

**Minutes of the
Parks and Recreation Commission
Meeting
March 15, 2011**

In Attendance:

Barbara Dobbin, Chairman
Wayne Tinker, Secretary
Evie Bottali
David Thaxter
Gina Carey
Phil Kearns

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

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

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved as submitted.

Minutes:

Mr. Tinker made a correction to the February minutes. On page three, fourth paragraph, under "Sub-Committee Reports" should read "Lap memberships seem to remain flat at this time." The minutes as amended were approved.

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 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 mentioned that it was decided that the site would be moved to a more "peaceful" setting off the walking path. The Commission mentioned that they felt this was a more appropriate site than the one they had originally suggested.
- The Skate Park had its large fundraiser which netted approximately \$3500 for the Park. The Park opened this weekend with free skating.

Mr. Roche discussed the current facilities rental agreement and possible future options with the Commission. Mr. Roche stated that he had received a request to host a large fundraiser event during a time when the facility would be used to host revenue making birthday parties and other programs. A lengthy discussion ensued regarding the large event fees, revenue loss, covering expenses and the future venue for these activities. The discussion proceeded on whether or not the Recreation Center is a "community center" or in the business of making revenue. The Commission suggested a review of the facility rental agreement at the sub-committee level and a review of the rental rates was necessary. The Commission also felt that fees should be considered "program specific" and a new rental agreement be drawn.

It was decided that at this time, Mr. Roche go back to the group requesting use of the facility and charge them just what it costs to host the event. It was also suggested that Mr. Roche mention to the First Selectman that there is a possibility that we stand to lose revenue, and that in the future

this rate may be adjusted to make up for the loss. Ms. Bottali will come back to the Commission with the sub-committee's recommendation on handling these issues in the future.

- The Ciuccoli Field renovation project is going well and will continue when weather permits. Fundraising continues to be successful and ground breaking is scheduled for next week.
- The Spray Bay committee has met with a new vendor. The Commission discussed these products and elements. Mr. Roche mentioned that the Board of Selectmen suggested that the Committee raise 75% of the needed funding for this project. The next step going forward is receiving approval from the Board of Finance.

Barbara Dobbin thanked the Parks and Recreation budget committee again for all their hard work in developing and presenting the 2011-2012 operating and capital budgets. Ms. Dobbin stated that Mr. Kearns did a wonderful job in the preparation and presentation. The Chairwoman also stated that she, Mr. Kearns and Mr. Roche had met with a member of the Board of Finance and that meeting went well. Ms. Dobbin mentioned that an item that had been deleted from the budget was a maintenance truck used for snow removal, equipment transportation, and other maintenance duties which would have been used at the Rec Center. Mr. Roche thanked Eileen Cipolla for the good job she did with developing this year's budget.

Assistant Director-Recreation:

Ms. Matthews reported on the following:

- Ms. Matthews is currently re-stabilizing the youth program and working on covering the open position. With this, she is currently working to get the summer Adventure Camp program and all other camp programs ready for this coming season. Ms. Matthews is also busy hiring staff and arranging schedules for the summer season.
- Ms. Matthews reported that she is working with the Rotary Club on the upcoming Egg Scramble event held in Ballard Park in early April.
- Swim lesson registration is scheduled for Thursday and private lessons will be added to this registration. Ms. Matthews stated that the in-house swim team program has become very popular.

Ms. Dobbin questioned whether or not the Department had made adjustments to help meet swim lesson deficit. Ms. Matthew discussed the ways the Department has offered advance lessons and changed times to help accommodate and to keep participants in future classes.

Mr. Roche stated that he has spoken with some outside groups who may be looking to expand their programs by incorporating swim lessons and using our pool facilities. Mr. Roche said this may be a way of increasing revenue and programs. The sub-committee will look at this further.

Assistant Director-Parks

Mr. Schneider reported that he is working on the following:

- Bids have gone out for fencing for the following schools; Ridgefield High School, Farmingville Elementary and the East Ridge Middle School.
- Mr. Schneider and his staff are working on taking inventory and purchasing materials for the upcoming spring sports season. These include; seed, fertilizer, clay and top soil.
- Mr. Schneider is working on the Ciuccoli Field project with the committee members.
- The crews are busy changing over the equipment from winter mode to spring mode. They are also working to repair all parks, schools and fields.

- Some other projects currently being worked on are: clean-up at the dog park, Sturges Park and cross country track repairs.
- The Asst. Director has been working on the Tiger Hollow and Scotts Ridge turf fields doing sweeping, repairs and painting.

There was some discussion regarding a recent request Parks and Recreation had received from the Board of Education regarding budget issues. Mr. Roche stated that he would be gathering this information.

Financial Status

Report/Budget Summary

Ms. Cipolla reported that the Department is watching very closely the expenses and that they hope to come in close to budget projections. There were some questions regarding year-end salary savings and seasonal part-time budgets.

Sub-Committee Reports:

Programs & Long Range Planning-Evie Bottali

Membership Report

Ms. Bottali reported that she felt that the Department had recouped some members due to the recent special offers and that the rate of decline had softened. Recreation and wellness memberships were reporting decline in its numbers while lap had a slight increase. There was discussion regarding exploring new options for new promotions and pursuing other means of membership terms. The Commission felt that shortening membership terms may have harsh effect on revenue.

After some discussion, the Commission suggested that a meeting with the marketing staff for a six month review may be in order. The Commission will forward the Director their thoughts and questions regarding the information they request.

The Commission asked Ms. Matthews if she knew the number of 16 and 17 year old memberships the Department had sold and if there were any comments from current members. Ms. Matthews did not have the total, but mentioned that they had only a few negative comments regarding this policy.

Mr. Roche and the Commission reviewed the Department's guidelines for use of parks and facilities by profit and non-profit users. The following was brought up:

- (a) Procedures must be tightened up and reviewed more closely.
- (b) Proof of non-profit must be submitted at time of rental.
- (c) What is a fair rate to charge?
- (d) Should the Department rent to for profit and if so how much?

It was recommended that this be reviewed by the Commission's Long Range Planning sub-committee.

Buildings and Grounds- Mr. Tinker

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

Budget & Policy-Phil Kearns:

Mr. Kearns reported that the Town wide budget meeting is scheduled for March 24, 2011 at 7:30pm at the East Ridge Middle School. Mr. Kearns mentioned that the following week will probably be the Board of Finance meeting.

ADA Issues – Gina Carey

Ms. Carey stated that there were no new issues at this time.

Aquatics-David Thaxter

Mr. Thaxter reported that there is an urgent staffing concern to fill a vacant Aquatic Coordinator position. The Aquatic Department is still feeling the impact from this open position. Ms. Matthews stated that this has had a very adverse effect on the staff and on our programs. Mr. Thaxter stated that this issue will be reviewed at a sub-committee meeting next week.

The Commission asked Ms. Matthews to put together a contingency plan listing coverage, duties that can be shifted, etc. and the impact this may have on staffing. Ms. Matthews mentioned that Collene Gregory has put together some information and Ms. Matthews will forward it to the Commissioners for their review.

Old Business

No current issues.

New Business

Ms. Dobbin added item (a) "Commission Reinstatements" under New Business. The agenda as amended was approved.

(a) Commission Reinstatements:

Ms. Dobbin stated that three Commissioners; Gina Carey, Evie Bottali and David Thaxter have terms that are expiring on April 1, 2011. After a brief discussion, Ms. Dobbin opened the floor for suggestions and comments regarding the reinstatement of these three Commissioners.

Barbara Dobbin made the following motion:

"ACCEPT the reinstatement of all three Commissioners for another term of service to the Parks and Recreation Commission."

The motion was seconded by Phil Kearns and passed unanimously.

The Chairwoman will get in touch with the Board of Selectmen on the reinstatements.

Meeting adjourned 9:14pm

Minutes Approved: _____
Wayne H. Tinker, Secretary

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