

**Minutes of the
Special
Parks and Recreation Commission
May 18, 2010**

In Attendance:

Barbara Dobbin, Chairwoman
Phil Kearns, Vice Chairman
Wayne Tinker, Secretary
David Thaxter
Jon Chase

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

Jane Byrnes, Comm. Secty.

Guests: Robin Telesco, 5 Windy Woods Newtown
James Rafferty, 15 Sunset Drive, Ridgefield
Donna Ingoldsby, 108 Limestone Road, Ridgefield
Linda Caponetti, 261 Mimosa Circle, Ridgefield
Billy Phofl, 344 North Salem Road, Ridgefield

Meeting called to order by the Chairwoman at 7:30 p.m.
The Chairwoman introduced and welcomed guests.

Approval of Agenda and Minutes:

The agenda and minutes as submitted 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 June to follow up on the final utility numbers. Ms. Cipolla mentioned that Town Hall continues to monitor the Department's revenue and she mentioned that the Controller has requested a month by month revenue projection for next year. The Commission mentioned that back in January they predicted an upturn in revenue, and without that upturn, they may be challenged in the future to meet revenue projections.

Mr. Kearns stated that the Budget Sub-Committee will be meeting June 4, 2010 to review May's revenue figures and review revenue shortfalls.

Chairwoman's Report:

Ms. Dobbin was happy to report that the Parks and Rec proposed budget had been passed by the Town's voters. Ms. Dobbin thanked Eileen Cipolla and the Budget Sub-Committee for their hard work. Also, she personally thanked Phil Kearns for his time in presenting a very creditable and compelling budget to the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance.

The Commission also wanted to extend its appreciation to the Town's PTAs for their support with the approval of the budget.

Ms. Dobbin reported that she had met with the Department's senior staff to present them with a copy of the original BOF budget. Ms. Dobbin felt that the presentation went well and the staff appreciated how the Department was represented by the Commission at the BOS/BOF meetings. The staff meeting was also to help the staff understand where the Department is heading in the future. Ms. Dobbin mentioned that the staff had come up with some good ideas for expense savings and additional revenue options.

The Chairwoman also reported that the three Commissioners (herself, Phil Kearns and Jon Chase) terms had been reappointed by the BOS. Brief discussion ensued regarding Ms. Dobbin's letter to the First Selectman and the BOS recommending a change in the reappointment dates for the P&R Commission. The Commission feels that better continuity and renewal would be reached by changing the reappointment dates for its members.

Ms. Dobbin's letter stated that:

“In looking at the terms for all the Commissioners, we realized that we have three term expirations in 2010, three in 2011, and 1 in 2012. We recommend, to achieve both continuity and renewal that a better schedule would be to have terms expire on a 3/2/2 schedule. To accomplish this, Jon Chase has agreed to serve only two years of the next term. Our suggestion would be that his replacement be appointed to a new three year term, thus getting a 3/2/2 expiration cycle.”

Director's Report:

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

Ridgefield Special Olympics

Mr. Roche reported that he and Ms. Matthews had met with Alicia 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 committee.

Barlow Mountain Fund Raising

Mr. Roche stated that he was pleased to see that the Barlow Mountain Pool repair item on the budget had been approved and that the fundraising continues with over \$70,000 already pledged for the project.

Mr. Kearns suggested that Mr. Roche inform the First Selectman and Town Controller that the current fund raising trends may exceed the projected matching funds. Mr. Roche reported that the proposal outlines the fact that additional funds will be used for cosmetic improvements such as; painting, drain repairs, etc. Mr. Roche will notify the First Selectman and Controller.

Outdoor Fitness Program

Mr. Roche stated that he will be visiting a site in Groton, Connecticut on Monday to review outdoor fitness equipment.

Mr. Roche also stated that funding for the outdoor fitness program will come from two donors and will total approximately \$24,000. The bids for this project have come in and the low bid had not met specs.

P&R Pool Filtration

Mr. Roche gave a summary of the status of the Rec Center pool filter repair:

- Currently operating with the temporary filter
- Water quality is good
- The slide opened this weekend for use during birthday parties
- All new parts are on site
- Have hose to pump out dirt and will use the Highway Dept. to pump out sand which will save in expense
- P&R will act as general contractor to save expenses
- Will plan to do backwash in pool now that all repair equipment is on site
- Planning to do full repair in early June

Some discussion took place regarding the possibility of any recourse from the manufacturer and the amount of warranty.

There was some discussion regarding the expenses for the pool repairs. Mr. Roche stated that the First Selectman and the Town's Controller have authorized the Department to override the budget to cover these new expenses.

The Director reviewed a letter sent by the Town's Health Director, to a physician in Town regarding the quality of the Rec Center's pool water.

Richardson Park

The Director, Chairwoman, John Pinchbeck, Bob Schneider, Jane Byrnes and several citizens had attended the Richardson Park Tree Tour and Walk on May 15, 2010. The walk included a brief history of the Park, discussion and tour of the recent planting of the new specimen trees.

Ciuccoli Field

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

The Director mentioned that the Friends of Parks and Recreation currently have several fundraising projects. The Commission suggested that it may be advantageous when speaking with the BOF and BOS, to mention these projects as a means for P&R to extend support with additional funding from outside groups.

Phil Kearns questioned the playground safety fencing which had been removed from the budget. Mr. Roche stated that he is unclear at this time, as to the status of the funding responsibilities.

Assistant Director-Recreation:

Membership Report

Ms. Matthews stated that we are still seeing the same trends in membership as in the past. Ms. Matthews stated that we may be seeing a fall in numbers in Wellness due to the promotional three month membership campaign. (Ms. Matthews stated that 83 people had enrolled in the three month membership and nine converted to full memberships.) A lengthy discussion ensued regarding past trends and the upward turns in membership during this period and how to report these memberships in the future. It was the suggestion of Meredith Towers and the sub-committee that the three month membership be offered in the fall of next year instead of spring. Ms. Matthews stated that lap memberships are down, as well as rec memberships; however, she feels that with the onset of summer camp, swim lessons, Skate Park, and Martin Park Beach registrations, these numbers may increase.

Ms. Matthews reported that Collene Gregory has been monitoring the RAC – Barlow Mountain masters swim class to see if there is any conflict with the P&R program. Ms. Matthews stated that Ms. Gregory did not notice any conflicts with this class. Mr. Kearns asked that we continue to monitor and review this program.

Jon Chase discussed an idea to allow younger people into the Wellness Center as a way to increase membership and revenue. There was some discussion and it was decided that the issue of offering a Wellness Center membership to high school students would be first addressed at the sub-committee level for review. Some of the issues the Commission would like reviewed would be; inconvenience to current members, times available, etc.

The Commission welcomed Mr. Phofl, a Boy Scout attending a Town meeting.

Skate Park

Ms. Matthews summarize the Skate Park revenue report for the Commission. Ms. Matthews also stated that Linda Caponetti is working on hosting events for out-of-town groups and schools, along with summer camp, birthday parties and daily activities and programs. They are scheduling a grand opening in August. The Commission asked if Ms. Matthews' felt that the Park would break even this year. The Asst. Director stated that "it is their goal to break even and then some." Ms. Matthews also stated that the Park has had a "bang" of a start. Ms. Caponetti stated that the new membership fee structure has helped with revenue and everyone is extremely happy with the "new" Park.

Special Olympics

Ms. Matthews stated that the Friends of Ridgefield Parks and Recreation will be getting a donation for the Ridgefield Special Olympics.

Summer Camps

The Assistant Director stated that the Department is working on hiring summer camp staff, summer lifeguards and developing summer orientations. Ms. Matthews is also working on the projections for the staff overtime for the fall season. Ms. Matthews is continuing work on fine tuning the recreation program reporting for the Commission.

A question arose from the Commission regarding whether or not P&R receives funding for the Town's Triathlon. Ms. Matthews reported that we receive funding to cover the Martin Park Beach lifeguard expense.

Corporate Memberships

Ms. Matthews presented a brochure that Ms. Towers prepared for the corporate members campaign to recognize National Corporate Fitness Day. Ms. Matthews stated that this is being mailed to businesses in Town to get their employees in the Rec Center to either take a class, a swim or use of the Wellness Center. Mr. Schneider suggested visiting Stop and Shop, as he had heard there was some interest in membership. Robin will follow-up on this with Ms. Towers. Mr. Kearns suggested that we poll Stop and Shop directly instead of just sending the mailing.

Assistant Director-Parks:

Mr. Schneider reported on the following:

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

- To schedule pool repairs at both Barlow and the Rec Center during down time to alleviate any inconvenience to members; however, this may be disrupted due to the cuts in our overtime budget. The pool may have to be closed during normal operating hours.

- Working on the new purchasing process with the Town's Agent.

- Also, working with staff to streamline work by using summer help to do smaller projects and keeping full-time staff on more difficult and larger assignments.

Outside Maintenance

The outdoor crews are currently mowing and preparing baseball diamonds. The staff is gearing up for school summer recess to work on grounds and play areas.

Crews are busy preparing ERMS fields for the upcoming Firemen's Carnival and the field is currently in excellent condition. The staff is also working on several upcoming Town events which include; Downtown Country Event, Run Like A Mother, Memorial Day, July 4th, summer camp and Martin Park Beach opening. Mr. Schneider stated that he has asked the staff to pay particular attention and spend a little more time prepping for these events to help market the department.

Mr. Schneider summarized the Integrated Pest Management program decision which will be in effect as of July 1, 2010. Mr. Schneider stated that the sub-committee will be meeting to discuss the procedure in the future.

Mr. Schneider is working on sending out bids for the purchase of new equipment.

Mr. Schneider summarized for the Commission a letter he received from the Town's Attorney regarding a question that came up on the use and ownership of sports buildings constructed on Town owned property by multiple same-sport organizations. Mr. Schneider stated that he would like to meet with the sub-committee regarding this issue.

Mr. Schneider also mentioned that the Town's Attorney stated that he had recently received a request from the Ridgefield Rebels regarding an explanation and history of the P&R Athletic Field Use Criteria with regards to Title 9.

Mr. Kearns wanted to thank Bob Schneider for the great work he and his staff did at Sturges Park. The Boy Scouts did a 3 hour clean-up service project at the Park. The Commission questioned if there had been any additional drainage problems at Sturges Park. Mr. Schneider summarized the work that was done by the Department and by the neighbors.

Sub-Committee Reports:

Buildings and Grounds- Mr. Tinker

Mr. Tinker wanted to know when overhead ice protection at the garage was going to be accomplished. Mr. Schneider has forwarded this issue to the Town's Risk Management Agent for his review. Mr. Tinker will setup the sub-committee meeting with Bob Schneider.

Programs & Long Range Planning-Evie Bottali

Mr. Roche reported that he had met with Ms. Bottali regarding the upcoming promotions and a new promotion for classes for non-profit organizations.

Budget & Policy-Phil Kearns:

Ms. Dobbin again thanked the committee for its support and hard work. Mr. Kearns stated that the sub-committee would be meeting to discuss future revenue.

ADA-Gina Carey

Mr. Roche reported that he had met with Gina Carey and the Special Olympics committee to discuss the future projects with Friends of Parks and Recreation. Mr. Kearns questioned the status of the project to make all P&R facilities accessible. Mr. Roche reported that he is working with the Town's Engineer on obtaining Grants to help fund the project. Mr. Roche also mentioned that he is meeting with SPIF tomorrow and he will touch base with that committee. Mr. Kearns stated that he would encourage the Department to continue our efforts on this project. Mr. Kearns also suggested getting in

touch with the Community Center's Director to see about joining with their efforts on their elevator project.

Aquatics-David Thaxter

Mr. Thaxter reported that the sub-committee had been asked to follow-up on a question that came up at a recent P&R Supervisors/Staff meeting. The question involved the feasibility of only opening Martin Park Beach on weekends in June, until school closes. Mr. Thaxter said the sub-committee had not had an opportunity to discuss the issue but would review it for consideration in planning for the 2011 season. Mr. Thaxter added that any attempt to implement such a change this season is not timely, as park memberships have been sold, staff hired, and advertising/marketing efforts completed. The Commission agreed with Mr. Thaxter's suggestions. The Commission also agreed that the staff should continue to monitor and keep a close eye on the use during the month of June for budget considerations for next year.

Old Business

No current issues.

New Business

No current issues.

The Commission adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Minutes Approved: _____
Wayne H. Tinker, Secretary

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