



## **Watertown City Council**

### **Committee on Parks and Recreation**

**Councilor Palomba, Chair, Councilor Feltner, Vice Chair, Councilor Bays, Secretary**

#### **Committee Meeting**

**Monday, July 8, 2024 at 6:00 PM in the City Council Chambers**

#### **Committee Report**

**Tuesday, August 13, 2024**

The Committee on Parks and Recreation meeting was called to order July 8, 2024 at 5:30 pm in the City Council Chambers. Present were Councilors Tony Palomba, chair, Lisa Feltner, vice-chair, and Caroline Bays, secretary. Also present were George Proakis, city manager, Emily Monea, Assistant City manager, Ernie Thebado, acting recreation director (on Zoom), and Pequossette staff members Brian Donato and Steve Helbery

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss desired qualifications and qualities for the position of Recreation Director.

Councilor Palomba called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

Councilor Palomba asked the manager if he had any comments on what qualifications he would need in a Director of Recreation. The manager explained that the job will require many different parts including developing a five year plan, putting together programs, and working with other departments. The director will report to the assistant city manager, Emily Monea.

Councilor Palomba asked if there were any comments from residents. Brian Donato expressed his support for the acting director, Ernie Thebado, who has been doing an excellent job. He has broadened camp activities beyond team sports as well as reached out to non-English speaking residents.

Councilor Bays commented that she was interested in this expansion of activities. She wants a Director who can think outside the box and will be creating programs for everyone, both addressing a wide variety of interests and skill sets as well as crossing across all ages. She felt more could be done in using all of our open space as well, such as using DCR property.

Councilor Palomba agreed and stated that the new director should be providing activities for all ages as well as different interests and that will require working cooperatively with other departments such as the Senior Center and Live Well Watertown. He also felt the person will have to be able to work within the limited budget and plan well, especially if they will be creating a five year plan. He said the director should be a strong voice for recreation and wants someone who can elevate the need for recreation for our city's residents.

Councilor Feltner agreed that it's a big job and the person will need to be innovative while not abandoning the popular programs already in place. The director will need to understand facility maintenance, how to plan a budget, and how to make hard choices and say no sometimes. She

would also like to see more synergy across departments and meet the needs of more people by expanding the range of programming.

Councilor Palomba added that in the future, he would like to have a director who could advocate for a recreation center. He also commented that he felt the salary was competitive. The manager said that he was thankful for the classification and compensation study because he will have an easier time filling positions with a more competitive salary.

The manager concluded by saying he finds these meetings helpful because they inform what questions he asks in the interview process.

The meeting adjourned at 6:30 pm. Minutes were prepared by Councilor Bays.