

**Minutes of the  
Parks and Recreation Commission  
Meeting  
January 10, 2012**

In Attendance:

Barbara Dobbin, Chairwoman  
Phil Kearns  
Evie Bottali  
Wayne Tinker  
David Thaxter

Paul J. Roche, Director  
  
Robert Schneider, Asst. Director  
Robin Matthews, Asst. Director  
Eileen Cipolla, Accountant  
Jane Byrnes, Rec'd Secty.

Meeting called to order by the Chairwoman at 7:32p.m.

Quests:

Mr. Patrick Egan, 26 Rowland Lane, Ridgefield, CT  
Ms. Jennifer Blackwell, 126 Holmes Road, Ridgefield, CT

The Chairwoman introduced and welcomed guests.

Approval of Agenda:

The agenda as submitted was approved.

Minutes:

Mr. Tinker made a correction to the December, 2011 minutes. On page one; first sentence should read: "Meeting called to order by the Vice Chairwoman at 7:30pm." The minutes as amended were approved.

Mr. Roche congratulated Jane Byrnes on her "Employee of the Year" award.

Financial Status:

Report/Budget Summary:

Ms. Cipolla stated that the budget sub-committee has been meeting monthly to discuss "how we are doing," a summary of the department's financials. Ms. Cipolla stated that the December revenue numbers are not complete; however, they look positive. We are waiting to see how the end of January will report. The new membership packages are selling well and we should meet our budget for this month. Ms. Cipolla stated that she feels very positive with the overall numbers and we should have more than enough savings in expenses.

Ms. Dobbin said that this is very positive news and she would like to congratulate the staff and sub-committee for all the hard work they did to develop and sell these membership packages. Mr. Roche reiterated that the staff, both weekend and weekday, are "all on board" and doing a great job with selling the new memberships. A Commissioner mentioned that he was impressed with how the staff handled the presentation and selling of our new membership packages.

Mr. Roche also stated that Eileen Cipolla is doing a great job with the financial end of the new memberships.

Membership Report:

Mr. Roche summarized the current membership "draft" report. The current draft shows that Rec memberships are up slightly, lap memberships are showing an increase and wellness/ all inclusive are also up. The Commission was happy to see that memberships are on an up swing and again thanked the sub-committee, specifically Evie Bottali for all her hard work.

There was much discussion regarding the membership packages and the interest it has created in the community.

**Chairwoman's Report:**

The Chairwoman had no report at this time.

**Director's Report:**

Mr. Roche's report was covered above. Mr. Roche mentioned that he has been spending a great deal of time on the new membership program and working on the Department's strategic plan.

**Assistant Director-Recreation:**

Ms. Matthews reviewed her report that had been mailed to the Commission. David Thaxter asked if the Skate Park was closed for the season. Mr. Roche stated that the Park closes in late November even if the weather is warmer. Mr. Schneider mentioned that the Park has to close due to ice which may cause hazards to the skaters.

Ms. Matthews mentioned that she is working with RMAC and the Boys and Girls Club to develop activities for teens and grade school children. Ms. Matthews also stated that Andrea Maiorano is working hard to develop programs and she is working to find the Rec Center's niche with youth programming in Town.

Mr. Thaxter mentioned that Ms. Matthews did a nice job successfully mediating a situation between two programs that were using P&R space.

Now that the all inclusive memberships include free fitness classes, Mr. Kearns asked if there has been any increase in the number of people attending these classes. Ms. Matthews reported that classes seem busy; however, she doesn't have an official count at this time.

The Commission questioned whether there had been any comments from the businesses in Town regarding our new guitar lesson program. Ms. Matthews stated that she had spoken with the businesses and they had no objections with our program.

The Commission also asked about the status of our chess program. Ms. Matthews mentioned that the program has moved to the after school program at the elementary schools.

**Assistant Director-Parks:**

Mr. Schneider has set the date for the annual fields meeting for February 22. He also stated that all but one athletic group is paid up for their field usage.

Mr. Schneider is working with the Senior Financial Accountant on the FEMA report from the last storm.

The bids for repairing of the fences damaged during the storm are completed.

Martin Park Beach water levels have been dropped again and this should curb any weed problems for next summer. There were some questions regarding the pond recouping the water. Mr. Schneider stated that there should be no problems in the future.

Mr. Schneider is meeting with Ridgefield Youth Football regarding installation of a turf field at the high school practice field. The Commission would like Mr. Schneider to encourage Youth Football to keep this project under the jurisdiction of Tiger Hollow.

Mr. Schneider mentioned that due to the recent storm, there is plenty of firewood at Sturges Park for the Scouts to use. The Asst. Director also mentioned that an Eagle Scout just completed a project at the Skate Park.

Ms. Dobbin also asked if there would be any issues at the upcoming fields meeting that may have to be addressed by the Commission. Mr. Schneider stated that all groups are in compliance with the Commission's guidelines.

Ms. Dobbin questioned the status of the Ridgefield Volunteer Firemen's field issue. Mr. Schneider brought the Chairwoman up-to-date with the recent discussions on next year's site. The Commission suggested that the Director check to be sure there are no location problems with using the new site.

**Sub-Committee Reports:**

**Buildings and Grounds- Mr. Tinker:**

No report at this time. Fields meeting covered above in Mr. Schneider's report.

**Programs & Long Range Planning-Evie Bottali:**

Ms. Bottali reported that the major push for memberships is currently underway. Ms. Bottali stated that by the spring, she and the sub-committee will be working with Ms. Matthews and her staff on a new methodology for reporting memberships and program budget numbers.

**Budget & Policy-Phil Kearns:**

Mr. Kearns summarized for the Commission Parks and Recreation's current financial condition. Mr. Kearns mentioned that the good news is that it looks as though we are seeing a turn around with memberships and our spin program to help improve revenue.

Mr. Kearns reported that he will be scheduling a special Commission meeting for the final budget vote. He will contact the Commission on the date; however he is hoping for January 20, 2012 at 8am.

**ADA Issues – Gina Carey:**

Mr. Roche reported that the ADA doors are on order.

There was a brief discussion regarding the status on the installation of a food vendor at the Rec Center and how it was progressing. Mr. Roche reported that he is meeting with the vendor who won the bid this week and will have a definite answer. The Commission suggested that an official start up date be obtained.

**Aquatics-David Thaxter:**

No current issues.

**Old Business:**

No current issues.

**New Business:**

No new business.

Meeting adjourned 8:25pm.

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

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