

**Minutes of the  
Parks and Recreation Commission  
May 21, 2008**

In Attendance:

Barbara Dobbin, Vice Chairperson  
Jon Chase  
Wayne Tinker, Secretary  
Evie Bottali  
Gina Carey  
David Thaxter

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

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

The Vice Chairperson introduced and welcomed Ms. Gina Carey, the newest member of the Commission. Ms. Carey gave a brief personal history.

**Approval of Agenda and Minutes:**

The agenda as submitted was approved. The minutes of the April, 2008 meeting were approved as submitted.

**Financial Status**

Ms. Cipolla reviewed with the Commission the recent cuts made by the budget subcommittee as a result of a request from the Board of Finance. Ms. Cipolla mentioned that the BOF would be meeting this evening to review these proposed cuts and determine if any additional cuts were needed. The Accountant reported that some items were permanently deleted and/or cut from the capital budget. These included; repairs to Barlow Mountain pool, school and parks safety fencing, and Rec Center maintenance/repairs were reduced. Ms. Dobbin stated that the department should respect the cuts made and try not to work within budget support.

Revenue/Expense Report

Ms. Cipolla reported that year-to-date revenue was down slightly due to outstanding payments. Ms. Cipolla stated that the expenses will level out by year's end.

Ms. Cipolla mentioned that Martin Park Beach revenue is reporting equal to that of last year's revenue numbers.

The Accountant mentioned that expenditures were slightly above projected budget.

Membership-Asst. Director-Recreation

Ms. Matthews summarized for the Commission the April year-to-year membership comparison report. The report summarized that recreation and wellness memberships are down with lap continuing to rise slightly. Ms. Matthews mentioned that the Marketing Committee is working on a new procedure for packaging memberships, which may help with the revenue numbers. The Committee is also working on a proposal to develop family programs.

Ms. Matthews reported that the summer Adventure Camp revenue is still down, but the summer “specialty camps” revenue was up significantly. The Asst. Director reported that with camp registrations down, the Supervisors are being very conscientious about their summer hiring. Mr. Chase asked if the Boys and Girls Club had an impact on our summer programs. Ms. Matthews stated that she has spoken with several other Parks & Recreation Departments throughout the State and they are all reporting low camp registrations. Ms. Matthews stated that she will have more accurate numbers next month. Ms. Dobbin questioned if the P&R specialty camps were exclusive in Town. Ms. Matthews stated that there are several around Town that are similar, however we are offering these camps as an additional/alternative to our Adventure Camp.

**Assistant Director/Recreation- Robin Matthews**

- Ms. Matthews circulated some of the recent program flyers, describing the current and upcoming Rec Center programs and activities. One of the new programs P&R is helping to sponsor is Share the Road Ridgefield. The program is also sponsored by the Fire and Police Departments. Ms. Matthews mentioned that safety would be a major topic covered in this program.

**Chairman’s Report:**

In Mr. Kearns’ absence, his report would be covered under the Director’s.

**Director’s Report/Assistant Director Parks:**

Mr. Roche reported that in Mr. Schneider’s absence he would also cover the Parks section:

- Mr. Roche reported that the Rec Center’s parking lot is finished, and there are an additional 26 parking spaces. Mr. Chase questioned why the auxiliary parking area had not been paved as well. Mr. Roche stated that a drainage system would have to be installed, and at this time would be too costly.
- As requested, Mr. Roche reported that Mr. Schneider had sent a letter to the First Selectman regarding the possibility of additional costs/expenses of using organic products.
- The Director reported that new lights had been installed, three new trees planted in Ballard Park and they all look terrific. Mr. Thaxter asked if the vandalism in the Park had stopped. At this time, Mr. Roche stated that there were no additional incidences.
- Mr. Roche stated that the 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee has been meeting and the event is looking to be very exciting. Mr. Roche said that there has been much interest by both Town Organizations and Town restaurants for participation on this day. Several stage acts and walking entertainment are also scheduled.
- Mr. Roche gave a brief summary on the Walpole property and the possibility of development of a Little League and/or girls softball field. Mr. Chase mentioned that this field may be geographically unfavorable for the Town’s sports groups. Ms. Dobbin also mentioned that this field is not to be used as a replacement field, but as an additional field. There was some discussion regarding the field availability and the use of the current fields.
- Mr. Roche summarized for the Commission a meeting he had attended with the Planning & Zoning Commission regarding the Rec Center trail development. Mr. Roche stated that he had received approval from the Commission to pave the trails around the Center and he is waiting for the bids to go out.

- Mr. Thaxter stated that the Barlow field was in great shape and that resting this field has proved successful. Ms. Carey questioned if the elementary schools have use of the field when it is in a rested state. Mr. Roche stated that most elementary schools have additional space for recess; however, Barlow School does use the field. Mr. Roche felt that this was not an issue, as the use is small.
- The Parks crews are busy with the upcoming Memorial Day celebration; planting flowers and cleaning Main Street.
- The outdoor crews are also working on the opening of Martin Park Beach, projects at Sturges Park, Tiger Hollow cleanup and tennis court repairs.

### **Assistant Director/Parks – Bob Schneider**

Covered above.

### **Sub-Committee Reports:**

#### **Buildings and Grounds – Wayne Tinker:**

Mr. Tinker reported that he had stopped by the Parks garage for a quick tour. Mr. Tinker had a few questions regarding the building. Some of these included drainage problems, lack of shower facilities, roof and door issues. Mr. Roche summarized the status of the garage for Mr. Tinker.

#### **Long Range Planning**

No current issues on this committee.

#### **ADA Issues:**

Ms. Matthews reported that she had submitted a nomination for the Connecticut Governor’s Committee on Physical Fitness Award. She submitted the coach of the Special Olympics, Alesia Williams for this honor. Ms. Matthews mentioned that although Ms. Williams did not win, it was a great accomplishment to be nominated.

#### **Rec Center Issues:**

Ms. Bottali stated that the Department continues to get detailed information from the new computer system which will help with the membership analysis. This information will also help with the development of the future strategy and membership plans.

#### **Budget and Policy:**

Covered above.

#### **Aquatics - David Thaxter:**

Mr. Thaxter stated that the aquatic subcommittee will have to meet in the near future to address the effects of the capital budget cuts regarding Barlow Mountain pool.

### **Old Business: Approval of Halpin Lane Arts District/Ciuccoli Field Proposal**

Barbara Dobbin gave a summary of the minutes from the Commission’s Special Meeting. She mentioned that the Commission would be voting on the revised plan as drawn along with the letters of understanding. After much discussion, Mr. Chase proposed the following motion:

“**MOVE** to approve the pending agreement between the First Selectman and the Youth Organization and such, based on these five items:

1. The softball field will remain. If and when the Walpole field is built, the current softball field will remain and Walpole will be an additional field.
2. The softball field will continue to be lit by the present lights. When and if new lighting is installed, that lighting will light the existing softball field as well as the new baseball field.
3. The pavilion maintenance and security responsibilities will be solely under the Babe Ruth organization. The pavilion access concerns the Commission had have been addressed with the changing of the building specs. Bob Alicea will share the new drawings and plans reflecting these changes with the Commission.
4. The scheduling of both fields will use Parks & Recreation’s prioritizing procedures. We may have to revisit that schedule with Mr. Schneider and the fields subcommittee (to accommodate football for the August use) should the project begin in August.
5. The Skate Park would be the first to be moved when the project begins.

I move that we approve the Arts District/Ciuccoli Field Proposal with these five items.

Before a vote could be made, Barbara Dobbin asked that the motion be amended stating that we not use the phrase “pending agreement with.”

Mr. Chase amended his motion to say:

“**MOVE**, that the Parks and Recreation Commission approve the Arts District/Ciuccoli Field Proposal based on the plans as presented and the inclusion of the five stipulations (outlined below):

1. The softball field will remain. If and when the Walpole field is built, the current softball field will remain and Walpole will be an additional field.
2. The softball field will continue to be lit by the present lights. When and if new lighting is installed, that lighting will light the existing softball field as well as the new baseball field.
3. The pavilion maintenance and security responsibilities will be solely under the Babe Ruth organization. The pavilion access concerns the Commission had have been addressed with the changing of the building specs. Bob Alicea will share the new drawings and plans reflecting these changes with the Commission.
4. The scheduling of both fields will use Parks & Recreation’s prioritizing procedures. We may have to revisit that schedule with Mr. Schneider and the fields subcommittee (to accommodate football for the August use) should the project begin in August.
5. The Skate Park would be the first to be moved when the project begins.

The motion was second by Wayne Tinker and passed unanimously.

With no further business, the Commission adjourned at 9:00pm.

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

**Wayne H. Tinker, Secretary**