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May 10th, 2022
Clinton Parks & Recreation Meeting Minutes
6:00 pm
Clinton Parks & Recreation Building
560 High Street

Call to Order: 6:00 Pm

Attendance: Chair Ed Verrier, Vice Chair John Green, Commissioner Patricia Kerrigan, Commissioner Amanda Agnitti, Commissioner Mike Garofoli

Administrative:

Consideration of Finalists for Recreation Coordinator
Interview Schedule of Two Candidates

6:00pm Laura Taylor

Introductions

Laura introduces herself. Been a Clinton resident for 22 years. Since moving here I was fascinated by how many activities, clubs and opportunities to get involved. Sorta hit the ground running. Got on the Old Home Day committee, cultural counsel, conservation, open space planning, anything to do with the schools I've been a part of. Sports, run the soccer program. This town has phenomenal opportunities to get to know people & get involved. Be a part of the community and really just take part in a phenomenal way to be a part of something. It's great. I just continued to stay involved and follow my children in the activities they are involved in and things I have a personal interest in.

Ed asks, describe your most challenging customer experience. What happened? And how did you deal with it?

Laura, I would say with the job I have now, we are dealing with mostly families and parents and having to explain to a parent that they need to engage with their child more, they have to spend more time with their child, and we do a questionnaire that's called an ages and stages questionnaire. As you go through the questionnaire it's charting the developmental milestones. Delivering that news to a parent and letting them know that they might have to go get an early intervention evaluation. They might have to go back to see their doctor. Delivering the information with compassion, empathy and understanding. In my activity life with Clinton, during covid, we still ran our soccer program. I had to create a whole covid protocol document for the board of health, what we would follow. We had to follow Mass Youth Soccer protocol, the town of Clinton, Clinton Public Schools, Nashoba Valley and the amount of resistance you got from the town with just the rules we were charged with to enforce just so we could play on the fields and to keep your head and to remain calm and just explain its part of a bigger picture so the children can play. I feel like anytime you run into an issue with somebody, if you try to see it from their side and understand why they are coming at you. Whether they are coming at you hard, at the same tone as you and almost try and

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empathize and try and work backwards and figure out how you can help them. Even if you don't agree. At least come to a resolution, or meeting of the minds, the last thing you want to do is make an enemy or burn a bridge.

Amanda asks, What experience do you have with creating and executing programs? What kind of programs would you like to add that we don't currently offer?

Laura replies, it's funny when my oldest two, who were in school, the volunteer program at the elementary school was there but it really wasn't there. I mean if you were related to a teacher you could go in and do something. So myself and three other women got the names from Mrs. Sargent, created a confidentiality agreement, set up a program, and then were able to get parents to come into the classroom. Parents helping with copying. Parents helping with reading. And then we put together the volunteers in a classroom. So actually having parents come in on a specific day and lead something and from there that turned into something I created called Career Day. I would have parents come in and talk about their careers. For 8 years I did Veterans in the classroom, at the elementary and middle schools. Once a year having veterans come in and speak to the students about their experiences. Then within the Clinton Early Childhood Resource Center when I started we, it sorta was like an open house, families would come in, come at 9 stay till 1, we were open three days a week. And now we have parent support groups, we have trauma groups, positive parenting classes, positive discipline classes, we have reading time is magical, we started Thursday evening play, where you can come play at night and have families from the community meet each other. With Parks & Rec the programs that you guys offer, I would probably try and offer ideas more to some family driven programs. But then targeting the middle teens. I feel like that age group like there's so much till you hit 10 or 11 and then all of a sudden there is kinda a gap and once you kinda 15, 16 you can start driving and things start opening up. So whether it's book groups, or just a teen club or maybe putting something in place working with the Director on that type of thing.

John, I know you have a ton of experience with youth all the way through, how about towards senior citizens. I just wondered if you had any experience in that.

Laura, I do, when I was on the Olde Home Day committee, I noticed there was a gap. There was so much for kids and so much for families, but what if you were single, what if you were a young couple, what if your a retired couple, what if your kids are grown and don't wanna go on the rides. And I ended up implementing the beer and wine where we had vendors come in. The first one was the Wine Merchant. They came in and set up a selection of wines and we charged five dollars and all these little plates of snacks. People came in and from there it's morphed into we now work with Apple Country, we have anywhere from twenty-five to thirty vendors come in. They don't charge us at all. So I implemented that for the adults. I also implemented the art show that started at the museum of russian icons but then we got too big so we started having it at the seventh day adventist church so we could run it over two to three nights. So I think it's important that we encompass all in the community. I think it's easy parks and rec, its for the kids, but parks and rec does encompass the entire community so whether it's working with the senior center with activities there doing, maybe moving it down here, its a bigger venue, maybe a little more parking thats closer, and trying to find ideas I think fit all ages. I know there's a chess club at Mr. Z's. My friend's son runs it but he's twentyfour. But he has kids as young as thirteen and gentlemen coming in who are sixty

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five plus and retired. So having the parks and rec center open for activities for drop in and see what sparks interest.

Mike asks, I have an obvious question, why would you want to transition from your current job to the one that's being considered?

Laura, after six years, I can organize anything, I can coordinate anything, I can talk my way through things and figure things out, but that job is really for someone who specifically has an education background. There are about seventy five CFCE it's Coordinated Family Community Engagement coordinators throughout MA & everyone either has their masters, was a past principal, past teacher, ran a preschool, ran an early intervention center, I don't have that background. And I feel as though I did as much for the program as I can and covid really turn that, it really switched a light on for me. I love what I get to do, I love the families, I love my employees but I think they need someone in there with an education background to really take it to the next step. We have wonderful relationships with the schools, with the different service partners in town, but I think someone coming in with an education background or early childhood background will really help create programming that's gonna continue to help our children be ready for school.

John asks, Are you going to be able to help with that transition?

Laura, oh definitely. I'm transitioning now off of Clinton Youth Soccer, I'm retiring as president, we have two great people coming in but I'm still going to be there because you never want to leave something hanging. You always want to make sure that whatever ends you have it either tied up or you spray it with a lighter so it waxes over. You want to leave a legacy, you want to leave something behind but also a group of us worked really hard to create what Clinton Soccer is now. Why would I want to leave them in the lurch? I wanna make sure that I can help them continue to make it even better. And that's what for me I make it a point not to leave anything I hope in a negative light. Keep it positive transition properly. Make sure all loose ends are tied up and so I would definitely do that at the resource center because it wouldn't be fair for the people who have worked there for years and I have grants in play that I would want to see work out.

Mike asks, Was that position exist before you filled it or

Laura, it did, it was filled by Laura McDermott. She held the position for twenty years. It's been around for well, I've been there six years, so it's been around at least twenty six years, it started at Oxford Court and then was at the bottom of the church of the good shepherd and then we found a space in the old elementary school. Which is now the Superintendent's office. We have a play gym and a play school room and resources and it's a phenomenal place. And the majority of people who work there have worked there like seventeen years plus.

John asks, who are you reporting to? Are you reporting to Dr. Meyer?

Laura, Dr. Meyer, yup.

Patti, appreciates Laura's full disclosure on her cover letter. How will you prioritize your managerial functions in an office & organize yourself which I kinda already gotta but is there anything else you wanna add because you sort of answered it?

Laura, when I go in each day, I look through my emails and I have a list from the day before complete those tasks sort of have a daily, weekly, monthly list of things that have to get done because when you run a grant there are requests for proposals there's monthly reports, quarterly reports, you have to gather all the information from your

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staff and compile it and it's just a matter of setting my priorities each day and working until they are completed. I'm on the computer all day at work. I have staff that run the programs but I'm doing the newsletters, advertising, flyers, communications, referrals, the meetings, the minutes, and working with our other partners.

Amanda asks, You mentioned the grants, how much experience do you have with that?

Laura, When I started I had none. So the first year writing the grant was exciting. Because it was the first year it was a competitive grant and so that meant all the other CFCE's were vying for my town. So my grant had to be put together in the best way possible. I've been awarded the grant the last six years, I've gotten compliments on we have narrowed the questions so the first year it was nine and each question has like seven parts but you know you just compile your thoughts put the words you know they are looking for because they are a targeted words that anytime you write a grant or request for a proposal you know the folks that are reading them are looking for certain words phases what you are actually trying to do and I was awarded it the first year and have been awarded it every other year as well I have obtained the determination of needs grant from UMASS memorial two years ago for a positive parenting class that I created that was in english, spanish and portuguese. And then Nypro has granted me two thousand dollars from the Nypro foundation and then the cultural counsel I've gotten money each year who co-sponsored one of the concerts in the park. I've learned trial by fire.

Patti, that's good because most people who try it quit after. I know how difficult those grants are and it is in the wording. Either less is better or the wording has to be right.

Mike, I'd like to add growing up in town I was able to take part in a lot of the sporting events park and rec had to offer, I don't know that we focus on that enough and I have encourage the directors in the past and the current director to utilize school resources, volunteers from the sporting teams and can you see yourself coordinating with the schools in obtaining volunteer athletes and what not to participate in clinics sports leagues over the summer into the fall, how would you handle that?

Laura, currently I am able to do that with Clinton Youth Soccer. What we found a couple years ago is, what if all of a sudden you have a coach that can't show up, especially because we have pre-k up until eighth grade and then we have the high school teams in the Spring but having someone to quickly fill that spot and so I have four girls from the soccer team that come down every week for the last couple years and are there on the field and if a coach doesn't show up or is new on the field or struggling or maybe there is a child that is just having a hard time, they will go out and field and help out. This year we also utilized the boys soccer team, ran a clinic for us which was attended by I think forty seven kids. It was unbelievable, they did such a good job. And now my daughter who is in eighth grade and her friends are now coming down to help with the U6's and U8's and I have a couple kids from the field hockey team who are volunteering at our snack shack. So I'm in touch with John Smith a lot. I feel I have a decent relationship with everyone up at the three schools and can articulate what we are looking for and I think they know my passion and dedication to the town and school that usually people come through for me.

Mike, fantastic.

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Amanda, I also wanted to ask if you had experience dealing with a municipality? Through your job now?

Laura, like dealing with the town, yes we have to, there are the reconcile reports. I have to balance what we are spending with the town because I have to do the request for funds which goes to the town from there. What I purchase I have to go through the accounts payable process and submit the bills, submit the checks, make sure that they are reconciled, fill out the spreadsheet work with the town, get the reports and make sure everything adds up.

Ed, The exchange club, I can remember you coming before the board and requesting different things you were going to run and we did our best and you also did a great job.

Laura, that's the thing, I've been really lucky with different civic groups and clubs in town because our grant hasn't gotten any more money and we are level funded since 2016. That's a long time, I've lessened my hours so my employees kept what they need because they are the ones that have the skill. The generosity of the town and the different businesses in town have really come through for us to allow us to have the program for the kids.

John, looking at your resume, knowing you, and knowing this position, this is a coordinator position, assistant position, this to me is a step down. How long are you going to be happy in that role?

Laura, I'm ready to let others take the lead. I enjoy planning, I enjoy putting things together but being on call 24/7 as I am in this job, daycare is shut down, a family is removed, someone needs emergency placement, doesn't matter that it's friday at 9:30 at night I have to help. A job like this, when I go home at 3, 4 or 5, I go home. If there's a nighttime event, I do the event and then I go home. If something crazy occurs of course I'll notify the director, It will be the directors responsibility, I'll always help but I'm looking for more, I get to participate in the town but the toll and responsibilities that I have now on the job it's sorta a 24/7, 365 days a year, for a job that's twenty hours a week. I'm ready to continue to work but I don't need to be the president, I don't need to be the one fully in charge and I am ready to enjoy and relish a job but when it's time to go home I can spend time with my family. There's always going to be times when something pops up and your going to rise to take care of it but more often than not I'm still on the phone or doing something at 5:30, 6:30, 7:30 at night and I just wanna watch my daughter's soccer game, you know what I mean. Or I just wanna sit outside and talk to my husband or be out with my friends.

John, for me sitting here looking at you going, Mackenzie is our figure head, Mackenzie is our, right.

Laura, I can totally see how you all can see that. Even from my resume, my experience, my sort of footprint in town in what I do, I mean it probably does seem like, she'll freak out, she'll never make it but honestly I have taken steps over the last year, stepped down today from the PTA, I've been on forever as an officer, I had my transition meeting last night to step down as president of Clinton Youth Soccer so I am in my life stepping down and ready to have my job and do that one hundred percent and be the best at it and then be able go home and be apart of my community and take part in events that might be parks and rec events, if there's nighttime meetings do that but if I'm home with my family there's nothing scheduled it will be nice to be able to do that. And just be with my family.

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Amanda asks, this question kinda ties into that, what do you see as your biggest challenge possibly in this new position?

Laura, Probably everything I just said. But you know what this has been something I've really wanted to do I have put myself out there and I have loved every minute of it but I stepped off the old home day committee, I have literally taken myself off of things that I've been doing for fifteen, sixteen, seventeen years, but I am ready to work and follow someone else's lead, offer advice, I know the director is the director and if offered this job I know that I'm working for her and she is the one who leads and I take her lead and run with it.

John, You satisfactory on the compensation right now as well?

Laura, yup.

Patti asks, How do you deal with conflict between participants in the program and the parents? The municipality employees or town organizations.

Laura, Soccer we had a game on Saturday, where let the coaches know the referee's are new, they are probably going to make mistakes, note it and we'll take care of it. Of course, two hours later. This is the coach, I got a yellow card, I think we are in a lot of trouble. I immediately called the referee director of the other town. Talked it through, got both sides. Even though I think my coach was valid in what he thought I still knew our club needed to apologize to the referees. So the thing is you can see both sides but some thing is the right thing to do is to apologize, make amends and move on. Because you want to continue a relationship and you don't want to be seen as difficult or sarcastic or annoying you want to be known as a department that they'll hear you and if something comes down the road you have to, my new thing is before you hit send, you have to wait twenty minutes because there are sometimes you hit send and you like ah, or you might say something and it's just trying to wait and make sure you have all the facts so that whatever opinion your giving is calm collected and full of facts and not based on emotion or hearsay.

Discussion
Break

6:45 Zachary Sullivan

Issue with recording from being paused in first interview. Have tried to recover but have been unsuccessful. Questions were the same.

Notes from Patti:

When asked to tell a little bit about yourself he responded - I grew up in Clinton and have knowledge of the town and programs at parks and rec .

After high school I went to Assumption College and did some teaching abroad and now I'm back here teaching in Lancaster

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Response- I had experience with a parent that I would call was a helicopter parent. She thought her grade should be high and know it was and I had to stay on target and show her the grade she had and not get influenced by her to change the grade, also the mother wants to what other kids were getting in the class and I had to let her know that it's not something I am obligated to give out.

Programs I was involved in a soccer and basketball, I coordinated the game schedule as well as transportation

We had dances I chaperoned them

I taught English in Europe and organized fun activities for the kids I developed an outdoor basketball program for them

As far as effective communication skills I like to give reminders to the students as well as the parents and I try to be open as possible with the kids and the parents

As far as my teaching role I had many different roles each day I taught academic classes, phys ed classes, art classes and even some music classes. I had to maintain a flexible schedule and my planning had to be organized

When asked if he had any writing Grant experience he said no.

Discussion on candidates. John motions to hire Laura, Patti seconds, All in favor

Congratulations we have a new recreation coordinator at 8:27PM

John motions to adjourn, Amanda seconds, All in favor.