

**Minutes of the
Parks and Recreation Commission**
March 17, 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

Robert J. Schneider, Asst. Director

Eileen Cipolla, Accountant

Jane Byrnes, Recording Secty.

Guests:

Ms. Keri Glass, 445 Main Street, Ridgefield, CT 06877

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

Recognition of Guests:

Mr. Kearns welcomed guest, Ms. Keri Glass.

Approval of Agenda:

The Director requested that item (a) under New Business: "911 Exhibit Request" be moved up on the agenda. The agenda as amended was approved.

Ms. Glass gave an overview on the "Connecticut Responds and Reflects" exhibit. The Connecticut Historical Society and the Goldstone Foundation are requesting that the Recreation Center host the exhibit. The Commission had the following:

- What are the contents/media for the exhibit?
- Rec Center is a "family, upbeat, positive building"; does exhibit have any solemn pieces?
- Will the exhibit create any parking problems for members?
- Would there be any problems with safety, insurance and disruption of programs?
- Would families of those lost in the 911 be notified in advance of the exhibit?

After a brief question and answer period, Mr. Chase made the following motion:

“**RESOLVE**, to approve the scheduling of the Recreation Center as host for the “Connecticut 152 Victims, Connecticut Responds and Reflects – 911 Exhibit” from August – September, 2010.”

The motion was seconded by Wayne Tinker and unanimously approved.

Ms. Glass mentioned that the Commission would have time to review the exhibit prior to its opening to the public.

The Commission thanked Ms. Glass for her presentation.

Approval of Minutes:

Mr. Tinker made the following corrections to the minutes of the February 24, 2009 meeting: on Page 3, fifth paragraph should read: “Ms. Cipolla reported that the Department is scheduled to meet with the BOS on.....” The minutes as amended were approved.

Financial Status

Revenue/Expense 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.

Mr. Chase questioned the decrease in wellness membership revenue numbers. Mr. Chase stated that due to current economic issues, this decrease should not be a surprise. A discussion ensued regarding upgrading of the wellness equipment, budget numbers, and other fitness clubs.

Chairman’s Report:

Mr. Kearns stated that he had met with Board of Selectmen regarding the budget; and this item would be discussed under the Budget and Policy sub-committee’s report.

The Chairman also reported that he has met with the First Selectman regarding the Sturges Park property and he will keep the Commission up-to-date on the situation. Some discussion continued regarding the on-going legal suit.

Director’s Report:

The Director reported on the following:

- The Director is working with a Ridgefield Boy Scout on an Eagle Scout replacement tree project at Richardson Park. Parks and Recreation has submitted a grant request to the Richardson Fund for financial support with the project.
- The Department has no final answer on the status of the relocation of the Skate Park. The Department is trying to develop a plan for a fee structure, scheduling of the programs, camps, and activities for the season. Since it is not definite as to when the Park will be moving, there was some discussion regarding a limited membership at a reduced rate and a daily

drop in fee. The Commission agreed that we should open the Park and try to operate on a regular season schedule.

After the report and discussion from the Director and Commission, Mr. Chase made the following motion:

“RESOLVE, to continue moving forward with the Parks and Recreation planning “status quo” for the (opening and operation this season) of the Skate Park and to institute the \$50 fee as proposed.”

Ms. Dobbin seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

- The Director stated that he is working with the National Recreation and Parks on a Benchmark survey regarding several Recreation Centers. Some of the items include: budget, facilities, acreage, land size, parks & fields and total employees.
- Mr. Roche stated that he is working with the Town’s mapping staff on the GIS system for the local Town parks and fields. The Department has developed a master list of all parks and fields including their amenities.
- Mr. Roche also mentioned that he is working with the Boy Scouts on a proposed construction of a pavilion on the Rec Center site. The pavilion would help with some outdoor programs, summer camp activities and help alleviate some building overcrowding in the spring/summer months. There was a question regarding financing of this project, and Mr. Roche reported that the Friends of Parks and Recreation may be included.
- The Director also reported that there will be a gathering in Ballard Park on Saturday, March 21 entitled “Activists Will Gather for a Tea Party Protest in Ridgefield, CT.” The Commission had some questions regarding the use of the Park for this venue.

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Assistant Director-Recreation:
Membership

A quick review of the memberships, indicated that both rec and wellness memberships are down slightly and that lap memberships continue to rise. Further discussion on memberships was covered above.

Ms. Matthews is working on the following:

- P&R is co-sponsoring some projects with the Discovery Center, along with co-sponsoring several large events; Draw On, Egg Scramble and Arbor Day.
- The Assistant Director is also working on some new programs at Yanity Gym and working with the Director on a new gymnastics program.
- Ms. Matthews also reported that she is working on the up-dating of the Rec Center trail map and working with Director on the Star Park.
- The Assistant Director is also working with the staff on the up-coming spring/summer camps and program sessions.

Mr. Kearns questioned if the camp flyers had been sent to the elementary and middle schools for distribution. Ms. Matthews stated that the elementary schools had received a copy and the middle school had some posted. There were some questions regarding the start date of camp with regards to the ending of the school year. Ms. Matthews stated that the Department has taken those dates into consideration and is working around them for program issues.

Mr. Kearns also mentioned that Kristi Jutton is doing a great job with the flyers.

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Assistant Director-Parks:

Mr. Schneider reported on the following:

- Mr. Schneider stated that a letter had been sent to all delinquent summer camp programs requesting fees. There was a brief discussion regarding the future tracking of these camps.
- The outdoor maintenance crews are busy cleaning the schools, athletic fields, playgrounds and parks of winter debris.
- The Assistant Director is working with some of the adult sports groups to accommodate additional time on Sundays for youth sports.
- Due to the recent loss of part-time staff, Mr. Schneider is working with the Town's Human Resource Department to help resolve some staffing issues.
- The crews are busy renovating the dog park for the upcoming spring/summer season.

There were some questions regarding the use and control of the Tiger Hollow turf field on Sunday mornings by adult groups. The Commission will look into this further in the upcoming weeks. Mr. Schneider mentioned that youth spring sports will begin using the Tiger Hollow turf field as early as April 1.

Sub-Committee Reports:

Buildings and Grounds- Mr. Tinker

No current issues at this time.

As Commission Secretary, Mr. Tinker again reviewed the FOI rules with the Commission.

Long Range Planning-Barbara Dobbin

No report at this time.

Rec Center Issues – Evie Bottali

Covered above.

Budget & Policy-Phil Kearns

The Chairman reported that he felt the budget meeting with the BOS went well, and that the Board was very supportive. Ms. Cipolla mentioned that the Annual Public Meeting with the BOF will be held April 30, 2009; however, she was not sure of place or time. Ms. Cipolla will contact the Commission with final dates and times.

ADA-Barbara Dobbin

No current issues at this time.

Aquatics-David Thaxter

Mr. Thaxter reported that the sub-committee had met with the Ridgefield Aquatic Club regarding the Barlow Mountain pool. Mr. Thaxter mentioned that the meeting was very positive with the continued support from the RAC organization. The sub-committee asked if RAC would be willing to establish a reserve fund to help with some of the pool issues. RAC seemed interested in helping with the pool issues.

Mr. Kearns mentioned that Mr. Tinker's term has come up for reinstatement. Mr. Kearns thanked Mr. Tinker for agreeing to continue his work on the Commission.

Mr. Kearns also mentioned that Commission elections will take place next month.

With no further business, the Commission adjourned at 9:40 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.**