

**Amherst Fourth of July Committee Meeting Notes
Town of Amherst, NH
Thursday, July 27, 2023
Amherst Town Hall, Barbara Landry Meeting Room**

Attendees:

- Deb Polatchek
- Kim Ayers
- Tom Darnall
- +7 community members

Call to order

- Meeting was called to order at 6:37pm

Approval of minutes

- June 22, 2023 meeting minutes were approved.

Housekeeping

- Deb thanked everyone for a job well done. Everything went pretty well, a few mishaps but nothing that couldn't be overcome.

Treasurer Report

- Financial update: what is the cost/revenue analysis of the fourth as a stand-alone event?
- Down \$500 this year, not counting any 3rd of July expenses.
- Donations were up: \$7500, including \$1500 from individuals
- Fireworks people are willing to reduce the price to \$6,000 instead of \$8,500
- Total revenues last year were about \$10K
- 4th of July food sales pretty much on par for usual year.
- Loss of revenue due to no sales on July 3rd

Parade

- School building was not open, so no access to restrooms.
- Politicians:

- Issue with vehicle non-conforming vehicle that was far too large, despite the registration form stating that large vehicles are not allowed.
- The committee will tighten up the language in the registration form to specifically define “large vehicle” as greater than XYZ in length, no more than YXX pounds. (Perhaps 24 ft. 8,000 lbs). Could also request a photo of the vehicle for approval.
- Will also add a caveat that supporters of a particular candidate must march together and cannot sprinkle themselves throughout the parade.
- Parade participants:
 - Requests about being early in parade to set up booth space.
- Parking at Wilkins field:
 - There was damage to soccer field took place in the afternoon of the parade
 - The damage appears to be intentional and will cost the Recreation Department \$3000 to repair
 - Craig Fraley suggested moving the parking off the field in years where the grounds are muddy.
 - George Bower, who oversaw the parking this year, agreed to reassess the parking system
 - It was suggested we consider paid parking, maybe even allowing parking to be paid for online in advance
 - This is done at Freestyle Farm during the Amherst Conversation Commissions Joe English Challenge race. They partnered with cross country team to staff the parking and take payments. The shared revenue was split 1/3 to team, 2/3 to the event.
 - Some people would benefit from a shuttle bus, especially on a hot day.
 - We could perhaps offer to allow a bus provider company to drive in the parade to shuttle people for free or at a reduced rate.
 - Parking maximum: we had about 180 cars this year, but if we had tightened it up the capacity could be double.
- Antique cars: email about oldest cars. Work around to have them drive COY?

Green

- Set up and break down issues:
 - Too few chairs for the green, had asked for more but only received about 20-30. Needed closer to 50.
- Music:
 - Might be better to have an individual sing anthem and then have the Souhegan Valley Chorus sing two songs at different point in ceremony. Kim Whitehead said she'd be willing to help with the talent for this.

- Parking: Folks had parked in front of the grandstand, believing this was Handicap Parking. CERT was directing them to this location, instead of the parking lot across the street. We need to block off the space with tape next year.
- Puppy show:
 - Maybe it would be better to have it closer to the green, or maybe near the Brick School.
 - Or an open area on the green
 - People seemed to enjoy it
- Artists/artisans:
 - Maybe move artisans over towards where artists are. Easier for parking and allows more room for organizational booths.
 - Liked set up of children's groups near artisans and would keep them together.
 - Terri thought the Artisans prefer being along a walkway, so we will probably keep them where they are.
- Registration form:
 - The form must be more specific about booth space rules.
 - Groups are not allowed to offer or sell items that compete directly with fundraising activities of the committee
 - No special requests for booth placement, location near other groups, early set up, etc.
 - Everyone wanted booth 44.
 - Booth space for every candidate?
 - Committee will provide category map in advance to all registrants explaining how the green is organized by theme: Food, Town Organizations, Political Groups, Artisans, Animals, etc.
 - Organizations ignored the deadline asking for a booth space 2 days before the event. After the committee bent over backwards to accommodate, these same groups complained about their booth location.
 - Next year the committee will enforce the registration deadline and will turn away late registrants.
- Lack of WiFi/Cell service on the green
 - This becomes more and more of an issue as less folks carry cash and rely on wireless payments and many organizations complained to the committee about this.
 - It was suggested that MiFi might work.
 - The Committee believes this is a BOS problem, not a 4th of July Committee problem.
- Food:
 - Things went fairly well. Should perhaps improve signage to increase slush and ice cream sales which we a bit lackluster this year.
- Maps:
 - It was suggested that we add a few large maps on easels so that folks can find the organizations they are looking for.

- Politicians:
 - Lily Tang showed up for booth but had not registered.

Fireworks

- Postponed to September 9.
- Need volunteers.
- Not likely to raise as much funds as on the 3rd so considering limited entertainment.
 - Ask schools to send over their mascots?
 - Cheerleaders performance?
 - Clubs?
- Coordinating logistics with the town and school.
 - Need to get the ice cream and slush out by 8/15
 - We will store slush in Deb and Katherine's freezers.
 - Will sell slush and pizza, drinks.
 - Bring in kettle corn vendor?
 - Ideas to call the celebration:
 - Called it Fall Fest
 - Back to School
 - Welcome to Fall
 - Fall Family Fun
- Ice cream/slush leftover: Delivered ice cream to town camps, police and DPW. Will bring slush to fire department 8/7 for monthly meeting.
- Fireworks update next year:
 - Altas Pro Displays was acquired by Protechnics last year. The new company is demanding a multi-year contract.
 - Cost of keeping the 3rd of July date will be as follows:
 - 2024: \$12,500; 2025: \$12,500; 2026: \$25,000
 - Cost of moving to the Sunday before July 4:
 - 2024: \$10,000; 2025: \$10,500; 2026: \$11,000
 - The Committee will bring before the BOS as we do not feel comfortable entering a long-term contract without town approval.
 - The Committee investigated other fireworks companies, but only 2 other companies are licensed to shot off professional fireworks displays in NH.
 - The other company quoted \$20K, other company will only sell the fireworks, and we'd have to employ display expert.
 - The Committee wondered if the citizens of Amherst would still attend the fireworks that far in advance.
 - The committee will consider doing a different activity on the 3rd:
 - Laser light show
 - Drones: Drones are \$10K for 50 drones, interesting once but not year after year

- Better music group worth higher amount of money
- Ask for donations for the fireworks on 9/9
- Poll the town to get their thoughts & ideas

New Business 7:30-7:40

- Open positions next year:
 - Deb Polatchek's term is ending this year but she has requested reappointment.
 - We are short one other steering committee member.
 - It is preferred that folks asking to be appointed to the steering committee has at least one year volunteering on the committee at large
- Three levels of volunteering
 - Day of only, no responsibility rest of the year
 - Committee at Large: sharing your voice, heading up an event or piece of the celebration
 - Appointed Board 5 members
 - Treasurer
 - Chair
 - Vice Chair
 - Secretary
 - Each will be responsible for a piece of the celebration: Green, Parade, July 3rd/Fireworks

Adjourn meeting

- Kim motioned to adjourn, Deb seconded, meeting adjourned at 7:49.