

PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD
Wednesday, March 3, 2010
Minutes

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman John Fontana called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. in the Parks and Recreation office, 75 Main Street, Southington, CT.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Chairman John Fontana, Vice Chairman Megan O. Maruzo; Commissioners Michael Fasulo, Joseph LaPorte and Joanne D. Palmieri; Director of Recreation William J. Masci, Acting Superintendent of Parks David Lapreyay.

MINUTES:

Commissioner Fasulo made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Palmieri, to accept the Minutes of the February 3, 2010 meeting as submitted. Motion carried unanimously.

VISITORS:

1. Mike Riccio re Drive-In. Former Town Councilman Michael Riccio introduced himself. He has been working with Commissioner LaPorte on the drive-in property for a couple of years. Commissioner LaPorte asked Mr. Riccio to head up a group of volunteers to get the movies going. A couple of people have approached him as being interested in helping to do whatever is necessary to actually start showing movies at the old drive-in. Mr. Riccio is thinking of going to a Council meeting because of the television presence in order to get some publicity about it. A lot of people watch the meetings. He would like to get a core group of perhaps 6 to 10 people who are really excited about the project. Some of the things the group would address include: checking the screen for needed paint, etc.; where would we get a projector and what would it cost; will we have people use their cars or lawn chairs; would we use the ticket booths as an entrance, if not, can we move one of them?

After the group gathers their information they would present it first to the Park Board and then the Council, if that's the appropriate next step. What will it cost to rent movies, projector, etc. and can we get donations or charge a small fee to cover the costs. Mr. Riccio is envisioning a very committed group of people who would organize everything, publicize, get the movies, etc. vendors selling popcorn, and even assisting with traffic control if cars will be allowed. There are a lot of unanswered questions but it is very exciting. Mr. Riccio would like it to be as authentic as possible.

Mr. Masci said that he and Dave Lapreyay met with a group who can do the whole thing or we can rent the projector, blow-up screens if desired, etc. He will make a copy of the brochure and information for Mr. Riccio. The board discussed this briefly at the last meeting and believed that renting the projector is probably the way to go.

After discussion, it was the consensus that Mr. Riccio should go to a Council meeting to announce his plans. He will speak to Chairman Pocock first. If anyone knows anyone who would be interested in being part of his volunteer group, let Mr. Riccio know.

2. Bob Arduini and Jim Sarantides – Southington Girls Softball League. Mr. Arduini, vice president of the league, introduced the new president, Jim Sarantides. Mr. Sarantides handed out a calendar of the SGSL events for the year. Opening ceremonies are April 24. Some of the events were highlighted. Fall Ball is 8 weeks through November followed by fall cleanup. Mr. Sarantides said he needs the lower fields for a few weekends. Mr. Masci asked him to come in to see him regarding availability because he has a couple of groups, service clubs, etc. that use the fields. An updated list of commissioners' names and phone numbers was presented. Everyone thanked him for the list and the calendar which was impressive. Commissioner Palmieri said all the leagues should provide something like this.

Mr. Sarantides spoke about a problem that has occurred a few times when the fields had been groomed for a game but then was cancelled due to rain. Sometimes kids will use the fields and play in the mud, ruining the fields. Police were called but said they had no authority to remove them from the field as it is public property. He asked if there was anything that could be done about it. Mr. Masci said that he would be contacted about the 99-year lease. If the league is leasing the fields, the other people could be asked to move. Commissioner LaPorte said this was discussed before. No one can play on that field without a permit. Mr. Masci will send a letter to the Police Department regarding the need for a permit so the officers on duty will be aware of it.

3. Craig Pellegrini – Lewis Lunch. Mr. Pellegrini handed out an information sheet. He has lived in town for 15 years. Unable to continue in his previous job which was very physically demanding, he started selling food from his truck. He is a certified food vendor. He is interested in running a concession at Recreation Park by the pool. The old concession stand has been closed for several years. It is unknown what shape it is in, but he could run the business out of his truck. Mr. Pellegrini said he loves Southington and would like to get involved in some town things. He may be interested in volunteering with the drive-in theatre. He said he did the Italian Festival last year. He worked in Plainville near the on-ramp to I-84 and had a nice following. Mr. Pellegrini was thanked for coming in. Mr. Masci will be in touch.

COMMUNICATIONS & REPORTS:

1. Rita's of Southington. This is a request to place an Italian ice vending cart at town parks during the spring and summer months and also during the Music on the Green concerts. Mr. Masci told her we have enough vendors for the concert series but would put her on the list if anyone drops out. As far as the parks, she was told about the times concession stands are open so other times would be available to sell the ice. For the baseball fields, she would not be able to go near the fields after 6 p.m. Mr. Masci will send a letter confirming these things.

2. Letter to John Weichsel re department reorganization. This is the letter written by the board in opposition to the merger of the Parks Department with the Highway Department as proposed. A proposed organizational chart was handed out and reviewed. The main thing is that the Parks Superintendent position is eliminated. Discussion followed on how this would work and the consequences of the position elimination. Mr. Masci said they were told that the administration can make changes in organization if they wish. Chairman Fontana said once they hear back from the union, it would probably go to the Council. There were concerns that Highway personnel do not know Parks work and vice versa; how can it be efficient? Commissioner LaPorte wondered if it might be possible to ask for a six-month trial to see how it works.

3. Donation of bench at Memorial Tennis Courts. This is a request to put a bench on the east side of the court in memory of Robert Querim who passed away. He was part of a group of tennis enthusiasts who play at Memorial. Mr. Masci said there is room for another bench. The board had no problem with it and approved the bench.

4. Sev Bovino letter re plaque on a bench at Rails to Trails. Mr. Bovino would like to place a plaque on a bench that would be located on the rotunda off of Mastrianni place near the intersection with Burritt Street in honor of his parents. It is in the Rails to Trails area. Discussion followed on whether or not this would need approval of any other group – is it part of the Renaissance? Who has authority over this area? Mr. Masci said he would check it out and report back to the board. It was also pointed out that Mr. Bovino is not suggesting purchasing a bench, just a plaque. A bench must be purchased to put a plaque on it (as was done downtown).

PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS: None

DIRECTOR OF RECREATION REPORT:

Mr. Masci said the Red Sox games are almost all sold out. A boating course will be held March 16, 18,

23 and 25 at JFK in the cafeteria. He has 20 signed up so far. It is being taught by the DEP. It is very popular as people have to get legal for the summer season. Crescent Lake had hardly any ice fishing this year; it was too warm. Mr. Masci said he had to chase people out when they were there illegally. On April 1st we start monitoring Crescent Lake on a regular schedule. Drive-in sign. People are requesting to use it for information. We have to make sure the letters fit properly. Once it is ready, we can use it to advertise service events. Following discussion, it was agreed that two-weeks exposure was good. Kayak rentals. Mr. Masci spoke with Mark Sciota about the RFP. Since Suburban Sport was the only bidder last year, we will roll over the contract for another year. The new contract will include wording that payment must be made within 30 days following completion.

Gym space is becoming a problem. Winter activities are still going on. A lot of organizations want spring training. Mr. Masci explained that when there is free time on our calendar he will have people come in and fill out an application and have them go to the principal's office themselves.

Men's softball has 30 teams signed up. There are 3-4 more looking for a sponsor. There was a meeting last week. Final meeting will be April 6. Youth Volley Ball starts March 16 for grades 7-8-9 and 5-6, strictly girls. We had the boys in the fall. It is at Derynoski. The department is helping with late registration for all Little League and softball. We are starting a Zumba class at Strong School on March 24 from 6-7 p.m. Mr. Masci already has 20 signed up; can have a maximum of 50. He will also do one for kids in mid-April.

Walgreens is requesting to use Holcomb Park for an Easter Egg Hunt on April 3. They also want to do food and were told they would have to get a permit from the Health Department. They want to have a couple of inflatables as well. There was much discussion on this since there could be lots of people and cars, no place to park including for customers. It is a dangerous corner. Chairman Fontana asked Mr. Masci to call and have them stop in on Friday. He will come in and talk about the safety concerns. Perhaps they may want to move the event to Derynoski.

Mr. Masci reported that he spoke with Fran Haig at the BOE about autism. She agreed we should not publicize anything since there isn't sufficient staffing, but we do have unified sports, challenger sports, arts and crafts. It should be sufficient. Commissioner Fasulo announced that UNICO funded a whole year of unified sports when they heard of their financial difficulties. Mr. Masci said he and Fran Haig would keep in touch regarding future needs.

Mr. Masci said they are taking reservations for picnics for groups at Recreation Park. We are turning people away. He noted that the back of the gazebo is bad if it rains the night before. Music on the Green sponsors have been sent letters. We lost Farmington Savings Bank but picked up Ali's Nursery. Tomorrow Jerry Limmer and Mr. Masci are going to the Parking Authority meeting to request all the usual parking. Jim Champagne is getting a larger light in the back (for Apple Harvest). We are getting all the registration and sign-up dates for the summer – playground, pools, swim lessons, etc.

Motion was made by Commissioner Palmieri, seconded by Commissioner Maruzo, to accept the report of the Director of Recreation. Motion carried unanimously.

ACTING SUPERINTENDENT OF PARKS REPORT:

Mr. Laprey reported that all the trees downtown have been pruned. Mike Manware is now doing trees around the Green. Open spaces are getting cleaned up. Trees at the drive-in have been cleared up. Have to get stumps moved. Can't do it with our equipment; they are too big. Mr. Laprey will talk with Highway to see if we can use their loader. Jaycee Park. New boards were put on the picnic tables. They will be painted. Some work was done at the Town Hall at the request of Mark Sciota to correct some Fire Department violations, such as installing ceiling tiles, etc. We are changing the toilet paper dispensers in the rest rooms in the parks. They always seemed to run out so are getting the dispensers for larger rolls. It is not too expensive and it is in the budget. Mr. Laprey was approached by Bob Geary about putting a plaque on a rock by the tennis courts. He suggested one of the rocks near Memorial Park; we don't need

those rocks. Commissioner LaPorte asked if there was any feedback from the budget. There were no major cuts. There is a budget workshop with the Board of Finance on March 15.

Motion was made by Commissioner Fasulo, seconded by Commissioner LaPorte, to accept the report of the Acting Superintendent of Parks. Motion carried unanimously.

REPORT OF PARKS:

Dog Park. Chairman Fontana read a portion of an article from the Cape Cod News regarding a sizable donation Agway made. He suggested that Mr. Laprey approach Agway for a donation for the dog park. Discussion followed on the mud problem there. Because of the wetlands, we really cannot do much there. Mr. Laprey will talk to Dave Lavalley in the Planning Department about Agrabate to see if we can put it there; it does not wash away. Panthorn Park pond needs to be dredged. Peter Kurtz will contact Dave Laprey about dredging ponds in all the parks. Comments were made about the trees cut down for the sewer line. Commissioner LaPorte reminded the board that when Tony Tranquillo presented the map and plan, no concerns or questions were raised at that time. Planning and Zoning and the Town Council also approved it. Nothing to do now; they promised to restore the area when the line is put in.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Drive-in property. Commissioner LaPorte said considering how busy they are, the Engineering Department is doing a good job to get the specs out and ready to bid. Mark Lovely has offered to take the job at cost. Once specs are out, we will go to bid. It will probably be about two months before we see any work done on the pavilion. It takes six weeks to get it. As soon as the frost is clear people will donate their time to get the field graded. Dave Laprey talked to Tony Tranquillo and Mark Sciota. No money is being funded for it; it will be a volunteer thing. Will need to use Highway trucks. Commissioner LaPorte said he would like to get a water line put in; he will talk to the Water Department.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Additional Hours at Crescent Lake. This was discussed in the Director of Recreation report.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, motion was made by Commissioner Palmieri to adjourn the meeting, at 8:05 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Fasulo. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Berardinelli
Recording Secretary