

**Minutes of the  
Parks and Recreation Commission**  
January 15, 2008

In Attendance:

Phil Kearns, Chairman  
Barbara Dobbin, Vice Chairman  
David Thaxter  
Evie Bottali  
Wayne Tinker, Secretary

Paul J. Roche, Director  
Robin Matthews, Asst. Director-Rec  
Bob Schneider, Asst. Director-Parks  
  
Jane Byrnes, Recording Secretary

Meredith Towers, Rec Program Supv.

Meeting called to order by the Chairman at 8:05 p.m.  
The agenda as submitted was approved.

**Recognition of Guests:**

Gina Carey, 107 East Ridge, Ridgefield, CT  
Bruce Yuen, 86 Blackman Road, Ridgefield, CT  
Both Ms. Carey and Mr. Yuen gave a brief summary of their backgrounds and their interest in becoming members of the P&R Commission.

**Approval of Minutes:**

The minutes as submitted were approved.

**Financial Status**

In Ms. Cipolla's absence, Mr. Roche reported that year-to-date revenue is ahead of projected budget. Mr. Roche stated that the Town Controller was on vacation; therefore, the expense numbers were unavailable.

**Membership Report**

Mr. Roche reported that both recreation and wellness memberships reflected a slight increase, while lap memberships continue to reflect a much higher increase. There was some discussion regarding the reasoning behind these increases. Ms. Towers stated that she is currently gathering information to develop an analysis.

Ms. Dobbin questioned the status of the construction of the additional parking, as the parking area was very busy this morning. Mr. Roche stated that because of weather conditions, the construction was delayed. It should resume sometime this month. Mr. Roche also stated that the wellness center is also very busy during the morning hours, and that Founders Hall has increased its programs during the peak visiting times.

**Chairman's Report**

Mr. Kearns stated that he had been notified by the Selectman's office that several people showed interest in becoming a Commission member. These residents would be attending both the January and February meetings.

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 again reiterated the

Commission's position regarding this issue. Mr. Kearns summarized this meeting for the Commissioners who did not attend.

Mr. Kearns stated that the Fifth Year Anniversary celebration at the Rec Center on Saturday was a great success and he thanked the staff members for their hard work in setting up the event.

Ms. Bottali also stated that she had attended the event and that Donna Ingoldsby did a great job with the logistics and that Ms. Matthews and Ms. Towers did a great job with the programming. The event had a large turnout and members were enjoying the facility.

#### Director's Report

- Mr. Roche reported again that due to weather conditions, the parking area construction was delayed; however, he feels that work should begin sometime next week.
- The light fixtures for Ballard Park are in, and Mr. Roche is very pleased with the design.
- Mr. Roche has been working with the Town's 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee in preparation for the July 5, 2008 event. Mr. Roche stated that the kick off for this event was a huge success and that he feels that the July activities will be also.

#### Assistant Director/Recreation- Robin Matthews

Ms. Matthews introduced Ms. Towers the new Recreation Supervisor for Program Development. Ms. Towers summarized her goals for the upcoming year.

- Ms. Matthews reported that the staff has been working on the brochure and that Ms. Towers reported that it should be out on schedule.
- Ms. Matthews also reported that the staff is working on the addition of several specialty camps for the summer camp program.
- The elementary school Family Fun Nights have begun and every elementary school is scheduled throughout the winter.
- The group exercise program continues to be busy. Jason Woods, the Wellness Supervisor will be leaving the department and Ms. Gregory is currently interviewing to fill that position.
- Ms. Matthews stated that the swim lesson on-line registration was a success and that classes had been filled.

There was a brief discussion regarding the popularity of the on-line registration, and if other programs had seen the same support. Ms. Matthews reported that there has been some activity; however, it has not caught on as well as the swim lesson registration.

- Ms. Matthews continued, stating that she is working with other Town organizations to try to co-sponsor some additional events. She stated that P&R will co-sponsor the 2008 Town Triathlon

Mr. Roche stated that Meredith Towers is doing a great job and is a definite asset to the Department.

#### Assistant Director/Parks – Bob Schneider

- Mr. Schneider reported that due to favorable weather conditions, most to the fall clean up has been completed.

- The snow removal budget is in good shape due to the mild weather conditions.
- The annual fields meeting is scheduled for the 28<sup>th</sup> of February, after the Town's Referendum on Onalfo Field.

Mr. Schneider summarized the Onalfo Field issues.

- Mr. Schneider stated that he has scheduled GMAX testing on the two turf fields for this spring. Mr. Thaxter asked for an explanation on what GMAX testing entailed.
- Mr. Schneider stated that he is working with the Director on the logistics for the 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration.
- The Asst. Director-Parks is also working on both the indoor and outdoor maintenance scheduling calendars for 2008.

#### Sub-Committee Reports

##### Long Range Planning, ADA Issues, Building & Grounds

No current issues on these committees.

##### Rec Center Issues - Evie Bottali

- Ms. Bottali summarized her membership report for the Commission. The report agreed with revenue figures in that, all were up slightly. Ms. Bottali stated that she is working with Meredith Towers on customizing the reports for the Department.
- The 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!"

Mr. Roche thanked Ms. Bottali for help with the Fifth Year Celebration on Saturday.

##### Budget and Policy – Operating Budget

Mr. Roche summarized for the Commission the proposed 2008-2009 Operating Budget. There was a brief discussion regarding the possibility of increasing the membership fees.

Ms. Dobbin made the following motion:

**“RESOLVE**, to accept the 2008-2009 Operating Budget as submitted by the P&R Commission's budget sub-committee, for presentation to the Board of Selectmen.”

The motion was seconded by David Thaxter and unanimously approved.

Mr. Roche thanked the sub-committee for its work on the budget.

##### Aquatics – David Thaxter

Mr. Thaxter stated that the subcommittee is currently planning its next meeting to discuss the upcoming year's activities.

##### Old Business – Rec Center Community Signboard Request

Mr. Roche summarized for the Commission the answers to the Commission's questions regarding the First Selectman's request for permission to locate a signboard at either the entrance to the Rec Center or at a different location on the Rec Center's property. The Commission discussed the placement visibility, what type of information would go on the signboard, and who is responsible for the updating of information for the signboard. The Commission felt that the proposed location may create a safety issue due to visibility and

traffic flow. The Commission felt that the P&Z Commission may also want to make some adjustments to the location. The Commission suggested that the placement of the signage may be safer at a traffic light intersection. The Commission decided not to approve the request, pending safety issues. The Director will forward their response to the First Selectman.

Mr. Thaxter asked for an update on the status of the Sturges Park issue. Mr. Kearns summarized the current situation for the Commission. Mr. Kearns stated that he will keep the Commission updated as soon as he is notified of any changes.

Mr. Kearns asked if the members of the Commission were happy with their subcommittees and if so, they will continue for an additional year. Mr. Kearns asked Ms. Byrnes to contact Mr. Chase to see if he will remain on his current committees.

With no further business, the Commission adjourned at 9:20 pm.

Minutes Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
**Wayne H. Tinker, Secretary**