

**Minutes of the
Parks and Recreation Commission**
April 21, 2009

In Attendance:

Phil Kearns, Chairman

Barbara Dobbin, Vice Chairman

Wayne Tinker, Secretary

Evie Bottali

David Thaxter

Gina Carey

Jon Chase

Paul J. Roche, Director

Robin Matthews, Asst. Director

Eileen Cipolla, Accountant

Jane Byrnes, Recording Secty.

Meeting called to order by the Chairman at 8:04 p.m.

Approval of Agenda:

The Director requested that item (a) under New Business: "Commission Elections" be moved up on the agenda. The Chairman stated that due to insufficient information there would be no need for an Executive Session. The agenda as amended was approved.

Mr. Roche opened the floor for nominations for a new slate of officers.

A nomination for Ms. Barbara Dobbin as Commission Chairman, Mr. Phil Kearns for Vice Chairman and Mr. Tinker for Commission Secretary. The floor was opened for discussion; hearing no objections or changes, the nomination was seconded and the slate of new officers was passed unanimously. The Commission had some questions regarding a decision from the Selectmen on the reinstatement on the Commissioner Wayne Tinker. Mr. Roche stated that he had been in touch with the First Selectman and that the Board (of Selectman) is still working on several Town Board member reinstatements.

The Parks and Recreation Commission officers are:

Barbara Dobbin, Chairman

Phil Kearns, Vice Chairman

Wayne Tinker, Secretary

The meeting was continued with the new slate of officers.

Mr. Roche thanked Mr. Kearns for his continued guidance and support, service to the Town, Commission, and Department.

Approval of Minutes:

Mr. Tinker made the following corrections to the minutes of the March, 2009 meeting, page one, under "In Attendance" add Jon Chase, and fourth paragraph under "Approval

of Agenda” should read; “The Commission had the following questions:” The minutes as amended were approved.

Financial Status

Report/Budget Summary

Ms. Cipolla reported that year-to-date revenue is down; however, the Department is showing a savings in expenses to cover the deficit.

There was much discussion regarding the current economic situation and the effects on the membership, building usage, programs and future direction of the Department. Mr. Chase stated that the Department and Commission are doing a great job to promote services, facilities and programs.

Ms. Cipolla reviewed with the Commission the proposed “Questions for Budget Referendum” for the 2009-2010 Town budget. The Commission discussed their suggestions and the effects of the outcome of this Referendum.

Ms. Dobbin had some concerns regarding the financial recording and expense numbers for the Yanity Gym.

Mr. Kearns mentioned that he had read the write-up in the Ridgefield Press, “Park & Recreation News,” regarding the value of a P&R membership. He stated that it may have more impact if there was a separate article written. Ms. Matthews and Ms. Towers will prepare the article.

Chairman’s Report:

The former Chairman, Mr. Kearns stated that he had met with the First Selectman regarding the Sturges property legal issue. Mr. Kearns summarized for the Commission the current status and will keep the Commission up-to-date as things occur.

Director’s Report:

The Director reported on the following:

- The Director is working with Ms. Towers and Ms. Matthews on the development of the Strategic Plan. A draft will be given to the Commission for their review.
- The Department is reviewing the proposed new sites for the Skate Park relocation. The Director stated that the Park is currently using a member joiner fee to help with accounting.
- Mr. Roche stated that the Department had received a donation from the Woman’s Club to build an ADA walkway from Ballard Green into Ballard Park.
- The Director has met with the contractor for the completion of the trails around the Rec Center. Due to weather conditions, the work will not be completed until late spring.

In the absence of the Asst. Director of Parks, Mr. Roche reported:

- Mr. Roche reviewed the cut-backs of both indoor and outdoor maintenance in coverage, routine and annual duties, due to the Town’s

layoffs and budget restraints. The Commission discussed in length the effects on the Department's responsibilities due to these cut-backs. It was the Commission's suggestion that a formal response be made, once the budget is approved, and sent to all those who will be effected by the cuts, along with notification to the Board of Selectmen. They also discussed the long-term impact on the facilities with the loss of manpower and supplies.

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Assistant Director-Recreation:

Membership

Ms. Matthews reported that memberships continued to decline in both Rec and Wellness; however, Lap continues to rise. There was some discussion regarding the controlling of people using the facility. It was the consensus of the Commission that several people are using the facilities who are not members. The Asst. Director and Director will investigate and work on controlling the problem.

- Ms. Matthews reviewed the program brochure that had been mailed to all residents for the upcoming summer season.
- Ms. Matthews reported that May is Fitness Month, and the Wellness Supervisor has planned several programs. Programs are currently underway using our outdoor trails.
- Ms. Matthews stated several programs are doing well, including: tennis, fitness classes, and swim lessons.
- Martin Park Beach set-up is in full-swing with registration beginning May 1.
- The Department is working on several co-sponsored events including: Arbor Day, Discovery Center programs, Year of Astronomy, Draw On and many more.
- The Eagle Scouts will be installing a boat launch at one of the docks here at the Rec Center pond.
- Yanity Gym will have ten weeks of summer camps scheduled at the site. Yanity is used as a rain location for many outdoor camps.
- Summer camp registration continues to be down, but Ms. Matthews is hopeful that numbers will go up over the next few weeks.

Assistant Director-Parks:

Covered above.

Sub-Committee Reports:

Buildings and Grounds- Mr. Tinker

Mr. Tinker reported that a meeting with the Ridgefield Rebels is scheduled for tomorrow evening to discuss field use.

Programs & Long Range Planning-Barbara Dobbin

No report at this time.

Rec Center Issues – Evie Bottali

No report at this time.

Budget & Policy-Phil Kearns

Ms. Cipolla stated that Town budget meeting is scheduled for May 4 at 7:30pm at the Ridgefield Playhouse. Ms. Cipolla handed out the final budget for the Commission.

ADA-Barbara Dobbin

Ms. Dobbin reiterated the development of a new walkway at Ballard Park.

Aquatics-David Thaxter

No report at this time.

Ms. Dobbin will forward the proposed Sub-Committee requests to each Commissioner for their input and review.

With no further business, the Commission adjourned at 9:17 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.**