

**Minutes of the  
Parks and Recreation Commission  
October 20, 2009**

**In Attendance:**

Barbara Dobbin, Chairwoman  
Phil Kearns, Vice Chairman  
Wayne Tinker, Secretary  
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 item “a) Community Sign Boards,” under Old Business be moved up and covered under Chairwoman’s Report. The agenda as amended was approved.

**Recognition of Guests:**

Ms. Dobbin introduced and welcomed Donna Ingoldsby of 108 Limestone Road, and George Hefferon of 58 Hobby Drive.

Mr. Hefferon gave a quick summary of upcoming programs at the Star Park.

**Minutes:**

The following are changes made to the September minutes:

On page (2) under Rec Center Trail should read: “The Director encouraged the Commission to take a walk on the new Rec Center trail which will be completed by the end of the week.”

On page (3) sixth paragraph should read: “Barbara Dobbin suggested.....”

On page (4) under Assistant Director-Parks, item three add: “The Commission would like the Chamber of Commerce to recognize that the SCOR Labor-Day Tournament is one of the many Parks and Recreation activities generating revenue for the businesses in Ridgefield.”

On page (5) under New Business should read: “Mr. Roche stated that he had been approached by Mr. Chris Curnan.....”

The minutes as amended were approved.

**Financial Status**

**Report/Budget Summary**

Ms. Cipolla reported that year-to-date revenue is down; however, there were equal savings in expenses.

The Commission discussed the past financial patterns and discussed actual versus budgeted numbers.

The Commission had some questions regarding the fuel costs for the Barlow Mountain Pool and if the Town was locked in at a reasonable rate. Ms. Cipolla will check with the Town's Controller and report back to the Commission.

**Chairwoman's Report:**

Sturges Park

Ms. Dobbin stated that she had spoken with the First Selectman and at this time, there was nothing further to report regarding the Sturges Park issue. Ms. Dobbin will keep the Commission up-to-date on any information she receives.

Community Sign Boards

Ms. Dobbin gave a summary of the meeting she and Paul Roche had with Ms. Betty Brosius of the Town's Planning & Zoning Department regarding their request to allow the Community Center to hang signboards on the property. After some discussion, Ms. Dobbin stated that it may be difficult to review the factors which would determine criteria for issuing permits. Ms. Dobbin also mentioned that Ms. Brosius stated that the implementation of the P&Z approval of the signs will be delayed until the Commission's concerns are resolved.

**Director's Report:**

Skate Park

The Director reported that to date, he does not have a firm date for the opening of the new Park. Mr. Roche mentioned that the Park has been locked, signage is up and there should be no one using the facility. Due to revenue issues, Mr. Kearns asked if Mr. Roche thought the Park would open this season. Mr. Roche stated that he could not give a final answer at this time. The Commission wanted to be sure that the Town was aware that this is a revenue generating project. The Commission also wanted to be sure that the Park will definitely be ready to open next season. Mr. Roche assured the Commission that the Park will be ready for next season.

Mr. Kearns asked if Mr. Roche had heard any response from the Town's insurance company regarding the possibility of having loaner equipment and a small concession for parts, skates and supplies available at the new Park. Mr. Roche stated that he had some negative response but that Evie Bottali and the sub-committee were looking into the issue further. There are also plans to get additional publicity for the Park.

Barlow Mountain Pool

The Director reported that the bids for the repairs of the Barlow Pool are due on the 27<sup>th</sup> of October. Mr. Roche stated that there have been several bids submitted and that the responses look good.

### Rec Center Trail

Mr. Roche stated that the trail has been very busy with people of all ages using the site. The Director reported that the dedication is scheduled for November 21, 2009 at 9:30am and Meredith Towers is working on the activities and invitations for that day. Mr. Thaxter stated that someone had expressed concerns regarding the grass covering the path. Mr. Schneider reported that due to the early winter weather conditions, the phragmites were bent over onto the trail. The crews will be mowing those sections later this week. Mr. Schneider requested that the Commission begin to think about establishing a "trail etiquette" policy, as he has received several concerns regarding dogs, unattended children, etc.

### Action Plan

Mr. Roche reported that the first quarterly staff meeting to discuss the Department's goals went well and they had made some great strides in several areas. All supervisors worked together to meet the Department's goals and they are heading in the right direction.

### **Assistant Director-Recreation:**

Ms. Matthews reported:

- Ms. Matthews has been meeting with the Department's Supervisors and has spend extensive amounts of time with Meredith Towers on the finalization of the Department's Action Plan, marketing and strategic plans. Ms. Matthews is also working on effective staffing plans with Ms. Towers. The Asst. Director reported that the staff is working together and what she is seeing is not just the branding of P&R, but information going out in a systematic way with everyone speaking the same language and understanding that each area is as important as the others. "We are all supporting and helping each other," Ms. Matthews reported. Ms. Matthews mentioned that the Action Plan is a big morale booster.
- Ms. Matthews presented an advertisement which was shown in the Danbury-News Times, entitled "Good News." Ms. Matthews stated that this is one of the best articles she has seen and it thoroughly represents Parks and Recreation. Ms. Cipolla suggested that this ad be printed in the Ridgefield Press and that copies be available at the Front Desk for visitors and members to see.
- Ms. Towers has developed a plan for the kiosk at the Rec Center. Her staff will be working on the plan and it should be set by Thursday of this week.
- Ms. Matthews reported that the Halloween Window Painting event was held this past weekend. Ms. Matthews stated that she had some difficulties in getting windows this year, due to the large number of vacant buildings around Town.
- The new gymnastics program is going well and has been running for over a month. Ms. Matthews is also working on the Breakfast with Santa event with other Town organizations.

### Membership Report

Ms. Matthews reported that memberships are still down; however, Ms. Matthews mentioned that she felt that we are following past years trends. Ms. Matthews and Ms. Towers are working on their plan for the future should numbers continue to fall. The plan will be presented to the sub-committee this week with final presentation at the November Commission meeting.

**Assistant Director-Parks:**

Mr. Schneider reported on the following:

- Mr. Schnieder reported that he has had a few complaints from residents regarding the reduced scope of work; the mowing of the triangles and the plowing of the Alternative High School. Mr. Schneider stated that he would like his crews to mow the triangles at least twice a year and they will plow the Alternative High School during the winter. There was some discussion regarding the liability and other legal issues if residents were to take over the mowing responsibilities of the triangles.
- Mr. Schneider mentioned that the new mower had arrived.
- The crews are busy winterizing the fields and Mr. Schneider has been working with the Tree Warden and Director on the planting of new trees in Richardson Park.
- The crews are also busy with the installation of the handicap walkway in Ballard Park.

**Sub-Committee Reports:**

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

Mr. Kearns reported that the sub-committee met to discuss summer camp field usage and fees in response to a request from the Ridgefield High School Athletic Director back in April, 2009.

The sub-committee agreed, after reviewing the current policy, to continue to hold summer camps as outlined in the policy. Only non-profit groups will be allowed to run camps on athletic fields and in the facilities.

Although Mr. Roche had a temporary agreement with the BOE/High School Athletic Director for an exemption to the policy last spring and summer, the sub-committee felt it would not continue this exemption.

It was the recommendation of the sub-committee to raise camp field use fees for residents from \$10 to \$25 per person/per camp and for non-residents \$30 to \$75 per person/per camp. Also, group participation minimum charge will increase from \$200 to \$500.

After a brief discussion, Mr. Kearns made the following motion:

“**RESOLVE**, to accept the Budget and Policy Sub-Committee’s recommendation to raise the camp field use fees for residents from \$10 to \$25 per person/per camp and for non-residents \$30 to \$75 per person/per camp. Group participation minimum charge will increase from \$200 to \$500.”

The motion was seconded by Wayne Tinker and unanimously approved.

The sub-committee will be meeting with the BOE regarding the upcoming renewal of the Athletic Fields Use and Maintenance Agreement.

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

In Ms. Bottali's absence, Mr. Roche reported that the sub-committee will be meeting with the Budget & Policy sub-committee tomorrow. A final report will be presented to the Commission at its November meeting.

**Budget & Policy-Phil Kearns:**

Mr. Kearns gave the dates for the upcoming budget discussion meetings.

**ADA-Gina Carey**

Mr. Roche reported that the Department is looking into the feasibility of installing an automatic door at the Rec Center facility. There was some discussion regarding the various types of doors, funding, and need for this project.

**Aquatics-David Thaxter**

Mr. Thaxter stated that Collene Gregory has done a good job in collating information on information about Martin Park Beach for this past season. Mr. Thaxter stated that during the months of June, July and August the beach was closed over 15 days due to inclement weather. The Department is working on other ways to use the facility and ways to modify staffing.

**Old Business**

**Community Center Sign Board**

Covered under Chairwoman's report.

**New Business**

No current issues.

With no further business, the Commission adjourned at 9:10 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.**