

**Minutes of the
Parks and Recreation Commission**
November 17, 2009

In Attendance:

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

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

Meeting called to order by the Chairwoman at 8:03 p.m.

Approval of Agenda:

The Director asked that "Budget & Policy Sub-Committee Report" be moved up and added under the Financial Status agenda item. The agenda as amended was approved.

Recognition of Guests:

Ms. Dobbin introduced and welcomed Donna Ingoldsby of 108 Limestone Road, Weekend Supervisor and James Rafferty, Front Desk Staff.

Minutes:

The following are changes made to the October minutes:

On page (3) under Assistant-Director-Recreation Report, first sentence should read: "Ms. Matthews has been meeting with the Department's Supervisors and has spent extensive....."

On page (5) under Aquatics-David Thaxter, should read: "Mr. Thaxter stated that Collene Gregory has done a good job collecting information about Martin Park....." Also, same paragraph should read: "The Department is working on additional ways to use the facility....."

The minutes as amended were approved.

Financial Status

Report/Budget Summary

Ms. Cipolla reported that year-to-date revenue is down; however, there was some savings in expenses. The department has frozen several accounts.

A lengthy discussion ensued regarding concerns with the retention of memberships. Mr. Roche stated that the department is currently working on a contingency plan. Ms. Matthews felt that the membership numbers are continuing to level out. There was also some concern with fall/winter swim lesson registrations and the future plans for continuing to meet budget revenue numbers. The Commission also talked about the

Barlow Mountain pool utility expense. The Commission felt that the user groups may have a small surcharge again to cover utility expenses; however, no decision was made.

Budget & Policy Sub-Committee Report - 2010-2011 Capital Budget

Ms. Cipolla reviewed with the Commission the sub-committee's recommendation for the Department's 2010-2011 Capital Budget requests. The Commission reviewed line by line each item and discussed them extensively. Mr. Roche summarized in detail some of those items:

- Rec Center Building Handicap Accessible Doors
- Barlow Mountain Pool Resurfacing
- Safety Improvements-Fields and Schools
- Vehicle Replacements
- Martin Park Beach
- Outdoor Fitness Course

The Commission also discussed the proposed budget format, the dates for presentation to the Boards, revenue producing items, and future budget projections.

After the discussion; Mr. Chase made the following motion:

“**RESOLVE**, to accept the Budget and Policy Sub-Committee's recommendation for the 2010-2011 proposed Capital Budget to be submitted to the Board of Selectmen.

The motion was seconded by Gina Carey and unanimously approved.

Chairwoman's Report:

Ms. Dobbin had no report at this time.

Director's Report:

Skate Park

The Director reported that to-date the Park has not been open; however, he is working with the First Selectman on a solution for the remaining issues. The Director and the Commission discussed the revenue challenges that face the Park.

Barlow Mountain Pool

The Director reported that the committee has met to discuss the bids in detail. Mr. Roche summarized the possible options for liners. The Barlow Mountain Pool Committee has committed to raising a significant amount of funds to help support the project. The Commission suggested that it may be more efficient to complete the project all at once, instead of in stages.

Rec Center Trail

Mr. Roche stated that the trail dedication is scheduled for this Saturday and he is expecting both Town officials and residents to attend. Mr. Roche is hoping to see some of the Commission as well.

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 cauterizing of the trees.

The Director mentioned that he was asked by the First Selectman's office to see if any Commission member would like to volunteer to be on the Norwalk River Valley Trail Committee. After a brief discussion, the Commission did not have any volunteers at this time; however, Mr. Roche will touch base with Wayne Tinker.

Assistant Director-Recreation:

Ms. Matthews reported:

- Ms. Matthews has been meeting with the Department's Supervisors on the development of the 2010-2011 operating budget.
- Ms. Matthews also mentioned that the Supervisors have been developing a way to reduce staff and consolidate classes to help support revenue.
- The Asst. Director is also working with the sub-committees on the action plan which will be presented at a later meeting.

Membership Report

Ms. Matthews reported that memberships are still down; however, Ms. Matthews mentioned that she felt that the membership trends were possibly showing a slight leveling out.

Mr. Kearns asked for the following:

- He would like the membership report to be included with the Commission package (package is sent out prior to the meeting).
- He would also like the report to include both the lap and wellness memberships in a three year trend as it is currently done for the Rec memberships.

Ms. Matthews will follow-up with Meredith Towers about these requests.

Assistant Director-Parks:

Mr. Schneider reported on the following:

- Mr. Schnieder reported that he is working on equipment issues with the Highway Department for the upcoming winter season.
- The crews are also working to meet OSHA standards.
- The fencing at the Barlow Mountain field has been installed.
- The brick ADA walkway at Ballard Park is complete and clean-up of the Park is almost finished.
- With such good fall weather, the crews have completed all fall clean-up and refurbishing of the baseball diamonds.
- There is a map installed in the kiosk at the high school trail.
- There may be some future problems with the septic system at Barlow. Mr. Schneider did mention that any field damage would be repaired with sod.
- Working with sub-committee and BOE on the Athletic Fields Agreement.

- Some discussion continued regarding the summer camp field usage fees and sport groups field usage.

Mr. Thaxter mentioned that the high school outdoor basketball courts are in good shape. Mr. Schneider mentioned that the RHS Athletic Director has been doing a good job maintaining these courts.

Sub-Committee Reports:

Buildings and Grounds- Mr. Tinker/Mr. Kearns

Mr. Kearns reported that the sub-committee is waiting for the BOE response to the Athletic Fields Agreement.

Programs & Long Range Planning-Evie Bottali

Ms. Bottali reported that the sub-committee is waiting to re-schedule its Action Plan meeting with the Budget sub-committee.

Budget & Policy-Phil Kearns:

Mr. Kearns reported that the first meeting for the 2010-2011 operating meeting is scheduled for December 4, 2009.

ADA-Gina Carey

No current issues.

Aquatics-David Thaxter

Mr. Thaxter stated that the committee had met to discuss the following:

Barlow Mountain Pool

For the last three years Ridgefield Aquatic Club and Ridgefield High School's annual increase was in accordance with the Consumer Price Index. The sub-committee is proposing a 3% annual increase which equates to approximately \$2.00/yr. The subcommittee felt strongly that P&R can justify keeping this nominal increase.

Martin Park Beach

There was discussion regarding a recommendation that the Beach be open for the season on weekends only until after school is closed. Collectively, the subcommittee felt that closing M-F would not have a large financial impact in lieu of the fact that we are now beginning to make strides toward marketing the Park. The sub-committee mentioned that they want to keep the Park open as much as possible. As a savings, they suggested that during the beginning of the summer and during rainy weather, the supervisors be conscious of scheduling and sending staff home or reassigning staff as necessary. The Commission also agreed that the Park should continue with the current operating hours.

Swim Lessons

Mr. Thaxter mentioned that Collene Gregory has done an excellent job of implementing the new curricula for the Red Cross swim lesson program i.e., bridging

from one class to another and streamlining the classes. The sub-committee suggested that Collene Gregory review pricing for the longer 45 minute classes.

Old Business

No current issues.

New Business

No current issues.

With no further business, the Commission adjourned at 9:25pm.

Minutes Approved: _____
Wayne H. Tinker, Secretary

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