



TOWN OF NEWTOWN
Fairfield Hills Authority
MINUTES

The Fairfield Hills Authority held a Meeting on November 26, 2018 in Council Chambers at the Municipal Center, 3 Primrose Street, Newtown CT 06470

These minutes are subject to the approval of the FHA at their next meeting.

Present: Ross Carley, Brook Clark, Terry Sagedy, Andrew Philbin, Melissa Beylouni (arrived 7:09 pm), Christal Preszler

Absent: Renata Adler, Michael Holmes

Public Attendance: Phil Clark – *Claris Construction*, Bob Crawford – *owner/operator of 4 ice rinks in CT*, Ian Yorty – *Executive Director - Newtown Youth Academy*

Also Present: Kim Chiappetta (clerk)

The meeting was called to order at 7:06 pm without a quorum. A quorum was reached at 7:09 p.m.

Public Participation:

Chairman Ross Carley called for public participation.

Bob Crawford approached the Authority and introduced himself as an ice rink owner and operator in the State of CT with 4 locations. Bob first visited Newtown about 18 months ago to investigate the possibility of teaming up with Peter D'Amico (owner of Newtown Youth Academy) for an ice skating rink opportunity in Newtown. Mr. Crawford provided his background that he has been an ice rink owner/operator for 23 years, and currently owns 6 surfaces in 4 facilities. Newtown will be his 5th location. The demographics of the area fit and indicate this is a great opportunity for the NYA and the people in the community who want a skating option. The ice rink will be located in the wing of the NYA building where the tennis and basketball courts are currently located. These courts will be relocated to the turf side of the building, and the turf area will be reduced in area. Phil Clark added that there will be no new expansion to the existing NYA building as was originally proposed. The only change will be an additional entrance to meet fire code regulations. The group discussed the size of the ice rink and the changes to the wing of the building. Existing seating will be used for the ice rink which will accommodate up to 300 patrons which is expected only when the high school hockey team plays. Primary use of hockey rinks is Monday – Friday, fluctuating from 15 – 30 skaters on the ice at one time. Ice rink hours will be Monday – Friday 3:00 – 10:00 p.m. Weekend hours will be 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Ross expressed that a concern on campus is parking. Mr. Crawford said that high school hockey games are typically 8 pm on a Saturday night or a Wednesday afternoon and they generate typically 80 – 100 people in attendance. The crowd size will be comparable to peak Monday – Friday activity periods. The group has years of experience with the number of people drawn by an event and plan accordingly. Terry Sagedy asked if the ice rink side will be multi-purpose. Mr. Crawford answered that it will be completely dedicated to ice.

Terry recapped that functionality will be shifted to the turf side of the facility, and that half of the turf will be lost. He asked if there is a feel that the NYA can still accommodate all activities on one side of the facility. Mr. Crawford explained that this shift is being done based upon the recommendation of Peter D'Amico. Terry asked if Mr. Crawford had any economic impact figures on how hockey patrons spend money in town. Mr. Crawford said that the economic impact is positive. The group runs events on weekends, and gave the example of a recent Thanksgiving tournament run at one of his facilities the weekend after Thanksgiving with teams from as far away as Florida. Mr. Crawford's group has received awards from the Greater Hartford Convention and Visitors Bureau for its contribution to the local economy. The Newtown ice rink will not be a major hub but will be a great ancillary facility that is intended to be used during events.

Melissa Beylouni noted that the turf side of the building appears to be rented to groups from out of town and asked if revenue would be lost? Melissa added that use of the turf has caused a parking nightmare. Ian Yorty explained that there will still be half of the turf that currently exists. The NYA does anticipate losing the business of teams who rent all of the turf; however, the majority of rentals are only for a portion of the existing turf so this business will be unaffected. Mr. Crawford further explained that part of the reason the decision was made to relocate the basketball and tennis courts was when the utilization and growth was studied, the turf was too big in comparison the number of participants and time in use. The goal is two-fold: 1) to create a facility that the town can be proud of, and 2) provide something the community will want to use. The desire is to create Newtown centric ice sports and to facilitate cost effective programming for people in the community.

Andrew Philbin asked if Mr. Crawford envisioned the space being utilized for playoffs. Mr. Crawford explained that the facility will not have the seating capacity for playoff games. Quarter final games require 700 seats, and semi-final and final games are played at Yale which seats 3,500. Newtown will be more of a user facilities. Andrew asked if any additional space will be lost to locker rooms. Mr. Crawford explained that the current location of the cages and wrestling area will converted to locker rooms. The goal is to not just bring the boys program over, but to develop a fully functional girls program so there is a girls locker room in the design.

Christal Prezler said that it is good to see Mr. Crawford again and to see the project moving forward. Mr. Crawford expressed that he has gotten to know the community over the past 18-months and has found the hockey community to be a committed, driven group. He added that there are people from Newtown who play in the Cromwell rink and whom he coaches. Terry applauded Mr. Crawford, Ian Yorty and the board for an insightful decision in using the existing space. Mr. Crawford complemented Peter D'Amico for being a gentleman and wanting what is best for the community. Ross asked if there will be a name change. Mr. Crawford said the facility will continue as the Newtown Youth Academy, but the ice rink side may be named.

Brook asked for information on the timing of the project. Mr. Crawford said the group is going through the approval process, and would like to be ready to begin interior work in late March.

Ross recognized the positive aspects of the project for the community and asked if a letter of intent was filed with the Fairfield Hills Authority to proceed with the change to the property. Mr. Crawford replied that if this is a requirement they will do it. Ross noted that a new lease may have to be drawn up for the property.

Ross thanked everyone for attending and providing information on the project.

Minutes:

Mr. Carley asked for a motion to accept the minutes of October 22, 2018. Andrew entertained. Brook seconded and all were in favor.

Chairman's Report

Ross welcomed the new board member Andrew Philbin, and noted the various activities on campus.

2019 Meeting Calendar:

Mr. Carley asked for a motion to accept the 2019 meeting calendar. Andrew entertained. Melissa seconded and all were in favor.

The group discussed next steps with regards to renegotiating the lease with changes to the facility. Terry expressed concerns with the past reduction in common area maintenance fees.

Cupolas:

Ross informed members that the First Selectman's office has received numerous inquiries regarding purchasing the cupolas. The FHA needs to determine if they want to sell all or keep one. A waiver will have to be signed by the purchaser stating that they are being purchased as is. Brook expressed that she would love to keep one of the cupolas for a decorative reuse on the campus, but knows that there are currently no funds available for refurbishment. The group discussed the possibility of keeping one of the cupolas and the opportunities to obtain funds for refurbishment. One suggestion was to use the funds raised in the sale of two to refurbish one. The group discussed the possibility of using a cupola as a focal point of a garden on campus. A next step will be for Ross to work with Parks & Rec to have the location of the cupolas mowed so people can view them. Concerns were raised with a sealed bid possibly containing a very low amount. Christal clarified that it will be noted that the Town reserves the right to rescind. A suggestion was made to partner with the Historical Society to preserve one of the cupolas. The group agreed to begin by selling one of the small cupolas to see if the process is successful.

Vice Chair:

Ross explained that there is now an empty seat on the FHA with Phil's resignation. This seat is to be filled by either a registered Republican or unaffiliated. Ross requested that if members were aware of someone who would be interested in joining the FHA and meets the requirement to have them submit their resume to the First Selectman's office. He added that Phil's resignation also leaves the vice chair position opened and asked members to think about who they would recommend as the replacement.

The conversation returned to the NYA. Melissa expressed concerns with the need for a drop-off lane and reiterated her concerns with traffic. Ross reminded members of the concerns with parking, and informed everyone that he will be attending the next Planning and Zoning meeting to raise his concerns. The group then discussed concerns with the infrastructure on the campus as it becomes more active. Christal explained that she has requested money in the CIP every year for 10 years for demolition, safety and infrastructure but have not received any such funds for the next two years. She noted that it is on the radar and will continue to request these funds. Ross noted that Christal has been good with keeping infrastructure in the forefront.

Brook returned the conversation to parking, and asked if this has been a consideration by the Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review Committee (FHMPRC). Ross explained that the FHMPRC is taking this into consideration in their review process, but the final decision is made by Planning & Zoning.

Member Updates

No updates.

Staff Update

Events & Activities:

Kim began by informing members that she is already receiving applications for 2019 events. Christal explained that changes to event size and location may be necessary in the future as the campus develops.

Campus updates:

Christal informed members that the biggest thing is that the lease is signed for the brewery. They are currently going through an appraisal process. She noted that Kim overseeing the trim remediation, and has been coordinating so that the renovation is moving ahead. Melissa expressed that it is very exciting. Ross added that this may result in more interest in the campus.

Adjournment: With no further business, Brook made a motion to adjourn, Melissa seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Kimberly Chiappetta, Clerk.*