

**Minutes of the  
Parks and Recreation Commission  
December 16, 2008**

In Attendance:

Phil Kearns, Chairman  
Barbara Dobbin  
Evie Bottali  
Jon Chase  
David Thaxter

Paul J. Roche, Director  
Jane Byrnes, Recording Secty.  
Robert J. Schneider, Asst. Director  
Eileen Cipolla, Accountant  
Robin Matthews, Asst. Director

Absent: Wayne Tinker, Secretary  
Gina Carey

Guests: Mr. Bill Coghlan, 21 Aspen Mill Road, Ridgefield-Ridgefield Rebels  
Mr. Cary Nadel, 524 Bennetts Farm Road, Ridgefield-Ridgefield Rebels

Meeting called to order by the Chairman at 8:05 p.m.

**Recognition of Guests:**

Mr. Kearns introduced and welcomed Mr. Coghlan and Mr. Nadel.  
Both Mr. Coghlan and Mr. Nadel gave a brief synopsis of their relationship with the Ridgefield Rebels.

**Approval of Agenda:**

Mr. Kearns asked that the "Sub-Committee Reports," first item (Buildings & Grounds – Ridgefield Rebels Softball Program) be moved up on the agenda.  
The agenda as amended was approved.

**Sub-Committee Reports-Buildings and Grounds**

**Ridgefield Rebels Softball Program Overview**

Mr. Nadel gave a presentation on the Ridgefield Rebels Girls Softball team. The following items were covered:

- The Rebels Philosophy
- The Rebels History
- The Rebels Player Development
- The Rebels Playing Structure
- The Rebels Players Progress
- Girls Softball Dynamics
- The Rebels Players
- The 2009 Rebels Program
- Rebels and Ridgefield Town Organizations
- Softball Fields Background

Mr. Nadel stated that the Rebels would like to continue to secure use of the Ridgefield's softball fields for the Ridgefield girls because "it's about the girls." Mr. Nadel also mentioned that the Rebels play only half of their games in Ridgefield and use the practice fields. Mr. Nadel also stated that the Rebels would, as Parks and Rec had requested, stop

advertising for players in newspapers in other towns and would limit their advertising to the Ridgefield Press.

The Commission thanked the Ridgefield Rebels representatives for their presentation.

### **Approval of Minutes:**

Mr. Tinker e-mailed to the Recording Secretary, a correction to the November minutes. On page 2, under Assistant Director-Parks, item 4, should read "...Mr. Tinker asked if the overhang...." Also, on page 3, under Assistant Director-Recreation, should read "Ms. Matthews is working on enhancing the Department's programming at Yanity Gym by adding adult and wellness classes."

The minutes as amended were approved. The vote was four in favor and one abstaining. Ms. Dobbin abstained as she was not present at the November meeting.

### **Financial Status**

#### **Revenue/Expense Report/Budget Summary**

The Accountant reported that year-to-date revenue is down; however, year-to-date expenses are also down the same amount.

Ms. Matthews reported that the Supervisors are still meeting weekly to plan for future programming and to find ways to increase revenue.

### **Chairman's Report:**

Mr. Kearns reported that he and Mr. Roche had a very positive capital budget discussion with First Selectman, Mr. Marconi and Town Controller, Mr. Kevin Redmond. Mr. Roche reported that the First Selectman was very supportive of the Rec Center Trail project. However, Mr. Kearns did mention that the First Selectman stated that this would be a very tough budget year.

Mr. Jon Chase suggested that the Commission educate the Board of Selectmen members on the Parks and Recreation Department's areas of Town responsibilities and how budget cuts will affect these areas in the future. A lengthy discussion ensued regarding this issue. It was suggested that a summary of all properties be developed indicating what happens when these areas have budget cuts.

### **Director's Report:**

The Director reported on the following:

#### **Rec Center Trail**

The Director stated that the trail construction is not finished due to weather conditions; however, Mr. Roche feels it may be more beneficial now to wait until the spring when the weather is more favorable.

#### **Legislative Request-Pool Drains**

Mr. Roche reported that he and the Building Maintenance Supervisor had met with the Health Department, Building Department, and the First Selectman regarding the Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act.

Ms. Cipolla questioned the Department's option for funding for this project should amounts for installation for drains run high. Mr. Roche stated that the First Selectman has contingency funds and that P&R would also contribute. There were questions regarding the effects on revenue and members should there be any problems meeting the

regulation requirements. After further discussion, Mr. Chase suggested that the Rec Center have a statement ready to issue to the Center's members advising them of the new legislations.

**Assistant Director-Recreation:**

**Membership**

Ms. Matthews reported that Recreation and Wellness memberships continue to be down slightly, with Lap membership continuing to rise. There was a brief discussion regarding revenue and the development of new membership packages.

The Assistant Director-Recreation reported on the following:

- The new "Sneaker" campaign has been very successful bringing in several people trying our Wellness Center, Group Fitness classes and dropping in for Rec swim.
- Held the Breakfast with Santa last weekend, sponsored with other Town organizations. Approximately 350 people attended, this number was down from past years.
- Ms. Matthews is working with Supervisors on future programming and revenue producing activities.

Ms. Matthews summarized for the Commission a report for the goals on improving the value of memberships and the recruitment of new memberships. Ms. Matthews also discussed the proposed plan for budget considerations regarding increases in the Department's fee structure and a plan for the future activities at the Yanity Gym facility.

Ms. Matthews also summarized a proposed fee analysis for the Commission.

A discussion ensued regarding the proposed fee increase for the next budget year. The Commissioners gave their thoughts and the Budget Sub-Committee will meet, review and submit their recommendations for a vote at the January meeting.

**Assistant Director-Parks:**

Mr. Schneider reported on the following:

- The Asst. Director is working with the Tiger Hollow Committee on the five year master plan.
- The crews have completed the promised work for the planting around the neighbors' property which surrounds the trails.
- The Department has received the CO for the new garage. They are waiting for the installation of computers, alarms, etc.
- The crews are also working on some projects for the Selectmen; which include the repair of the Main Street lights and timers for tennis court lights.
- The Dog Park has been partially closed for renovations.
- The crews are busy working on garage entranceway to repair the ice problem.
- Mr. Schneider is working on gathering information for annual Fields Meeting with Town's sport groups. The meeting is set for early February.
- The Town has been inspected by OSHA and they did very well. The Parks crew will only have a few training sessions to attend.

**Sub-Committee Reports:**

Buildings and Grounds

In Wayne Tinker's absence, Mr. Kearns summarized for the Commission the Field Use Criteria Guidelines. Mr. Kearns stated that after hearing the Ridgefield Rebels presentation, the Fields Sub-committee will meet again to take into consideration the Rebels presentation with regards to future field allocations.

Long Range Planning & Rec Center Issues

Nothing to report at this time.

Budget & Policy

Covered above.

Aquatics

Mr. Thaxter reported that the sub-committee had a very successful meeting and Ms. Gregory is doing a terrific job in marketing the Barlow Mountain Pool.

ADA

Ms. Dobbin questioned the ADA revenue figure. It was suggested that due to the late hour, this issue will be moved to the January meeting.

Old Business

Trails

Mr. Roche reported that he had a request from the Ippoliti family regarding a legal agreement between the family and the Town of Ridgefield to name a nature walk on the 195 Danbury property after the Ippoliti family. Mr. Kearns suggested that the Director bring a formal recommendation to the Commission at its January meeting.

With no further business, the Commission adjourned at 10:50pm.

Minutes Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Wayne H. Tinker, Secretary

\*These minutes are a general summary of the meeting and are not intended to be a verbatim transcription.