority: Is it who books it first or is it following a hierarchy?

Chairman Rossi noted that the Finance Committee understands that there has to be a build-up of funds for the replacement, yet the taxpayers have been short-changed. The Parks Department has reduced the use of the fields for in-town groups. Mr. Murphy disagreed, noting that the lacrosse group, for example, wants a certain number of hours which precludes renting to other groups. Mr. Murphy indicated Parks had offered another field to the lacrosse for some of their hours but they did not want it.

Mr. Schrader theorized that the residents are paying the debt service and local sports groups pay lower rental fees. The out-of-town groups pay higher fees which should help offset the debt service. Chairman Rossi clarified that all fees go into the Enterprise account. The debt service cost is paid out of the general fund.

Referring to the data on the spreadsheet, Chairman Rossi reported that 57% of the time on the fields was by out-of-town groups. Discussion followed. Ms. Bliss reported that the high school's use of the field is not put on the schedule. The high school has the field from 9 AM – 6 PM and nothing is entered. Every month is different. Mr. D'Amico noted that they have been cleaning up the data a little. Mr. Schrader asked if the out-of-town group gets bumped if an in-town group wants the field for the same day/time. Mr. Murphy responded that they were unable to combine the lacrosse groups into the same weekend, and lost \$16,000 revenue from an outside group. Most groups want more than two nights a

week, preferring four nights a week and possibly time on the weekend as well. Field use is seasonal mostly in the spring and fall for both in-town and out-of-town groups. Mr. Doherty noted that, for the spring, a group may not know until Feb or early March what a schedule might look like. A game schedule would not be available yet. It was noted that Medway Youth Lacrosse requests practice field time in October for the spring season.

Mr. Doherty expressed concern that the agreement is not being followed as it was intended to be. What happens when a large group expands their program and wants more space? One group implied he might move his group to a venue where he was most likely to find more field space/time than two nights a week.

Brief discussion followed during which it was noted that the in-town groups are expanding as the younger groups are getting larger. Mr. D'Amico explained that the intent was to provide playing space for the youth groups, whether it is natural or synthetic turf. He admitted that it is true that some group might opt to look for space where they can be assured of having access to synthetic turf all the time.

Chairman Rossi asked about revised policies and procedures, some that would satisfy the need to build up funds for turf replacement as well as meet the needs of the athletic groups. Mr. Murphy noted that he is "not a big government guy. We sit down and try to figure out a way to maximize the field space. We are not kicking anyone off the fields, but sometimes we have to split a group's time between grass and turf. If we want to keep up the facilities, we have to generate revenue in order to keep it viable."

At this time it was noted that a placeholder article has been submitted for Annual Town Meeting for funds to be transferred out of the Parks Revolving Fund (the unreserved fund balance). There is no dollar figure in the article, although \$25,000 was transferred in the first year.

Selectman Trindade reminded everyone that free cash can be used for all kinds of things including transfer into the stabilization fund. Chairman Rossi concurred, suggesting that there are other options for funding the replacement turf besides the revenue from the field rental.

Mr. Murphy reported that only two groups have uncollected fees, one of which has made a partial payment. Ms. Bliss added that Medway groups typically do not pay until the end of the season. Deposits of 50% are required only for tournaments or outside groups with the balance due 15 minutes after their last game.

Mr. Schrader suggested that the rules need to be established with a caveat that the scheduler has the option to move groups to different fields if need arises. Quote the policy if necessary. Mr. O'Neill clarified that the problem arose when a particular group reserved space and then their requested hours were shortened. Mr. Murphy stated that there have also been times when people reserve the field, and then do not show up to use it. If that is an in-town group, we lose the revenue that could have been received from an out of town group. He added that he did not believe the Medway sports groups are being affected as much as people think.

Ms. Carol Pratt, Finance Director, distributed some updated numbers and noted that the accounting system can be utilized even more by creating more individual line items and accounts to track revenue per field, as well as the expenses.

Mr. Schrader expressed concern that this may not be something under the purview of the Finance Committee. Chairman Rossi clarified that the Town Charter specifies that the Finance Committee has the authority to review any document. Mr. O'Neill added that we know there is a future expenditure

on the maintenance and replacement of the turf so it is within the purview of the Finance Committee. Selectman Trindade noted that it also gives an independent look at the budget requests from Town departments.

Mr. Doherty noted there is currently a Parks Improvement Project under discussion, and it will not generate any revenue. What is the reason why the fields need to be self-funding? Mr. D'Amico responded that the intent of the fees is to help cover the cost of the synthetic turf replacement. There is minimal cost each year for the maintenance of natural grass fields, but there is a big price tag for turf replacement. Mr. Murphy noted that the youth groups have plenty of field space, adding that the fees for the synthetic turf fields are too expensive for many of the groups. The soccer group is getting smaller. Chairman Rossi added that field space is becoming more available in other communities. Mr. Murphy added that no group wanting four hours of time (other than soccer) has complained about not having enough field time.

Mr. Ernie Buonaccorsi, A gentleman identifying himself as the President of Medway Youth Lacrosse stated that it was a discrepancy of 12 hours, and we would give back six hours if we could get the nights we wanted. He explained that moving from synthetic turf to grass fields is more than just moving as there is no striping, no nets, and other factors.

Mr. Paul Ramos, Boys Director, edway Youth Lacrosse stated that last year they really wanted the same fields they had the year before. It's not a question of hours, but the nights. Community sports involve parent volunteers. These fields were built for residents. Because students are involved in karate, guitar lessons, horseback riding, etc., it's hard for families to schedule events when grass fields are unreliable. If we booked a field to have it available for a rain date or make-up game and then did not need it, we have still paid for it. It's the spirit of the agreement. We do not have the opportunity to utilize the fields for mid-week games or Friday night games. Mr. O'Neill agreed with the "spirit of the agreement", but it was never said that there would be a big chunk of money for field replacement ten years later.

Chairman Rossi asked if there was a way to revise the policy. Mr. D'Amico suggested that Mr. Rossi could be the one to inform the residents that a policy change was coming. Selectman Trindade stated that the fields were funded because all the sports parents showed up at Town Meeting and voted for it, theorizing that, in ten years, parents will attend Town Meeting and vote for it again.

Discussion followed on creating a separate department for Recreation with its own budget. Chairman Rossi noted that the Finance Committee just wants to see accurate accounting. Ms. Pratt stated that her department can create more detailed accounts to track revenue stream, either by specific field or by complex. Is there a plan to update or create a more specific policy? Discussion followed. Mr. Murphy stated the office is already getting calls for booking fields/dates for next year. Ms. Bliss reported she cannot book fields for any group until they can submit a schedule, and some of the groups do not have those yet. Chairman Rossi stated that the Finance Committee would just like to have it all tightened up a little more so it is easier to evaluate. Mr. Doherty, speaking as liaison to Parks and Recreation, added we need to be able to understand the actuals, and determining whether the existing document needs to be clarified and/or updated.

Mr. Schrader posed the following: What are the goals from the perspective of the Finance Committee? What is the expectation of the operation of these fields? If it were being set up right now, how would we develop the fee structure in the Enterprise Account?

Mr. Murphy noted that, for conflict resolution, we sit down as a group (Murphy, Bliss and D'Amico) to try to figure out the best solution that satisfies the most people.

Ms. Hoffman expressed concern that there seems to be a tight line between making money and trying to appease local groups. Local groups should have priority, and making money should be secondary.

Mr. O'Neill asked for an update on concession stands. Where does the revenue go? Mr. D'Amico responded that the concession stand is operated by a separate entity, Medway Athletics, which is a non-profit group. Twice a year they report to the Parks Department. Mr. O'Neill pointed out that the agreement specifies that "the revenues shall be deposited in the revolving fund". Directing his comment to the Finance Director, Chairman Rossi asked her to please tell the Town Administrator and Assistant Town Administrator that this policy needs to be revised.

Mr. D'Amico stated the real intent of the agreement was to "play nice" with the schools.

The committee thanked everyone for coming in.

**Chairman's Report:**

Chairman Rossi reported that Mr. Ashok was approached by the Affordable Housing Trust for a liaison for the 6 Cutler Street project. This developer is also developing another project on West Street which will consist of 48 units all classified as affordable.

Selectman Trindade clarified that the reason for involving people outside the Affordable Housing Trust and the Affordable Housing Committee is to get additional input. We have learned that it will cost \$1.2 million to build 12 apartments on Cutler Street. For a project of fewer than 20 units, the Town would not be eligible for state tax credits. MetroWest Collaborative is looking to expand outside their base area. Under that umbrella we will be able to combine the two projects. They were the only respondent to the RFP. By providing a liaison, the Finance Committee has eyes and ears on the process and can be part of the vetting process relative to the developer's references. We have decided to have our consultant conduct those reference checks, but the Finance Committee will still have its representative participate as the project goes forward. Discussion followed. There will be a management company handling the apartment rentals as the Town is not in a position to handle that responsibility. Mr. Trindade reviewed components of each project as well as local amenities such as school bus stops, playgrounds, etc.

Ms. Hoffman reported that the West Street project is in her neighborhood and she is against it. The road is already full of speeding motorists and adding 48 units with two cars each will make it much worse. Selectman Trindade noted that he sat in his car for a couple of afternoons watching the traffic and noticed that, because there is no traffic light at the entrance to the industrial park, the trucks take West Street. On a recent Medway cleanup day, he found dozens of liquor bottles, empty nips, clothing, and syringes strewn along the roadway. He stated that a traffic study will definitely be done to anticipate the impact. Discussion followed.

Referring to the field situation, the Parks Department has the control of how the fields are used, develop policy, etc. But the Parks Commissioners do not have the authority to spend the money as it has to be voted by Town Meeting for the excess reserve fund. The number one reason to build the fields was for Medway youth.

It was announced that the School Budget Advisory Meeting scheduled for tomorrow will be cancelled due to the snow. It was been rescheduled for February 15. Hopefully Mr. Sullivan or Mr. Alessandri will be able to attend.

Chairman Rossi announced that the Annual Legislative Breakfast is this Saturday, February 11, at 8:30 AM. He will email the schedule to committee members.

**Clerk's Report:**

There were no changes to last month's report on the Finance Committee Reserve Account or the Finance Committee Budget.

**Liaison Reports:**

Mr. Schrader reported that EPFRAC has developed a concept for each of the sites included in the presentation to the Board of Selectmen and the Community Preservation Committee. There will be another meeting to further prioritize the spending, the budget and phasing. He briefly described some of the components, noting that the presentation is posted on the Town's website on the EPFRAC page. Speaking as liaison to the CPC, Ms. Hillery noted that some elements of the design cannot be funded with funds collected through the Community Preservation Act.

Ms. Hoffman stated that CIPC will be meeting with the Finance Committee very soon.

It was noted that the Schools will be coming to the Finance Committee meeting on March 8 to give a presentation.

Mr. O'Neill reported that he still owes a call to the Fire Chief and Police Chief and hopes to talk with them soon.

Ms. Hillery reported that she attended a Board of Health meeting a while back, noting that they may be seeking a part-time person in the FY18 budget.

Mr. Doherty stated he was unable to attend the most recent meeting at the Medway Public Library, adding that they will likely have to repurpose the existing unused funds for some of the things on their punch list.

Referring to the schools' budget, Mr. Schrader posed the following question: How good do your schools need to be? What is the right amount of money to do that? Mr. O'Neill theorized that the FPS Strategic Plan was put in place to set some standards that can be tracked.

**Review of Meeting Minutes:**

*The committee reviewed draft minutes from December 14, 2016.*

**After discussion, Mr. Schrader moved that the Finance Committee approve the meeting minutes of December 14, 2016 as amended; Mr. O'Neill seconded. NO discussion. 6-0-0.**

**General discussion:**

Referring to this evening's discussion with the Parks group, concern was expressed that the Finance Committee needs to follow through on what has been suggested. It was suggested that the two groups meet again in a couple of months. Mr. O'Neill asked about the Town's position on this matter. Mr.

Doherty theorized that it sounds like the Parks folks just want to manage the exceptions instead of following a policy.

**Next Meeting:**

Next regular meeting is scheduled for March 8, 2017, 7 PM, Sanford Hall.

**At 9:13 PM Ms. Hoffman moved to adjourn; Mr. Schrader seconded. No discussion. VOTE: 6-0-0.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Jeanette Galliardt  
Night Board Secretary