

Park and Recreation Commission	<b>Meeting Minutes</b>
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**Date: March 18, 2021**

**Place: Zoom Webinar**

**Commissioners Attending:** John Bain, Nancy O'Connor, Clara Batchelor, Wendy Sheridan, Antonia Bellalta, Dan Lyons and Jim Carroll

**Commissioners Absent:**

**Staff:** Leigh Jackson: Recreation Director, Jon Lewitus, Justin Lawson

TOPIC	KEY POINTS/DISCUSSION
<p><b>Welcome/Approval of the Minutes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• John Bain: “This is an open meeting for public comment, opening remarks, a special Parks &amp; Rec hearing and it will be recorded. I repeat it will be recorded, and the minutes and video will be available after the meeting, or tomorrow. This is something that we want to make sure that you all understand that you will be recorded, what you say, and also it will be on the video. There are 13 speakers signed up for public comment. Each speaker will get 3 minutes to say what they have to say and whatever they want to say, and that’s fine with us. We won’t be taking questions on any of the speakers. Hopefully everybody has enough time to say what they have to say. 8:15 is the closing time, but we may have to reconsider that a little bit. Lisa Wisel from Vine Ripe Grill has requested to be the last speaker and we will honor that.”</li> <li>• Introduced Dave Geanakakis: who is the Bidding Officer in the town. He is well respected. He will give you a presentation of how the process works. Dave will not be taking questions either.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Process for RFQ</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dave Geanakakis: “Chief Procurement Officer of the town. I’m in charge of the different bid, RFP, and RFQ processes for all school and town departments. I will be going over the process that was undertaken to obtain the recommendation for this RFQ. It’s a request for quotations. It falls under chapter 30b of Mass General Law called the uniform procurement act. That’s to open fair and open competition in all procurements for cities and towns. The role that I play is when a department has a need, a good, or service, depending on the expected dollar amount, they come to me, and request which process we should use. In this case, many of you know, that originally at the beginning of the year an RFP was issued as we’ve done periodically, as required</li> </ul>

	<p>by law, to obtain the services for food and beverage at the Robert T. Lynch Municipal Golf Course. That RFP had no response. That was in January. The Recreation and Golf Course came to me to find out what options we had. Based on the year term that was agreed upon, we decided with my advice, that we do that Request For Quotation process. That is for a lower dollar, shorter term contract, which is what this situation warranted. The hope was to obtain food and beverage services at the GC for a one year period. There are no contract extensions allowed, there are no additional terms. We recognize that the restaurant industry is under great stress due to Covid-19. The thought was that the golfers and the golf course could have service over the next year period. This was the process we chose to do. In February, the Request For Quotations was released in my office. We received 3 responses, 3 proposals and quotations. The Anthem Group, Vine Ripe, and Chris Yorty. At that time, what I do with procurements involves various Departments. I request advice and set up a Selection Committee to come up with a recommendation for the award for that contract. My office is not voting members of the Selection Committee- Selection Committee is made up of 5 members and they follow the correct RFQ procedure, included interviews, and all three companies that submitted quotations were interviewed by the members of the committee. The members of the committee are made up by 3 staff people from Parks &amp; Rec and GC and 2 Parks &amp; Rec commission members. At that time once they completed their review and evaluation, including the interview, they come to me with the award. This contract falls under the purview of the Parks &amp; Rec Commission. This has been a Brookline tradition to bring this contract every 3-4 years to the commission to confirm and give me a recommendation as well based on the information they provided for this contract award. That was done last Tuesday since then we have not completed the award of the contract in respect of the public process that is continuing today in this meeting. My office will notify the successful vendor based on the recommendation that we would like to get into a contract. That has not happened yet, but I anticipate it will be happening shortly because the golf season starts in the middle of April. So at this time that is where we are in the process. The Recreation Director will offer more insight. This process is done to</p>	
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	<p>make sure it's open, fair, and responsible for the bidders. This is something I have been doing in my 20+ years for all departments, town, and schools of Brookline. Thank you!"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leigh Jackson- Added that we did have procurement involved in the entire processes including interviews.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Public Comment</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jon Lewitus: will introduce all of the speakers on the list provided by Lisa Wisel one at a time, then open to the public at large.</li> <li>• Tricia Laham- Tricia is good friends with Lisa and Danny Wisel. She is a longtime home owner and an involved citizen in Brookline. Tricia believes the process is the issue. She personally thinks the town will have a hard time finding a better fit than Lisa. Lisa is a woman who has capably ran the Vine Ripe Grill at the golf course for 13 years. Tricia stated the timing was not quite right, post pandemic, and a little insensitive. Her frustration, embarrassment, and sorrow is because of the manner in which this happened. She stated, at a minimum, the professional courtesy to reach out to Lisa was not done. Tricia thinks the town should have acknowledged Lisa for the service that she provided. She thanks Lisa for being caring neighbors, housing a Thanksgiving Dinner for the past 5 years to Brookline families in need, including this year. She believes Lisa deserves better, and that the town has a responsibility to do better.</li> <li>• Scott Gladstone- Scott is a Town Meeting member pre. 16. Scott states that the golf course is an amenity of this town. The Town Meeting will have something to say if the golf course resource is not being managed to our values. Not renewing this contract is contrary to Brookline values. He states the town should give it to Lisa for the year and then talk about extending her contract. He says the town's vision is going the wrong way. It's the town golf course and we love it. Part of what we love about it is Vine Ripe Grill. It should not be replaced with a white male. At least replace her with a person of color. Not renewing this contract will make people very upset.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bob Weintraub-</li><li>• Bob is a meeting member from Precinct 9. Bob stated that he was the Head Master of Brookline High School. He is an active golfer and knows the Wisel family very well. He said Lisa is an on-the-ground servant leader, and she takes on many roles. When he heard the news he was shocked. He can't imagine anyone could do a better job than Lisa. The service is excellent. Bob attended plenty of celebrations at Vine Ripe Grill and everything was always great. He is 110% in support to keep Lisa at the golf course. He believes the course is in great shape, including the driving range. He urges you to renew the Vine Ripe Grill.</li><li>• Joe Bergantino- Has been in Brookline for 36 years. He says he loves this town. Joe was disappointed and outraged at this decision involving Vine Ripe Grill. He stated that, our town is forcing a local woman out of business. This is a neighborhood restaurant that serves exceptional food. The focus should be on improving the golf course, starting with the horrendous first two holes. Joe hopes that The Commission rethink this decision.</li><li>• Gil Hoy: Gil is a Town Meeting member from pre. 13, and a former four term Select Board Member, and Advisory Board Member. He believes that high quality service is hard to find. He is a regular golfer at Putterham and has attended numerous parties and events put on by Vine Ripe, he knows firsthand that they are high quality, and have excellent service. They earned the Reader's Choice Award for 8 years from the Brookline Tab. The Wisels are generous citizens, by donating food, time, and energy all over town. They toughed it out during the past year. Revenue was down and they still paid the rent and employees. He understands the difficulty that the town is facing trying to raise revenues and cutting expenses, but he believes Vine Ripe Grill is worth something. He hopes that the town can find an agreement to keep the Wisels at the golf course.</li><li>• Paul Epstein: Paul is near the end of his 5th decade of living in Brookline. He is finding fewer examples of community shared interests. Paul states that it's natural for local</li></ul>	
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institutions to close and be replaced by new businesses, but for one of Brookline's treasured establishments! Operated by one of Brookline's treasured families, that facing an unfair and premature forced demise, he knows it's his turn to speak out and justify on its behalf. He states that he could be here all night talking about all the glorious accomplishments that the Wisels have done, and it still wouldn't even scratch the surface of all the great things that they have done for this town. He won't pretend to know all the details that led to this surprising outcome, but what he does know is that Lisa and her family have done so much for our community. Lastly, he states that everyone from Brookline deserves that Lisa gets a fair hearing and opportunity to continue their work for Vine Ripe Grill.

- **Harvey Bravman:**  
Harvey has concerns on the subcommittee report. They mention Chris Yorty's name and his excellent interview several times, but there was no mention of Vine Ripe Grill's, even after 13 years of existence at the golf course and commitment to the Brookline community. No mention was made of the pandemic and the devastating impact on restaurants, including Vine Ripe Grill. He questions why Chris Yorty was notified that he was the recommended vendor before Vine Ripe was even notified. Justin and Leigh are new to Brookline. Can they be expected to fully comprehend the scope of Vine Ripe Grill's impact on this community? During the 9 minute meeting Justin mentioned that Chris's presentation was spectacular, but Harvey asks for Vine Ripe Grill to be considered for all of the spectacular things they have brought to Brookline.
- **Benjamin Duggin-**  
Benjamin was born and raised in Brookline. He was a graduate of Brookline High School's class of 2005. He has known the Wisel's all his life. Benjamin would like to be addressed as a concerned golfer. He worked for Mike Murphy as a greens keeper, and Benjamin uses the golf course 2-3 nights a week during the summer. He stated, Vine Ripe Grill is what makes Putterham Meadows an excellent golf course. He says, the food is better food than any other golf course. The staff is always smiling and happy to see you. Seeing local Brookline families is part of the reason the golf course experience is so great. As a concerned citizen, Benjamin asks, please do not fix something that is not

	<p>broken. He urges you the keep Vine Ripe Grill at the Golf Course.</p> <p>Laura Baber-</p> <p>Laura is a long time resident of Brookline. She works for Center Communities of Brookline serving over 500 seniors and independent senior housing. She has had the pleasure to know Lisa and Danny for 35 years. Laura expresses that we have all suffered in many ways this year. Laura believes that situation sends all Brookline Businesses a difficult message. She urges The Commission to reconsider this decision, and award Lisa for an extension.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Philip Sandler- Philip is a former President of Brookline Rotary Club. He stated; Lisa exemplifies and goes above and beyond to help anyone that goes her way. She has donated thousands of dollars to this town. He tells us that Lisa has contributed to this town, and is always there when we need her. She always gives a better price than anyone else. Philip was happy to hear that the commission has not made up their minds on a decision yet.</li><li>• Leise Jones- Leise is the President of the Board of Brookline Chambers of Commerce. She spoke on behalf of the small business owners. She stated, Lisa Wisel's restaurant and catering business gives excellent food and business. They have hosted 100 families for Thanksgiving dinners. The Chamber is questioning this evaluation and decision process. They wonder if all the contributions that the Wisels have given to the town have been taken into consideration. Also, if the timing was a factor? Leise said that they want to explore this surprising decision and wants to make sure it's in the best interest of the town. They are here in support of Lisa and Danny.</li><li>• Lee Greenblatt- Lee has been a resident of Brookline for over 50 years. He has known Danny and Lisa for over 40. Lee and his family are so proud of them for what they have done for the town. He finds this decision shortsighted and is confused by the awarded contracts. There are no negative comments on what Lisa and Danny have done and what the restaurant has meant to our town. He says this committee needs to recognize what Lisa and Danny have done for us.</li><li>• Luisa Raposo-</li></ul>	
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	<p>Luisa has lived and owned in Brookline for over 20 years. She is appalled by this process. Luisa can't see why this is the best thing you can do for Brookline. She does not think this is in the best interest for Brookline. Especially in March, that celebrates Woman History. She is hoping that The Commission reconsider the decision.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Jay Morris- Jay has lived across the street from Vine Ripe Grill for over 35 years. He thinks Vine Ripe is the best. Jay is puzzled by the process, though he respects it. He is not a golfer but he likes to walk across the street for a good lunch. He stated, there was no community input. He respects everyone on the panel for giving time to express their support for Vine Ripe Grill. Jay says that Brookline might have put themselves in a bind by already alerting the potential winner. He states that he agrees with all the speakers above.</li><li>• David Gladstone- David is on the Select Board for Climate Action Committee, and is a banker by trade here in Brookline. One of the things he looks at is how this got to this point. It appears to him that the town, and the committee, did not take into consideration all of the contributions that the Wisels have done to this town. He says he understand, why the town is trying to drive more revenue. The town needs more revenue, he just doesn't know if this was the way to go about it. There should be a discussion with the Wisels to see what is fair.</li><li>• Jennifer Goldsmith- Jennifer is a town meeting member of precinct 11. Her first interaction with Lisa was when they catered the high school, the generosity and care was unbelievable. This should not be a financial decision, but this should be a community decision. She explains that majority of the golfers come from outside of Brookline, and says this is a missed revenue opportunity. She hopes that the town reconsiders this. Jennifer tells us that announcing the contract before it's signed is not a good move. She is glad that there is an opportunity to reverse this decision and do the right thing.</li><li>• Aiden Briney- Aiden is not a member of any town or commission. He grew up around the corner from the Wisel's. When</li></ul>	
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	<p>Aiden was in HS he worked at the golf course. Lisa and Danny are incredibly involved in the community He says the food is always enjoyable. Aiden says, you have such a good situation with Lisa and Danny at the golf course that you should reevaluate your decision on what is best for the golf course and town.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Barbara Tynan- Barbara is a former longtime Recreation employee. She stated, Vine Ripe easily surpasses any concession that has ever been at the golf course. She says Vine Ripe is by far the best food vendor that has ever been there including phenomenal service. It's a personal touch that the Wisels give you when you walk in. They service the community in so many ways. Barbara respectfully requests that Parks and Rec Commission rethink their decision.</li><li>• Bob Allen- Bob is not involved in the committee, but he does have an understanding of how the town government works. He understands the RFP process. The concern Bob has is how the commission would think anyone would respond to that RFP in this particular climate. He is unsure the reason behind the RFQ. He believes that the contract should have been extended this year for the Wisel's by using a state of emergency order, and then go for a RFP next year once things are a little better.</li><li>• Richard Segan- Richard is a long time Brookline resident and a former Town Meeting member pre. 13 and now in precinct.10. In Richard's opinion, Lisa is the model that he would prefer, and hope to recruit to maintain in Brookline. She has repeatedly offered generous pricing. He asks The Commission to consider Lisa's contributions. Richard says we should be recruiting not removing Vine Ripe Grill.</li><li>• Karen Chabon- Karen is a Brookline resident for 28 years, she is an active volunteer, a chair for the After The Prom party, and currently provides accounting for many local restaurants. Karen has worked with Lisa for several years doing her bookkeeping. Karen was astonished with what the town was asking for in the RFP, in the middle of a pandemic. She doesn't understand what the town was thinking when they gave them 30 days to come up with a menu and price point. She says typically that takes months. She says that the town is</li></ul>	
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	<p>just the landlord and should only be getting the rent and maybe a small percentage but should not be asking for all of these perks. She says, Chris Yorty is a general manager and not even a chef, meanwhile Danny Wisel is an award winning chef.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ruth Kaplan- Ruth and her family are lifelong residents of Brookline. Ruth was feeling optimistic with all the outpour the Wisel's were getting from Brookline. Speaking as a non-golfer, Ruth was so drawn to the golf course because of Vine Ripe's food and the service. She says this place is Brookline's best kept secret. She loves the beautiful setting and thinks it is a treasure. When Ruth went to the golf course with her 100 year old mother, she was greeted by Lisa with great service. She says the service could not have been friendlier.</li><li>• Jake Wisel- Jake worked at Putterham grill before his parents took it over. He stated, his mom still has not heard anything from the committee. He personally hopes they do not get the bid because of how poorly his mom has been treated. He is disappointed with this process. Jake thanks his mom for the time here and tells her she deserves better.</li><li>• Amy L- Lifelong citizen of Brookline. Amy says, 'I am enraged that we would do this to one of our exemplary citizens'. She expresses that this is unbelievable to her. We should be collaborating with them in a way that Vine Ripe Grill is benefitting from this.</li><li>• Dorothy Lebach- Dorothy tells us she is embarrassed to be speaking, but she is wowed by all the praise. Dorothy was saddened by the decision, and says this is the wrong time to not renew a locally owned business. I hope there will be a second chance to support Lisa and Danny. She had a party 11 years ago and Lisa still remembers her.</li><li>• 3/18/21 EMAIL Thanks for the info. Wish it had been on the town website. Please enter our email protest and support of Vine Ripe into the record--and convey our position to attendees. We'll try to listen in via phone. And, send us info about the positions expressed at the meeting, the</li></ul>	
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	<p>results of the meetings, and info about registering for future ZOOM meetings about this issue.</p> <p>Sincerely, Victoria Longino &amp; John Ambler</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Danny &amp; Lisa Wisel- “Technical difficulties over here. Thank you for allowing me to speak tonight. I am going to go over the three minutes and I apologize. First of all, I just want to say a comment that started the night off was that the contract has not been awarded yet, but the contract to me was awarded. It was approved by Parks and Recreation on March 9th. And the final stamp of approval is through the select board. So, I just wanted to clarify that also, I've gotten dozens of text tonight that people have tried to get in and weren't allowed in. So I just want that for the record as well. I want to begin by expressing to Chris Yorty that I bear no ill will. And in fact, I wish him tremendous success in all his future endeavors. I want to make clear that this is not about Chris or any of his actions. I would like to thank the golfers, the non-profits, the local charities, the community and the entire Town of Brookline. I have received over two hundred emails of support. I thank all the people who are taking time out of their busy schedules to attend tonight's meeting and I want to thank the Park and Rec for adding additional time on to tonight to hear everyone's voice. This process has been flawed from the very beginning. I have every right to be somewhat skeptical of the way the Town of Brookline conducts its business, as this is the second time my livelihood has been threatened or placed in jeopardy. I feel that the RFP and RFQ were written explicitly to prevent me from bidding. I believe that it suggests age and gender discrimination. The town notified the awarded vendor prior to the public vote last Tuesday. I received an email at eight forty eight p.m. that very evening inviting me and all of you to zoom into the Park and Rec Commission meeting where they were scheduled to approve the next vendor. That email was distributed 12 minutes before the meeting ended. I was never notified and to this very moment I have not received a courtesy notification of my status in leadership at the golf course. This past season, in the midst of a pandemic, pressured me at every weekly meeting to implement a golf course employee discount beyond the 50 percent discount already being given to</li></ul>	
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	<p>five employees in a leadership role. Every Tuesday morning, I would get asked the same question. Will you consider giving all golf course employees food and beverage discounts? Every Tuesday morning. I had the same answer. We're in the middle of a pandemic and although I would love to, I'm fighting for my financial life. In September, I finally had the nerve to ask that this be taken off the weekly agenda. Sure enough, the RFP and subsequent RFQ are requiring the new vendor to give these discounts. I feel this is vindictive. In 13 years of serving the golfers, I am not aware of any issues regarding the quality of our food, our customer service or a complaint of any nature. There is nothing on record and in fact, last year alone we won six Regional Gold Reader's Choice Awards. Our sales increased every year, with the exception of this past year, where it plummeted once again for the second time. This process has put enormous stress, anxiety and uncertainty to my livelihood. Having survived the pandemic on adapting my business model and seeing normal times in the future, having paid my rent, my vendors and my employees, I never imagined the Park and Rec Commission would be my undoing. What I will miss most are the friendly golfer faces and them telling me how they had a horrible round. I will miss my relationships with all town departments, including the Brookline Food Pantry, the Senior Center, the high school and all other schools, the Rotary Club, the Teen Center, Town Hall, the Libraries, Women Thriving and the Police Department. I will find a way to support my favorite local charities and nonprofits no matter where I land, because it's my passion and it's what I do. If this commission is inclined to keep their decision and award the new vendor the contract, I have some specific questions that I would like accurately conveyed to town counsel. One. Did procurement follow statutory bidding procedures, including public advertising? And if not, why not? The RFP was advertised on the town website. The RFQ was not. How is the RFQ advertised? Power bidders informed that the RFP was available. Was it advertised in Central Register of Goods, in Central Register of Goods and Services and local and minority papers? As is customary, just yesterday I received a copy of all the submitted bids and one of them it stated, and I quote, My apologies for any lack of detail here as we were only made aware of the contract a few days ago, end quote. How is this</p>	
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bidder made aware of the RFQ. Two, the RFQ was issued on Feb 10th per the town meeting minutes. How is it possible that an RFQ could have been approved so shortly thereafter on March 9th by the Park and Rec Commission, the lead time on advertising in Central Register and goods and services is approximately seven business days. Typically an RFQ or RFP is on the street for a minimum of two to three weeks to allow sufficient time for bidders to prepare their bid and then submit. Once the bids are submitted the awarding authority needs a few days to review the qualifications, the bid requirements and call references. Were references checked ours were not. Typically a memo or staff summary has to be prepared to present to the awarding authority for approval. How is this done in 18 business days? Three, if prospective bidders have particular questions, they should be directed to Procurement, where the question and the answer should be distributed to all bidders. So each bidder is on the same playing field. And in one of the proposals it's stated, and I quote, I have not yet seen the grounds, but in speaking with Justin and it goes on, end quote. Where's the transparency, where's the equity, where is the equal footing? Four, since there was no criteria to be judged, what was the process for evaluating each bidder? What greater experience does the new vendor have over Vine Ripe Grill? Does he have any golf experience? What are his connections to Brookline? Since he did not submit menus, how can they be compared to ours? This process was set up for us not to succeed. The golf course has failed us. The Town of Brookline has failed us. The Procurement Department has failed us and the Park and Recreation Departments has failed us. Thank you.

- John Bain-

“The questions that you will be looking for, I'm sure that will be addressed and hopefully you'll understand, whether it's in our favor or not, I don't know. We're not in that position to comment. But I do want to say this. I'll speak for the Park and Recreation Commission again. I'm John Bain, Chairman of Parks. I've been on the board for over thirty three years since my last term. We do recognize, Lisa and Danny, your contribution to the town. This is a separate issue. Your generosity, Thanksgiving and all the other venues that you take

on to help people. We recognize that and we appreciate that. And I can also say what I've heard tonight, overwhelming support and love the Wisels. You know, certainly it's hard to make some decisions that, you know, that may not always go in our favor, whether it's ours or elsewhere. But you should be very proud of the support that you have in the town. And you have my support and you have the commission's support. Unfortunately, these things come up. I don't know the legality of why they had to come up, but that's something you can do some research yourself and talk to David and the town counsel and they'll certainly sort things out. Again, I do appreciate what you've done in the town, how much people think of you. And let's see what the outcome is. I mean, right now, Bobby Allen said we could be in a box. I don't know. It really wasn't awarded to Mr. Yorty, who was only told he was a high bidder and it's not awarded to anybody right now until it goes through the process. So with that, I want to thank everybody who joined tonight.

Lisa Wisel:

Am I still on time? Am I still on? This is Lisa.

John Bain:

I thought you were done. I'm sorry.

Lisa Wisel:

No, I was done. But I just had one comment to what you just said, I watched a copy of The Commission vote last week and it was awarded. I heard the ay, ay, ay, ay, ay, to give Chris Yorty approval to be submitted to the Select Board. So he was nominated by the committee. He was approved by the Park and Rec Commission. To me, that's an approval. You're only waiting for the final stamp for the select from the select board.

John Bain:

Well, that's the process. I'm glad you understand that. The panel recommends a vendor to the Park and Recreation Commission and The Commission votes on that recommendation as a procedure and then it moves on to further legalities. So thank you, Lisa, for your service to the town. And we'll close the meeting now.

Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes 3/18/21

	Thank you.		
<b>Adjourn</b>			

**Next Meeting: March 24, 2021**

**Location: Zoom Webinar**

**A true record**

**Attest Brittany Abany**

**Date: 3.18.21**