

**Minutes of the
Parks and Recreation Commission
June 15, 2010**

In Attendance:

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

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

Jane Byrnes, Comm. Secty.

Guests: David Wood, RHS Intern

Meeting called to order by the Chairwoman at 7:30 p.m.

The Chairwoman introduced and welcomed high school intern, David Wood.

Approval of Agenda:

The agenda as submitted was approved.

Approval of Minutes:

Mr. Tinker made a correction to the May, 2010 minutes. On page four, under Skate Park, should read: "Ms. Matthews summarized....."

Also, page two under Ridgefield Special Olympics should read: "Mr. Roche reported that he and Ms. Matthews had met with Alesia Williams....." The minutes as amended were approved.

Financial Status

Report/Budget Summary

Ms. Cipolla reported that year-to-date revenue is down from projected budget; however the department still has some expense savings. There was a brief discussion regarding the utility charges. Ms. Cipolla stated that she will be meeting with the Town's Purchasing Agent in a few days to follow up on the final utility numbers. It was reported that project program revenue along with swim lesson revenue were down this month. The Commission discussed this at great length.

Mr. Kearns asked about the current camp revenue numbers. Ms. Cipolla reported that specialty camps are up, however, Adventure Camp is down.

There was a discussion regarding the current revenue numbers for the Skate Park. The Commission asked Ms. Matthews if the Park was currently breaking even. Ms. Cipolla mentioned that the May month end numbers reflect that the Park is currently not showing a surplus, however it is covering its expenses. The early June numbers are reflecting that

the Park is also maintaining itself. Ms. Cipolla will continue to monitor these numbers. Ms. Matthews stated that she feels that the Park will keep on track and break even.

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:

The Director mentioned that the Friends of Parks and Recreation currently have several fundraising projects. These include:

Ridgefield Special Olympics

Mr. Roche reported that he and Ms. Matthews had met with Alesia Williams from the Special Olympics regarding a donation in the amount of \$25,000.00 to the Friends of Ridgefield Parks and Recreation, \$10,000 of which was donated to the Barlow Pool project. The remaining funds will be used toward the Ridgefield Special Olympics special events and projects to be determined by the Special Olympic and Friends committee.

911 Exhibit

Funds are coming in to the development of the 911 Exhibit which will be placed on the front field of the Rec Center property. Funds will be used to install benches and plantings.

Barlow Mountain Fund Raising

Fundraising continues on the Barlow Mountain Pool project and numbers are reflecting that we are close to reaching projected goals.

Ciuccoli Field

The Director reported that the project is moving along and that the new bleachers and dugouts look great.

Outdoor Fitness Program

Mr. Roche stated that he visited a site in Groton, Connecticut to review outdoor fitness equipment; however, they had not installed all the pieces and he was unable to get a good sense of the equipment.

The Director is also working with the Long Range Planning Sub-Committee on several projects and recent issues.

Assistant Director-Recreation:

Ms. Matthews reported:

Ms. Matthews is working on the Annual ADA Meeting with the various Town organizations, including SPHERE, ROSE, the Agent of the Disabled and the Special Olympics.

The group meets yearly to discuss Parks and Rec programs and future events and issues. Ms. Matthews gave a summary on the fundraising efforts from the Special Olympics committee and the use of these funds.

Martin Park Beach Triathlon

Ms. Matthews reported that the annual triathlon at Martin Park Beach went well.

Rec Center/Barlow Pool

The pool work at Barlow Mountain is expected to begin in August. The Rec Center pool work was completed without any problems and the pool is working well.

Skate Park

The Park is going well with summer lessons and group activities.

Summer Intern Program

Ms. Matthews will be working with an intern from WestConn this summer. A brief discussion ensued regarding the intern's and Parks and Rec's responsibilities.

Ms. Matthews stated that the summer camp brochure has been mailed and should be in mailboxes by Thursday.

Membership Report

Ms. Bottali reported that Wellness memberships continue to be soft, with Rec Center memberships holding steady. There was a slight increase in lap membership last month. It was reported that the Department is working on communication vehicles to get the news out about summer camps. Additional newspaper ads will be going out to help boost registration numbers along with some advertising at the front desk. The summer camp brochure has been mailed which will help get the information to the residents.

There was a discussion regarding membership packaging and where the department is heading in the future. The Department is also looking into new web-site development.

Assistant Director-Parks:

Mr. Schneider reported on the following:

The Department is working on its restructuring plan for the outdoor maintenance operations, which will better utilize staff. This would include the development of a project board for the repairs of equipment.

Relay for Life

The Relay for Life event was held at Ridgefield High School field and it was a big success. Mr. Schneider mentioned that this event may have the same potential problems as the SCOR Tournament with regards to field damage from inclement weather. This event is held rain or shine and bad weather conditions may have damaging effect on the

field. There was a brief discussion regarding the vehicle issues at these events on the field during bad weather. The Commission discussed the possibility of a contingency plan if there is inclement weather. This issue will be discussed at the next Buildings and Grounds Sub-Committee meeting.

The Commission questioned the amount of use these fields get during this season with regards to the recovery time. Mr. Schneider reported that the high school and various Town teams are still using these fields, but recovery during the summer months is difficult. Mr. Schneider also stated that he has several additional field issues to be discussed with the sub-committee.

Mowing Reduction

Mr. Schneider shared some pictures with the Commission on the sites where the mowing has been reduced. Mr. Schneider is worried about the tick factors.

Pesticide Applications

Mr. Schneider summarized for the Commission the recent State Legislation regarding the “no use” policy of pesticide applications on school grounds. There was much discussion regarding the effects on the fields and the possibility of a greater number of insects, such as bees in these areas. The Commission discussed possible options regarding the Legislation and meeting with State representatives. The sub-committee will also discuss in length, this issue.

The Commission suggested that the Department advise the Town’s sports groups and also the public, of the upcoming legislation and the future effects on the Town’s fields. It was agreed that the Commission would not do anything until the sub-committee met. Mr. Schneider will contact the DEP to get the exact ruling.

Mr. Kearns asked Mr. Schneider about the status of the upcoming Volunteer Fire Fighters’ Carnival. Mr. Schneider discussed at length the Commission’s conditions and the Volunteers responsibilities regarding the field issues.

Mr. Kearns also questioned the parking issues at the lower high school field and the removal of the posts. Mr. Schneider will look into this issue.

Mr. Kearns asked Ms. Matthews if it would be worthwhile to have Parks and Rec program information, summer camp and Skate Park information available to the public at the upcoming Firemen’s Carnival. Ms. Matthews said she would think about setting up an information table.

Sturges Park

Ms. Dobbin asked about the status on the drainage issue at Sturges Park. Mr. Schneider reported that the materials have been delivered to the site by the Highway Department as agreed to by the First Selectman, Town Engineer, and neighbor. Ms. Dobbin also asked for a status on the well. Mr. Schneider stated that there are no current updates. He will follow-up on this issue.

Sub-Committee Reports:

Buildings and Grounds- Mr. Tinker

Mr. Tinker stated that his report was covered under the Asst. Director-Parks.

Programs & Long Range Planning-Evie Bottali

Ms. Bottali's report was covered above.

Budget & Policy-Phil Kearns:

Mr. Kearns summarized the reasoning for the sub-committee's recommendation for the proposed membership fee increases and the impact on future revenue. The Commission made an amendment to the sub-committee's proposed recommendation, they asked for an increase in the lap memberships.

After a very lengthy discussion, Ms. Carey made the following motion:

ACCEPT, the Parks and Recreation Budget Sub-Committee's amended membership fee increases effective July 1, 2010, as follows:

Recreation Single Membership from \$115 to \$125
Recreation Couple Membership from \$175 to \$190
Recreation Family Membership from \$230 to \$250

Wellness Membership from \$290 to \$360

Lap Membership from \$210 to \$230

The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

The Commission stated that this increase is approved under the assumption that there will be improvements to the Wellness Center equipment and improvements to the locker room and amenities.

There was a lengthy discussion regarding options for the improvements and amenities. The Commission was in agreement with these improvements. The Commission talked about the future membership packaging and membership fees for the new packaging. They also spoke about the possibility of a large percentage of non-renewal memberships due to this increase.

The Commission stated that the Department should be monitoring the public's response regarding the increase, along with educating the front desk staff on the reasoning behind these increases.

ADA Issues – Gina Carey

Ms. Carey summarized for the Commission a recent meeting with the sub-committee regarding the co-sponsored 20th ADA Birthday Celebration event schedule for July 27 in Ballard Park. The Commission is proposing extending support for this project through volunteering time and if necessary, funding.

After a discussion and clarification; Ms. Carey made the following motion:

“**AGREE**, to use funding from the ADA account up to \$500.00 (if needed), for the event – “20th ADA Birthday Celebration” in Ballard Park on July 27, 2010.

The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

It was suggested by the Director that the July Commission meeting be held in Ballard Green so the Commission can help and attend the Celebration. The Secretary will make necessary notifications and changes with the Town Clerk.

Aquatics-David Thaxter

No current issues.

Old Business

No current issues.

New Business

No current issues.

The Commission adjourned at 8:50 pm. The Commission went into Executive Session from 8:51pm to 9:30pm to discuss personnel issues.

Minutes Approved: _____
Wayne H. Tinker, Secretary

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