

Massachusetts House of Representatives Bill Summary

Bill #: H.5604

Title: An Act restructuring the town of Ludlow recreation department and the town of Ludlow recreation commission

Sponsor: Rep. Aaron Saunders

Committee: Municipalities and Regional Government

Hearing Date: 9/21/26 to 9/28/26 written testimony only

Current Law: Mass. General Laws Chapter 45 regulates public parks and playgrounds. Section 2 governs the election of a board of park commissioners to oversee town parks and playgrounds.

Summary: This bill would replace the elected Ludlow Recreation Commission with one that is appointed by the Select Board. The Recreation Department would be folded into the Parks and Recreation Division of the town's Department of Public Works.

Section 1 of the bill authorizes the town, notwithstanding any contrary laws, to have the Recreation Department become part of the Parks and Recreation Division within the Department of Public Works. The functions of the division would be overseen by the DPW Director.

Section 2 abolishes the appointed and elected offices of the current Recreation Department, including the elected Recreation Commission, and the terms of the incumbent members would be terminated. Current employees would become employees of the Parks and Recreation Division to the extent that their positions are established within said division. The incumbent elected Recreation Commission members would be appointed by the Select Board to serve out the remainder of their elected terms, whereupon new members would be appointed to serve staggered 3-year terms.

Section 3 provides for the Select Board to become the appointing authority of the Recreation Commission and the Parks and Recreation Division, and of all of the employees. The Board could appoint and remove a Director of Parks and Recreation to oversee the daily operations, who would be subject to the oversight of the Director of the Department of Public Works. This provision also requires the Select Board to appoint all previously active members of the

Recreation Commission to serve out their previously elected terms. The Recreation Commission and Parks and Recreation Division shall have the powers and duties as set forth in applicable laws, including Chapter 45 of the General Laws.

Section 4 ensures the continuation and legal effect of existing contracts and liabilities, and states that the new Parks and Recreation Division shall be the lawful successor of the former Recreation Department. All records, property and equipment of the offices of the appointed Recreation Department shall be assigned to the Parks and Recreation Division.

Section 5 provides for the act to take effect upon its passage.

Notes:

This home-rule petition was approved as Article 30 at the May 11, 2026 Annual Town Meeting by a hand count vote of 38 yes, 35 no.

Article 30 Warrant Explanation: This article works to provide departmental and resource support to the Recreation Department. In recent years, there has been an absence of clear decision making in the daily management of the parks and recreation department. This article would establish a partnership with the Recreation Commission, DPW, the Select Board, and the Town Administrator to ensure clear lines of communication, delineated roles and responsibilities, increased managerial response, and improved conditions to our park and recreational facilities.