

**Minutes of the
Parks and Recreation Commission**
April 13, 2010

In Attendance:

Barbara Dobbin, Chairwoman
Phil Kearns, Vice Chairman
Evie Bottali
Wayne Tinker, Secretary
Gina Carey
David Thaxter
Jon Chase

Paul J. Roche, Director
Robin Matthews, Asst. Director
Eileen Cipolla, Accountant
Robert Schneider, Asst. Director

Jane Byrnes, Comm. Secty.

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

Approval of Agenda:

The Chairwoman stated that she had a request to move the Financial Status Report, item IV, below the Assistant Director-Recreation and Assistant Director-Parks' report. The agenda as amended was approved.

Minutes:

Mr. Tinker made the following corrections to the minutes of the March, 2010 meeting: On page one, under Approval of Agenda, second paragraph, should read: "The Commission asked Storm Heidinger for his.....". On page two, also under Approval of Agenda, fourth paragraph, should read: "The RVFD will roll/up mats....." On page six, under Programs and Long Range Planning, second paragraph should read, "To stay focused on and to develop....."

Mr. Thaxter also made a correction, on page seven, under Aquatics, first paragraph, should read: "The Beach will have to be closed at 3pm; however....."

The minutes as amended were approved.

Chairwoman's Report:

Ms. Dobbin reported that she and Paul Roche had attended the Board of Selectmen meeting regarding the reappointments of the three Commissioners. Due to an application presented to the BOS for the position, the BOS would like to interview the applicant before making any final decisions.

The Commission would like to be notified when the interviews take place. There was a discussion regarding the Commission's past practice relative to conflict of interest and that no Commissioner could concurrently hold a substantive position with any sports team while serving as a Commissioner.

Ms. Dobbin also reported that the Sturges Park issue is resolved with the courts and we are free to do work there.

Director's Report:

Mr. Roche reported that he is working on the following projects:

Richardson Park

The Director invited the Commission to attend the Richardson Park Tour scheduled for May 15, 2010. The walk will include some Park history and a brief discussion on the recent planting of the new specimen trees.

Barlow Mountain Fund Raising

The fundraising is going along great with over \$70,000 already pledged for the project; and the Committee continues to actively seek donations.

Outdoor Fitness Program

Mr. Roche stated that funding for the outdoor fitness program will come from two donors and will total approximately \$24,000. This amount will cover expenses to build the area and will be donated directly to the Town. Since the Town budget was not approved, P&R will find a different venue for the resurfacing of the area. The bids for this project will be coming in on Thursday, April 15, 2010.

P&R Pool Filtration

Mr. Roche gave a summary of the recent mechanical problems with the Rec Center pool. Mr. Roche explained that Mr. Keeler, Building Maintenance Supervisor, and his staff did a tremendous job in getting the problem repaired for little expense and with little pool down time. The Commission discussed at length, Mr. Keeler's ability to resolve building problems quickly and with little expense. The Commission questioned the length of time on the warranty of the equipment. Also, Mr. Roche stated, that the Rec Center whirlpool was experiencing a slight leak. Mr. Keeler again stepped in to repair the problem without any large construction costs and saved the department several thousands of dollars. The Commission again praised Mr. Keeler for his insight and hard work.

Ciuccoli Field

The Director reported that he and Bob Schneider have met with Mr. Bob Alicia regarding the Ciuccoli Field improvement project. It was decided that fundraising would go through the Friends of Parks and Recreation and funding has already begun.

Sturges Park

The Director reported that there has been a drainage problem at Sturges Park and that he has spoken with the First Selectman regarding the problem. Parks and Recreation does not believe the problem is caused by our structures or surfacing but has asked for an opinion from the Town Engineer or Highway Department.

Legislative Meeting

Mr. Roche reported that he will be attending the Connecticut Legislative Meeting in Hartford tomorrow regarding the Integrated Pest Management legislation.

Staffing

Mr. Roche stated that he has been working with Ms. Dobbin and Ms. Carey reviewing the Department's staffing plan, job descriptions and organizational chart.

The Director stated that we will be starting a new reporting procedure by the Assistant Directors in a format that corresponds with the Department's Action Plan.

Assistant Director-Parks:

Mr. Schneider reported on the following:

- The baseball diamonds and clean-up at the Town fields are underway and will be ready for baseball's opening day.
- Clean-up at the schools will be done next week during school break.
- The Asst. Director has been working with a resident on the opening of another community garden at the Farmingville School. Mr. Schneider discussed the water situation for the site.
- Mr. Schneider has been working with Mr. Bob Alicia regarding the construction of the new dugouts at the Old High School field.
- The Asst. Director reported that he had received a complaint regarding the high school basketball court benches. A discussion ensued regarding funding for these repairs. Mr. Schneider will follow-up and get back to the Commission.
- Mr. Schneider reported that he has installed a new planter in Ballard Park and the original planter is currently being restored.
- Mr. Schneider stated that he had met with the Athletic Director of the High School regarding the development of the new facility use form for the Tiger Hollow facility. Mr. Schneider mentioned that the form will be forwarded to the Board of Education for approval. He has also met with the Tiger Hollow Board for their annual meeting. They will be working on some small projects this year.

Mr. Schneider reported that we have forwarded to Mr. Gabianelli, RVFD the minutes from the March meeting as agreed. The Asst. Director followed up with a phone call to be sure he got the notes. Mr. Gabianelli did receive the notes and, as agreed, if he had any changes he would be in touch with P&R. To-date the P&R has not had any changes from Mr. Gabianelli. The Commission asked Mr. Schneider to advise Mr. Gabianelli of the approval of the March minutes.

Mr. Schneider summarized for the Commission his plans to meet the goals of the Outdoor/Indoor Maintenance Action Plan. They are:

- To help the outdoor maintenance crews be more productive and save on time. We have improved the way we schedule daily work and designed a system with the new trailers so that all crews can be self-contained.

- We have cut down on overtime expense and have rescheduled work more efficiently.
- Doing repairs in house, keeping expenses low and saving on time. A recent example was the repair of the whirl pool and Rec Center pool by Mr. Keeler and his staff.

A lengthy discussion ensued regarding the ways to thank the staff for all their hard work and dedication and for going “above and beyond.” It was proposed by the Commission that they sponsor a pizza lunch for the staff.

Assistant Director-Recreation:

Ms. Matthews reported that the Rec Center has been very busy. This Saturday the building hosted several community events including:

- Over 150 participants in the Lego Contest
- Over 100 participants in swim lessons
- 50 SERT Training
- 50 Birthday parties with over 50 people attending
- Over 25 attending group exercise classes
- Several members using the lap/rec swim times
- Several members using the wellness center

Membership Report

Ms. Matthews reported that the department sold 86 promotional “New Year Memberships” and to-date seven purchased annual wellness memberships. A new promotion to offer 13 months at a cost of 12 will be in effect as of April 30, 2010.

Ms. Matthews summarized the results of the recent wellness and lap membership survey. There was some discussion regarding how we should look at the packaging of memberships in the future and the response members gave for not renewing. The Assistant Director also discussed the mission of the department and direction it wants to take in the future. The Commission requested that P&R continue to be diligent and follow up with the survey to those who did not renew and not respond.

Ms. Matthews reported that 80% of the program participants are also members of the Recreation Center and she is currently developing a report that will show the effect programs have on the overall budget.

A discussion ensued regarding the recent decline in lap memberships and whether the decline was directly related to a new outside swim program at Barlow.

Ms. Matthews also presented the Commission with a copy of the Action Plan for the Recreation section of the department. She stated that the Plan has all the situation analysis that was done in the strategic marketing plan along with the program breakdown information for each section. The breakdown reflects what has been done to meet revenue and how to increase future revenue, staff utilization, and monitoring expenses. Ms. Matthews stated that for the next meeting she would have a formal report showing the metrics in place as well as a graph to show whether program revenue has gone up or

down. Ms. Matthews feels that we are still showing the same trends of two years ago in both membership and programming. The Asst. Director wanted the Commission to know that we are not resting, but still pushing forward trying to provide a better service and a better option for people using the Center.

Ms. Matthews suggested that the Commission contact her with any questions or suggestions.

There was some discussion regarding the Skate Park and its current membership fees. Ms. Matthews summarized the membership breakdown for the Commission. They also asked the date of the “Grand Opening” celebration of the Park. Ms. Matthews will get back to them with final details.

Financial Status

Report/Budget Summary

Ms. Cipolla reported that year-to-date revenue is down; however the department is covering some of the revenue deficit with lower expenses.

Ms. Cipolla presented the Commission with a copy of the final budget which will now go to the Town Referendum. The Commission discussed the cuts made by the Board of Finance and how they will affect the department and safety issues. The Commission felt the department did well with this year’s budget deliberations.

Sub-Committee Reports:

Budget & Policy-Phil Kearns:

Mr. Kearns asked Ms. Cipolla if she had the dates of the Town Budget referendum and how would P&R be bundled in the referendum questions. The Commission had some concerns due to past experiences. Mr. Roche will follow up with Mr. Redmond, Town Controller and get back to the Commission.

Buildings and Grounds- Mr. Tinker

No current issues.

Programs & Long Range Planning-Evie Bottali

Ms. Bottali stated that the sub-committee is working on program revenue and exploring new membership packaging options.

ADA-Gina Carey

No current issues.

Aquatics-David Thaxter

No current issues.

Old Business

At the March Commission meeting, the Chairwoman talked about developing a communication plan with the staff. After meeting with some of the Commissioners and Director, the following was decided:

- Scheduled a meeting with the senior staff to review the Commission's budget presented to the BOS and BOF, in hopes that the senior staff will understand how well their work was represented by the Commission to the Town.
- Present a chart showing the department's monthly stages of revenue and expenses and to look at the challenges that face the department in budget year 2010-2011. To also look at ways that the department will represent to the Town that they have a handle on revenue and have a plan on how to increase our revenue in the upcoming fiscal year.
- The Commission would like input from the senior staff to help develop ideas as to what the department is doing well and how we can improve. Also, any suggestions for improving revenue and lowering expenses are being sought. The staff will have a questionnaire to complete offering their ideas.
- The Commission discussed the possibility of also meeting with all the staff members and getting their input as well. A final decision has not been made.

New Business

The Chairwoman stated that she had a request to change the time of the Commission's monthly meeting to 7:30pm. After a brief discussion, the Commission agreed. The following motion was stated:

“RESOLVE, to approve the moving of the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting from 8pm to 7:30pm.”

The motion was unanimously approved.

The recording secretary will follow-up with the necessary paperwork.

The Commission adjourned at 10:14pm.

Minutes Approved: _____
Wayne H. Tinker, Secretary

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