

ADVISORY COMMITTEE CAPITAL SUBCOMMITTEE  
Report on the FY 23 Budgets of  
Recreation Department  
Recreation Revolving Fund  
Golf Enterprise Fund

On March 10, 2022 at 5:30 p.m. via Zoom the Capital Subcommittee held a hearing on the above-mentioned budgets. Access to a recording of the meeting can be found here: <https://brooklinema.zoomgov.com/rec/share/ykD8Xeb2K4JbGVbLqBTeggAcLuKR08G-i5XVm0lAjz9T5wPz2oHUExwR2z6OzibG.moIeTOcz9YdMhDSb>  
(Passcode: +Xfxs9c^)

In attendance were Leigh Jackson (Recreation Department Director); Jon Lewitus (Assistant Director); Justin Lawson (General Manager and Pro at the Putterham Meadows Golf Course); Gerry Kelly (Business Manager of the Recreation Department); Alexandra Vecchio (Director of Parks and Open Space); Nancy O'Connor (Vice Chair, Park and Recreation Commission); Melissa Goff (Deputy Town Administrator); and members of the Capital Subcommittee, John Doggett, Harry Friedman, Carol Levin, Pamela Lodish and Alok Somani.

Summaries:

The proposed FY 23 budget of the **Recreation Department** is \$1,162,787, representing a \$104,396 (9.9%) increase over the previous year, attributable in part to adding a Therapeutic Recreation Specialist to positions supported by the General Fund and increases in electricity to operate the temporary chillers at the Kirrane Rink.

The proposed FY 23 budget of the **Recreation Revolving Fund** is \$4,093,699, representing an increase in revenues and expenditures of \$213,768 (5.5%) over the previous year with increases in salaries, services and utilities. Added to the budget are increases in staff salaries at Soule; part time staff salaries at the Aquatics Center; part time salaries for summer camp staff and programming for the new community room at the Tappan Street gym. There is also a transfer increase of \$48,000 to the division of Parks and Open Space due to permit fee increases. Transfers to the General Fund decrease by \$85,788 (15.7%) due to vacancies in the Revolving Fund and therefore a reduction in the cost of employee benefits.

The proposed FY 23 budget of the **Golf Enterprise Fund** is \$2,580,460, representing an increase in expenditures and revenue of \$570,967 (28.4%) over the previous year with notable increases in services (equipment rental, landscaping services, general consulting services, and agricultural supplies) and utilities. Pro shop supplies decline due to the absence of US Open merchandise. There is also a \$235,519 (11.5%) increase in transfers to the General Fund.

Discussion

Regarding the **Recreation Department**, Leigh Jackson noted that Covid has significantly impacted the programs of the Department due to the shutting down of facilities and the need to change protocols. Pool hours decreased at times due to a lack of lifeguards, which the Director noted, is a national issue. Covid compounded the problem because the in-person licensing component of lifeguard certification was suspended for two years. Hourly wages for lifeguards have been raised to \$18. In addition, due to staffing shortages, existing staff members have had to take on additional responsibilities.

In the past year the department has completed 50% of the required policy updates for CAPRA (Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies). CAPRA provides quality assurance and quality improvement of accredited park and recreation agencies throughout the United States by providing agencies with a management system of best practices. The accreditation process takes five years; the department is currently in its third year.

The department has also begun to implement a community engagement plan and equity plan and has undertaken staff training. Success in the coming year will be measured by efficiency and how well Recreation staff members are able to focus on the goals that they set and whether they can complete their equity goals initiatives at the same time as they service the community through their programs. Staff has also identified marketing and workflow that needs improvement in the next fiscal year.

In **Recreation Revolving Fund** programming, core programs have been addressed by adding enhancements, new training, new supplies and selection of a better location to provide these services. More program variety has been added including Ultimate Frisbee, esports, and chess wizards, and archery and pickle ball have been expanded. Brookline High School basketball coaches and players have assisted with a K-2 basketball clinic. Recreation teams have scrimmages with high school players and the Tappan Gym is now used by the Recreation Department on Sundays. The department has not been able to run the RAFT Program for Teens, Health and Wellness Classes or the Ski Program due to vacancies in two recreation leader positions.

The department has had difficulty hiring and retaining staff, particularly at the aquatics center, as noted above. High school students who are hired as lifeguards go on to college. Staff turnover has also had to do with staff that want a promotion or want to be closer to family. Existing staff on a number of occasions has had to step up and take on additional tasks in order to continue departmental operations.

The department has a number of partners, including the Senior Center, and Park, Dexter, Beaver Country Day and Winsor schools. The director does not see Library programs as competition for the Recreation Department and assured the Subcommittee that Recreation and the Library work well together.

Looking ahead, Recreation programming will focus on the 14 to 35 age group and building back programs for seniors to the level of pre-Covid days. Success of the Recreation Revolving Fund is looked at via participation numbers and how many users can be accommodated in the programs offered.

Regarding the **Putterham Meadows Golf Course and Golf Enterprise Fund**, a consultant has been engaged to develop a Master Plan to address the serious drainage issues at the golf course that interfere with its operation. (In FY22 30 days of operations were lost due to flooding of the course.) Opportunities to expand activities at the facility to make it a recreational asset for non golfers as well as golfers continue to be explored via hosting seasonal special events and developing a marketing and social media plan.

Putterham staff along with Recreation administration have worked closely with the Town Administrator and Town Hall staff to support the plans for hosting the U.S. Open at The Country Club in June.

A consultant to develop a Master Plan for the clubhouse has yet to be retained since responses to the RFP came in over budget. An RFP will be issued again in FY 23. The transition to the new food vendor has been a challenge due to Covid, however there has recently been an uptick in inquiries for special occasion events. People who have eaten at *The Hemlock Grill* report that the food is good.

### **Other Issues**

The Subcommittee also heard about additional resources needed for the cleaning and maintenance of the Tappan Street gym and new community room. Clarification of respective responsibilities of the School Department and the Recreation Department has been requested. The Recreation Director believes that an additional custodian may be needed.

Kirrane Rink – The FY 23 budget of the Revolving Fund anticipates \$297,402 in expenses for managing the rink and \$279,020 in revenue from fees, resulting in a projected deficit of \$18,382 for the Revolving Fund. The costs of operating and maintaining the rink run in excess of \$100,000 annually.

Aquatics Center – The FY 23 budget of the Revolving Fund anticipates \$728,670 in fees paid for participation in aquatics programs and \$589,420 in expenses to run those programs. The operating costs of the Aquatics Center are projected to be \$512,006 and are carried in the Recreation Department's FY 23 operating budget. Approximately two-thirds of that amount is allocated for salaries, with the remaining funds covering the cost of supplies, services, and utilities.

Financial Aid – According to the Recreation Director, the dollar amount of financial aid has decreased due to Covid and the subsequent reduction in program offerings.

In the past, funds from the Brookline Community Foundation have been sufficient to support 20 children attending summer camp. The Recreation Department has provided funds for 15 other children to attend camp at no cost and 12 children to attend camp at partial cost. Eleven additional children have been able to attend the Park School Summer Program through a partnership between the school and the department. During other times of the year, 109 children have been awarded partial scholarships to attend recreation programs.

Access to programs - In order to ensure children and adults access to Recreation department programs, staff relies on support from the School Department and ODICR and colleagues with knowledge of other languages including Spanish and Mandarin Chinese.

By a vote of 5 – 0 on each budget, the Capital Subcommittee recommends approval of the following three budgets:

Recreation Department- \$1,162,787  
Golf Enterprise Fund - \$2,580,460  
Recreation Revolving Fund - \$4,093,699.