

**Minutes of the
Parks and Recreation Commission
Special Meeting
April 30, 2008**

In Attendance:

Phil Kearns, Chairman
Barbara Dobbin, Vice Chairman
Jon Chase
David Thaxter
Wayne Tinker

Guests:

Mr. Rudy Marconi, First Selectman
Mr. Jay Montanari, RHS Baseball
Mr. Robert Alicea, Ridgefield Little League/Babe Ruth
Mr. Jim DeLalla, Architect

Meeting called to order by Chairman 8 p.m.
The Chairman recognized guests.

Mr. Marconi summarized and gave a brief history of the proposed Arts District project.

Some of the key points included:

1. Development of additional parking for Playhouse, Yanity Gym, Town Annex and fields.
2. The relocation of the Skate Park
3. The addition of new walkways from the Ridgefield Performing Arts Center and the Guild of Artists.
4. The construction of a new pavilion and field development.

Mr. Marconi stated that the project would be done in phases depending on the availability of Grant monies. However, Mr. Marconi mentioned that the committee is planning to bring the entire Master Plan to Planning & Zoning all at once.

The Commission questioned the maintenance responsibilities associated with the addition of walkways, parking lots and sidewalks. Mr. Marconi stated that additional help may be needed either with private firms or Town services.

Mr. Chase suggested that the P&R Commission be involved early in the planning stages with any projects associated with park related responsibilities. Mr. Marconi mentioned that Bob and Paul had been involved in some of the early meetings.

Mr. Thaxter questioned whether there would be any unforeseen problems regarding this project should the Town not obtain the requested Grant funds. Mr. Marconi stated that he

feels that the Town does meet the qualifications and does not see any problems with receiving the (STEEP) Grant.

Mr. Kearns asked for a time frame on this project. Mr. Marconi stated that depending on funds, late summer early fall with the parking. The Commission stated that it would like to see the Skate Park moved first. Mr. Marconi stated that Mr. Charlie Fisher, Town Engineer will be handling the Skate Park relocation.

Mr. Alicea took the floor. Mr. Alicea spoke about the proposal and the history for supporting this project. Mr. Alicea then gave an in depth summary on the revised criteria for the OHS field portion of the Arts District Master Plan.

Mr. Alicea addressed the concerns the P&R Commission had at the initial presentation in March. (Letter to Bob Alicea from Commission attached.)

These concerns included:

1. The current plans do not show the softball field and/or diminish extent of its potential usage.
2. Proposed lighting of baseball field only.
3. Maintenance responsibility for pavilion and responsibility for access of pavilion.
4. Schedule of use of facility
5. Additional parking issues.

Mr. Alicea mentioned that Mr. John Frey is currently investigating the possibilities leasing the Walpole property from the State. This property could support softball and Little League. The Commission stated that this property may not be accepted by the various Town sports groups due to location.

Mr. Alicea would like to put in additional lighting on the OHS field to support baseball. This would allow for additional games and tournaments for baseball. Mr. Alicea mentioned that this lighting will be included in the overall Master Plan.

Mr. Alicea submitted the following resolution to the Commission's concerns:

The plan has been changed to reflect the location of the softball field. The current lighting will remain and any new lighting will encompass the softball and baseball fields. The pavilion structure has been revised and the size has been cut in half. This new structure will have better control and security. Restrooms will only be open during planned events, with permission from Babe Ruth.

The pavilion maintenance will be under the Babe Ruth umbrella, as are other Little League facilities in Town.

The Commission will be advised on how long the field will be out of play and also advised on the start of work from Mr. Alicea. Mr. Alicea will be in touch with Bob Schneider who will notify the P&R fields subcommittee.

Mr. Kearns reiterated:

1. It is agreed that the softball field will remain no matter what and that if and when the Walpole field is built. Walpole will be an additional field.
2. It is agreed that the lighting will continue to exist on the softball field forever. The current lighting will be there operable until the point in time that new lighting is done. The new lighting will encompass both the new baseball field and existing softball field.
3. The pavilion maintenance and security responsibilities will be solely under the Bath 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. It is the understanding that the scheduling of this field will go through whatever prioritize procedures we have currently, and that 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. It was agreed that the Skate Park would be the first to be moved when the project begins.

Mr. DeLalla discussed the proposed drawings. The discussion also included the need for fill on the proposed baseball field and the possibility of sodding the field so that it will be playable by next spring.

Mr. Roche questioned the current placement of the baseball field in relation to the softball field and if any changes would interfere with softball play. After a brief discussion, Bob Schneider mentioned that softball currently shares space, and that it won't change with the additions on the baseball field.

Mr. Kearns had some questions regarding the safety of children in the Skate Park with relation to the new parking addition; traffic and car drop off at its new location. Mr. DeLalla reassured the Commission that there would be no problem as the Park will have the walkway, sidewalks and a grass area.

Mr. Chase suggested installing bike racks.

A brief discussion regarding the current baseball field situation ensued. Mr. Montanari felt that this proposal will help the high school a great deal. They currently have problems with the lack of sanitary facilities for the home team and visiting teams. Mr. Thaxter asked Mr. Montanari if the high school needed anything further from P&R.

Mr. Chase stated that he feels strongly that this plan will benefit the Town and is a great asset to the Town's sports teams.

Mr. Kearns stated that he applauds the efforts of Babe Ruth and their support of this project. The Chairman mentioned that this proposal will go to a vote at the next P&R Commission meeting scheduled for May 20, 2008. Mr. Kearns will also follow up with Mr. Alicea in writing on the items discussed above. Mr. Kearns asked Mr. Marconi if

their approval on this proposal could wait until after the May 20th meeting. Mr. Marconi said it would be no problem.

Mr. Marconi suggested that the fields subcommittee be involved and a protocol be developed for going forward. Mr. Roche and Mr. Schneider will stay involved and report back to the subcommittee and Commission.

Mr. Kearns thanked Mr. Marconi, Mr. Alicea, Mr. Montanari and Jim DeLalla for their continued support and their presentation. Mr. Roche stated that upon approval, P&R would support the project at the P&Z meeting.

Minutes Approved: _____
Wayne H. Tinker, Secretary