

**Minutes of the
Parks and Recreation Commission**
February 19, 2008

In Attendance:

Phil Kearns, Chairman

Jon Chase

David Thaxter

Evie Bottali

Wayne Tinker, Secretary

Paul J. Roche, Director

Robin Matthews, Asst. Director-Rec

Bob Schneider, Asst. Director-Parks

Eileen Cipolla, Acctg.

Jane Byrnes, Recording Secretary

Meeting called to order by the Chairman at 8:00 p.m.

Recognition of Guests:

Bob Alicea, 49 Pine Mt. Road, Ridgefield, CT (Ridgefield Little League)

Tony Wilmont, (Coach RHS Baseball), Ridgefield, CT

Kent Rutron, 6 Millers Lane, Ridgefield, CT (Ridgefield Little League)

Bob Thompson, 12 Spectacle Lane, Ridgefield, CT

Mario Bernardis, 65 Woodlawn Drive, Ridgefield, CT

Jack McAuley, 167 Silver Spring Road, Ridgefield, CT

Mr. Thompson, Mr. Bernardis and Mr. McAuley gave a brief summary of their backgrounds and their interest in becoming members of the P&R Commission.

Approval of Agenda:

The Chairman requested that item (b) "Plans from Ridgefield Babe Ruth....." under New Business be moved up on the agenda. The agenda as amended was approved.

New Business

Plans from Babe Ruth – Ciuccoli Field

Mr. Alicea summarized for the Commission plans for the renovation of Ciuccoli field and the addition of a structure on the site. Mr. Alicea mentioned that he has spoken with the First Selectman regarding these plans. This renovation would be an asset to the community and benefit the Town's and high school baseball teams.

Mr. Wilnot also spoke about the advantages of this proposal with regards to the Ridgefield High School baseball teams.

After several questions and comments, the Commission Chairman stated that the Commission Buildings and Grounds sub-committee would meet to discuss the proposal and bring their comments back to the Commission for a vote at the March meeting. Mr. Kearns requested that the Commission forward any questions and recommendations to the committee before it meets.

The Commission thanked Mr. Alicea for his presentation.

Approval of Minutes:

Mr. Thaxter made the following corrections to the minutes of the January meeting:

Page two, under Assistant Director/Parks report, should read: "Mr. Schneider reported that.....most of the fall clean up has been completed." The minutes as amended were approved.

Financial Status

Ms. Cipolla reported that year-to-date revenue is ahead of projected budget. Yanity Gym was showing a drop in revenue; however, the final RBA payments were not in as yet.

Mr. Thaxter questioned whether or not the department's overtime budget had been affected by the mild winter weather conditions. Mr. Schneider reported that the overtime budget was low due to several icy storms.

It was suggested that Ms. Cipolla develop a more accurate budget format to present at the March 3 BOS budget meeting. Ms. Cipolla will work on the format.

Membership Report

Ms. Cipolla reported that both lap and non-resident memberships have shown some increases, and that wellness and recreation memberships remain flat. Mr. Thaxter asked for an explanation of the revenue versus the memberships totals.

Chairman's Report

Mr. Kearns stated that he and Mr. Roche had met with the First Selectman regarding the operating budget. The department is scheduled to meet with the BOS on the budget on March 3, 2008 at 7pm. Some discussion ensued regarding the proposed budgets and the items that might be cut.

Mr. Kearns reported that he had attended the public hearing regarding the proposal from SCOR regarding the installation of turf on Onalfo Field. Mr. Kearns reviewed with the Commission the department's analysis regarding the request from the BOS on the financial aspects of turf versus grass fields. The discussion continued regarding the installation and type of turf field and the current health issues. Mr. Kearns stated that it was suggested by the BOS that a "well rounded" resident committee be formed, should the referendum be passed by the voters.

Director's Report

Mr. Roche reported that work has begun on the parking lot expansion. The Highway Department has been working on this project for the last two weeks. They are installing an additional 9-10 spaces near Founders Hall. The Director mentioned that work on the middle section area would begin this spring.

The Director also stated that the winter senior event, The 300th Anniversary Valentine's Dance was a great success with over 200 seniors attending. Mr. Roche reported that the event was co-sponsored by the 300th Anniversary Committee and the response from the seniors in Town was great. Mr. Kearns mentioned that these events are a great outreach program for the Town's senior population.

The Director stated that the outdoor crews have installed storage bins for the boats and kayaks at Martin Park Beach.

The final signatures have been obtained for the trail grant; and work should begin in the spring.

The Director is working with the State Parks and Recreation Legislative Board on the use of chemical pesticides on public land, along with developing a more timely background check on staff and volunteers.

Mr. Thaxter reviewed a recent article regarding “super bugs” found in New York City health clubs. Mr. Roche stated that to date, we have had no reports of bugs or super bugs at the Rec Center.

The Director stated that P&R is partnering with RACE to help get some of their information out to the Town sports leagues.

Assistant Director/Recreation- Robin Matthews

- Ms. Matthews reported that the Egg Scramble is scheduled for March 15, 2008.
- The Valentines Dance activity was also co-sponsored by the Girl Scouts, SPIF, and the National Charity League. The event was a great success and the staff did a great job.
- Ms. Matthews is working with the supervisors on their upcoming budgets.
- The Skate Park is due to open on March 8, 2008.
- The Asst. Director is also working on several activities with the supervisors for the 300th Anniversary celebration.
- The program brochure is due in mailboxes the first week of March.
- The Wellness Center swipe system is up and running smoothly since the installation of a new card reader.

Assistant Director/Parks – Bob Schneider

- Mr. Schneider reported that he has been working on the field schedule and the annual meeting is March 28.
- This summer is turning out to be very busy with the upcoming 300th Anniversary activities at the OHS field and the annual July 4 Fireworks at the HS.
- Mr. Kearns asked if Mr. Schneider had heard from the Volunteer Fire Department regarding their annual carnival. Mr. Schneider will check into the date and report back to the Commission.
- Mr. Schneider reported that the GMAT tests done on the two turf fields reported a good rating. A brief discussion regarding the numbers and what they mean for replacement of these fields.
- Mr. Schneider reported that the garage is almost complete, electricity has been completed and they are waiting for the installation of a storage cage for tools.

There was some discussion regarding the washing and care of the outdoor trucks.

Sub-Committee Reports:

Buildings and Grounds:

Mr. Tinker stated that the report was covered above.

Long Range Planning, ADA Issues:

No current issues on these committees.

Rec Center Issues - Evie Bottali

Ms. Bottali summarized her membership report for the Commission. Ms. Bottali stated that the marketing committee may want to revisit marketing strategies now that the new Boys and Girls Club is up and running. Ms. Bottali also stated that she is working with Ms. Towers on the development of additional reports to better track memberships.

The marketing committee has chosen a winner for the “Tag Line” contest. The new tag line is “Ridgefield Parks and Recreation: Your active partner for community, wellness and fun!”

Budget and Policy – Operating Budget

Mr. Roche and Mr. Kearns summarized for the Commission the proposed changes in the capital budget. They reiterated that the meeting with the BOS is scheduled for March 3 at 7pm.

Aquatics – David Thaxter

Mr. Thaxter stated that the subcommittee is planning to meet on March 3 to discuss the upcoming year’s activities.

New Business:

Bike Rack Request

Mr. Roche reviewed a request he received from Mr. Harry Lipstein of the Better Ridgefield Initiative requesting the installation of four bike racks at various locations. The BRI would be raising money to pay for the racks if P&R would install them. Mr. Schneider stated that it would be no problem installing the racks, should the Commission approve the proposal. However, Mr. Schneider did mention that he would like to be sure that the racks are in keeping with the décor of the Rec Center.

After some discussion, Mr. Chase made the following motion:

“**MOVE**, to accept the proposal submitted by Harry Lipstein, (member of the Better Ridgefield Initiative) to put four bike racks in the areas indicated (Ballard Park, Town Hall, Yanity Gym and entrance to the Recreation Center).”

The motion was seconded by Evie Bottali and passed unanimously.

Mr. Chase asked if there had been any solution to the Sturges Park issues. Mr. Kearns stated that he had not heard from the First Selectman and that the issue is still pending. Mr. Kearns asked the Director to touch base with the First Selectman regarding this subject.

With no further business, the Commission adjourned at 10:00 pm.

Minutes Approved: _____

Wayne H. Tinker, Secretary