

**Minutes of the
Parks and Recreation Commission
Meeting
February 22, 2011**

In Attendance:

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

Paul J. Roche, Director
Robert Schneider, Asst. Director
Robin Matthews, Asst. Director

Guests: Steve Creedon, Matthew Lee, Parks and Recreation - Aquatic Coordinators.

Meeting called to order by the Chairman at 7:31p.m.

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved.

Welcome Guests

Ms. Dobbin introduced and welcomed guests to the meeting.

Minutes:

Mr. Tinker made a correction to the January minutes. On page four, last paragraph correct spelling of Mr. Creehan's name to read "Mr. Creedon." The minutes as amended were approved.

Financial Status

Report/Budget Summary

Mr. Roche presented the budget summary in Ms. Cipolla's absence. Mr. Roche stated that programs continue to show a deficit to budget and mentioned that the Department is hoping to recoup some of the deficit.

The Director reported that recreation and wellness memberships were up from previous month, and lap memberships continue to remain flat.

2011/2012 – Budget

In Mr. Kearns' absence, Mr. Roche reported that the budget sub-committee had met with the Board of Selectmen regarding the Department's 2011/2012 budget requests. Mr. Roche mentioned that the meeting was well received; however there was some discussion regarding the deficit. Mr. Roche stated that the committee had made adjustments in this year's revenue budget. Mr. Roche mentioned that Mr. Kearns had stated to the Board that the Department is doing more than just programs; it is also providing services to the Town.

Ms. Carey and Mr. Thaxter also mentioned that Mr. Kearns did a good job in communicating that the Department does more than just supply programs for the Town. The Department should be looked at as a whole; including parks, schools, Town facilities, etc and not just Recreation Center. Mr. Roche stated that the committee is waiting for the second round of discussions. The Commission reaffirmed that the Board needs to look at the Department as a whole.

Ms. Dobbin thanked the committee for its hard work in presenting the budget this year.

The Commission had some discussion regarding the items requested in both the capital and operating budgets.

Mr. Chase discussed some of the past practices of the Board of Selectmen regarding the capital requests. It was also suggested that the Department track the services outside the realm of the Recreation Center. A lengthy discussion ensued regarding the aspects of the Department's duties.

Chairwoman's Report

The Chairwoman had no report at this time.

Director's Report:

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

- Mr. Roche summarized some of the points from the presentation of the Spray Bay proposal at the recent Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance meetings. The Spray Bay committee is enthusiastic about the project and will be working on fundraising strategies if the project is approved. If approved, the committee will begin to raise half of the funding for the project. Mr. Roche felt that the committee may go back to the Boards with additional details on the project.
- The Director is working with the 911 Memorial sub-committee on fundraising for the project. The Director mentioned that the sub-committee has received over \$34,000 in donations to-date. Mr. Roche felt that the project is well on its way.
- The Skate Park will be doing a large fundraiser to try to offset some of the deficit. The proceeds from the fundraiser will also be split with the Barn. It is expected to take place Thursday at the Community Center from 7pm-10pm. Mr. Roche mentioned that tickets would be approximately \$50.00 and that it will be a very nice event and he invited the Commission to join him.
- The Ciuccoli Field renovation project is going well and will continue when weather permits. Fundraising continues to be successful.

Assistant Director-Recreation:

Ms. Matthews reported on the following:

- Ms. Matthews distributed a copy of the new spring/summer brochure to the Commission. Ms. Matthews stated that all programs and activities are highlighted in the brochure.
- Ms. Matthews mentioned that the Recreation Center has received seven memberships from the new Pickleball program, and the instructor would like to take the program outside for the spring/summer seasons.
- The Assistant Director reported that the 16 & 17 year old memberships have started in the wellness center.
- The Aquatic Department is currently publicizing the "three layers of protection" campaign to help decrease the number of pool closings. The public, members and staff have all participated in and are appreciative of the campaign.
- The Newcomers Summer Camp Fair will be held at the Recreation Center this year. The Recreation Center will be highlighting its summer camp program and also having a membership and information table for all of our services.
- The Egg Scramble, Annual Tag Sale, and Visit Town Trucks are just a few of the upcoming spring events that Parks and Recreation will sponsor. Some new programs offered this spring include: in-house swim team (11 participants already signed-up) and recorder lessons for adults. The aquatic staff has just completed an in-service training session (Ms. Matthews circulated pictures). The program was important to the staff members along with being very informative. The aquatic staff is currently working on a new dive program at the Barlow Mountain Pool.

Ms. Bottali praised the work done on the latest program brochure. Mr. Roche stated that the staff did a great job on the brochure; he also stated that the aquatic staff is doing a good job covering the open position.

Ms. Bottali mentioned that the summer programs/outdoor camps may have to be adjusted to meet delayed school closings.

Assistant Director – Parks

Mr. Schneider reported:

- Mr. Schneider mentioned that he held the Annual Fields Meeting last week and that the meeting had gone very well. Mr. Schneider summarized at the meeting the new fee increase. There were no notable objections to this increase. Mr. Schneider mentioned that he has asked the sports groups to assist with the Town's recycling program on the Town's fields. Mr. Chase stated that the recycling program should be the responsibility of the Sports Groups and not that of Parks and Recreation.
- Mr. Schneider reported that he is working with the Tiger Hollow committee on the turf project and construction is currently underway.
- The Annual Volunteer Fire Department's Carnival is set to begin on June 22 and final clean-up will be June 26. The Commission asked Mr. Schneider if he felt the field had been left in good condition after last year's carnival. Mr. Schneider responded that we had not lost anytime getting the softball program back on the field; however, nothing is ever perfect.
- The Ciuccoli field project is currently underway pending weather conditions.
- Mr. Schneider stated that he has met with the RFCL regarding the group's status on meeting the department's field use criteria.
- There was a lengthy discussion regarding the outside summer camps utilizing the Town's fields and how Parks and Recreation can look into streamlining and future involvement with these camps.
- SCOR has made a request for the development of the East Ridge North Athletic Complex field turf replacement sinking fund. It was suggested that the request should be reviewed at the sub-committee level. The Commission briefly discussed its involvement should this fund be established.

The Commission requested that Mr. Schneider send the Ridgefield Volunteer Fire Department the same letter as last year and that Mr. Schneider follow-up with discussions on changing the date of the carnival.

Sub-Committee Reports:

Programs & Long Range Planning-Evie Bottali

Promotion-Membership Report

Ms. Bottali reported a change in the membership comparison report.

Ms. Bottali reported that recreation and wellness membership had an increase and this looked very encouraging. Lap members seem to remain flat at this time. Ms. Bottali stated that the Department is looking at the promotional memberships in depth for its effectiveness for future promotions.

Ms. Bottali reported that at last month's meeting, the Commission questioned the on-line advertising and its success. Ms. Bottali stated that advertising was done in the News Times, Ridgefield Press and on Facebook. The Press and Facebook were the most effective. The Press had the highest click-through rate out of all three, Facebook had 730,000 impressions. Ms. Bottali and Ms. Schroppe also looked at the cost effectiveness of each of these advertising avenues. They found that the Press and Facebook both had a lower cost than the News Times.

ADA Issues – Gina Carey

Ms. Carey stated that she is continuing to try to connect with Carol Konner, Social Services Director, from Town Hall to discuss developing a plan to identify grants which can be used to fund automatic doors for the Recreation Center.

Buildings and Grounds- Mr. Tinker

Mr. Tinker stated that there were no new issues at this time.

Budget & Policy-Phil Kearns:

Covered above.

Aquatics-David Thaxter

Mr. Thaxter reported that as a consequence of budget decisions, the Aquatics sub-committee withdrew plans to recommend a new playground at Martin Park. The current plan is to enhance the beach front, using inflatables. Mr. Thaxter stated that related issues of safety and manpower are also being reviewed along with the organization of an in-house swim team. Mr. Thaxter reported that there is an urgent staffing concern to fill a vacant lifeguard position.

Old Business

No current issues.

New Business

No current issues.

The Chairwoman motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:25pm.

The Director requested a brief executive session to discuss personnel matters. Mr. Chase motioned to go into executive session. The motion was seconded by Mr. Thaxter.

Executive Session 9:27pm-9:40pm.

Minutes Approved: _____
Wayne H. Tinker, Secretary

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