

**Minutes of the  
Parks and Recreation Commission**  
December 15, 2009

**In Attendance:**

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

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

Jane Byrnes, Comm. Secty.

Meeting called to order by the Chairwoman at 8:05 p.m.

**Guests:**

Mr. Steven Zemo, 109 Danbury Road, Ridgefield, CT and Ms. Alison Greeley,  
“September 11, 2001 Memorial Committee.”

**Recognition of Guests:**

Ms. Dobbin introduced and welcomed the “911 Memorial Committee.”

**Approval of Agenda:**

The Chairwoman asked that “Old Business, 911 Memorial – Steven Zemo” be moved up on the agenda. The agenda as amended was approved.

Mr. Zemo thanked the Commission for the opportunity to discuss the proposal for a municipal 911 memorial. Mr. Zemo reviewed for the Commission the Committee’s site proposal selection and Mr. Zemo gave an overview of the assessment process for the installation of a September 11, 2001 Memorial. (See attached evaluation report.) Mr. Zemo reported that the Committee had reviewed several sites, and the most preferable sites were Ballard Park and the Recreation Center. Mr. Zemo stated that the 911 Committee preferred the Recreation Center site. After some initial questions, Mr. Zemo stated that he would like to have some direction from the Commission so that the Committee can begin the design process. A lengthy discussion ensued regarding site issues; memorial designs, maintenance, impact on site (wet lands), landscaping, and future memorials. Some of the Commissioners felt that the Recreation Center was a more appealing site than Ballard Park. Mr. Zemo and Mr. Roche reviewed a site plan for the area in front of the Rec Center (in the large grassy area near the phragmites) as a possible site for the memorial. The Commission had some concerns regarding: the size of the memorial (Mr. Zemo suggested 12’ to 14’) and amount of space it would need, the landscaping, the long range maintenance of the area, and the impact it may have on future expansion or development of the facility. The Commission also felt that before they could give a formal approval their concerns should be addressed. The Commission Chair suggested that Commission is in agreement that the Rec Center is a reasonable site.

They would like the opportunity to work with the Committee regarding the placement of the memorial and would like to discuss the landscaping with the architect. A letter will be written to the Committee expressing the Commission's thoughts. The Commission requested that the Director and Commission's Buildings & Grounds sub-committee also meet with the landscape architect.

The Commission had three issues they wanted to be sure were considered:

- Agreement with the September 11, 2001 Committee that endowment funds are available for long range maintenance of the structure and surrounding area.
- The location would be such that it would not compromise any future expansion or interfere with the P&R long range plan for the future projects of the Rec Center.
- The Commission would like to work with the landscape architect on the planting designs.

The Commission thanked Mr. Zemo and Ms. Greeley for their presentation. A meeting will be set up after the first of the year.

### **Minutes:**

The minutes as distributed were approved.

### **Financial Status**

#### **Report/Budget Summary**

Ms. Cipolla reported that budget revenue is down (due to timing); however, there was some savings in expenses.

Ms. Cipolla reported that memberships are not too far off of last year's actual numbers and in fact, numbers are up from actual October, but down compared to the budget. Ms. Cipolla stated that the Department is being very conservative with expenses.

#### **Membership Report**

The Commission asked if the three month membership program was showing any interest. Ms. Matthews stated that the program had just started and she has already seen some new memberships; however, Ms. Matthews stated that there should be a better comparison next month. A lengthy discussion ensued regarding future membership structures and offering additional services to wellness members. There was also some discussion about exploring future monthly payment options and looking at future structuring of payment plans. It was suggested that Ms. Carey and Ms. Bottali work with Ms. Cipolla on their ideas and bring their ideas to the Long Range Planning sub-committee for future discussion.

Ms. Bottali also reported that rec and wellness memberships were down just slightly this month with lap memberships reporting a slight increase. Both are down compared to budget.

Ms. Bottali stated that she is meeting with Meredith Towers and Robin Matthews to develop various membership packages to help increase revenue.

**Chairwoman's Report:**

Ms. Dobbin reported that the Sturges Park issue has seen some recent activity from the interested parties. There were some issues being reviewed by the Town's attorney and Ms. Dobbin will continue to monitor the situation and keep the Commission up-to-date.

**Director's Report:**

Skate Park

The Director reported that a local contractor and the Town's Highway Department will be working together to get the final construction issues completed. The Department is looking to raise additional funds to complete the project. The Commission questioned if the construction would be completed in time for the spring opening. Mr. Roche stated that he doesn't foresee any issues.

Richardson Park Trees

The Director reported that the specimen trees have been planted in the Park along with clean up of dead branches, stumps and other tree work. Mr. Roche mentioned that an Eagle Scout would be doing a complete map and categorizing of the trees.

Mr. Kearns suggested that P&R hold a re-introduction ceremony for the Park and an appreciation to the Ann S. Richardson fund for their generous donation. Mr. Roche stated that he is planning a formal reception sometime next spring.

Parks

In Mr. Schneider's absence, Mr. Roche reported that P&R now has both large seven yard dump trucks out of service and condemned. After much discussion between Bob Schneider, First Selectman Marconi and Mr. Roche, it was decided these trucks would not be repaired at this time. The Highway Department will be adding sanding of our large Town areas to its routes. Mr. Marconi assured Ms. Dobbin that this would not be a problem.

**Assistant Director-Recreation:**

Ms. Matthews thanked the Commission for its support and its invaluable work over the past months.

- Ms. Matthews reported that the Breakfast with Santa had approximately 250 children.
- Ms. Matthews is working on scheduling more events and activities at the Yanity Gymnasium.
- The Asst. Director reported that winter swim registration was close to projected budget, and that Collene Gregory has done a good job keeping classes filled.

**Assistant Director-Parks:**

Mr. Schneider's report covered under Director's report.

**Sub-Committee Reports:**

**Buildings and Grounds- Mr. Tinker/Mr. Kearns**

Wayne Tinker summarized his recent meeting with the Norwalk River Valley Trail Committee. Mr. Tinker mentioned that at this time, he feels his involvement is minimal.

Mr. Kearns reported that letters have gone out to the sports groups regarding the upcoming field allocation meeting scheduled for February 18, 2010.

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

Ms. Bottali report covered above.

**Budget & Policy-Phil Kearns:**

Mr. Kearns reported that the sub-committee has met several times and that the capital budget has gone on to Town Hall. Mr. Kearns also asked the Commission to read through his cover letter and Ms. Dobbin's letter for details on the budget submission. Mr. Thaxter thanked Mr. Kearns for his comprehensive cover letter. The sub-committee will be meeting after January 1<sup>st</sup> on the operating budget.

**ADA-Gina Carey**

No current issues.

**Aquatics-David Thaxter**

Mr. Roche reported that Ridgefield Aquatics Club has committed \$25,000 to the Friends of Barlow Mountain Pool for the fund raising project at the Barlow Mountain Pool. RAC has agreed to raise a total of approximately \$75,000 for this project.

Mr. Kearns suggested that some publicity be done on this project; Mr. Roche stated that he is planning to do this sometime after the first of the year.

**Old Business**

Moved up on the agenda.

**New Business**

No current issues.

With no further business, the Commission adjourned at 9:45pm.

Minutes Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Wayne H. Tinker, Secretary

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