

**MINUTES OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 7, 2009**

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman John Fontana called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Chairman John Fontana, Vice Chairman Megan O. Maruzo, Commissioners David Kanute, Joseph LaPorte and Joanne D. Palmieri; Director of Recreation William J. Masci and Superintendent of Parks Richard L. Egidio, Sr.

MINUTES:

Commissioner Kanute made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Palmieri, to accept the Minutes of the December 3, 2008 meeting as submitted. Motion carried unanimously.

VISITORS:

1. John Slesinski, Praline's Cafe. Mr. Slesinski addressed the board regarding the letter he sent dated December 26, 2008. His concern centered around the fact that there were other vendors on the Green during the summer concert series selling ice cream when his ice cream store is right there on Center Street. He believed the other vendors were not only competing with his business but were from out of town. If the town is trying to promote the downtown and Southington businesses, he believes there should be a policy that the vendors should be from Southington.

There was much discussion on the subject. Mr. Masci clarified that the "blue truck" ice cream vendor, Tom Zindros, has been selling ice cream in the town parks for about twenty years and at Music on the Green since its inception. Also, he gives the town a stipend each year. The other vendor, Nana's, only serves Italian ice according to several commissioners. Mr. Slesinski differed and believed that they also have soft-serve ice cream. However, Mr. Masci pointed out that these people are Southington residents.

Commissioner Maruzo said that perhaps for people with small children, the vendors in the parking lot or on the street are easier. She then asked if Mr. Slesinski had the ability to be there on site, and he said yes. He mentioned that he also has provided free ice cream to the wheelchair groups from the nursing homes. In further conversation, Mr. Slesinski stated that he is not really interested in setting up on the Green when his store is 500 ft. away. He is more concerned about the board reviewing its policy on which types of vendors are allowed to sell at the town events, and particularly that they should be Southington businesses.

There was further discussion about the number of vendors allowed during the Music on the Green concerts. The board basically guaranteed that no additional ice cream vendors would be allowed. Commissioner LaPorte stated that Mr. Slesinski brought up a valid point and the board should review its policy. The item would be discussed later in the meeting.

2. Bob Arduini, Vice President, Southington Girls Softball. Mr. Arduini said he has been involved in the league for about five years now and wished the board to address a couple of issues regarding use of the fields at Panthorn Park. The group has had some problems with the field being used for practice or for Home Run Derby by some teens who would not leave when the league had a scheduled game or practice and asked them to. The police were called on several occasions but since there is no sign or rule that could be enforced, they could not do anything since the fields are town property. Also, Mr. Arduini expressed his frustration when the fields are groomed in the evening for a morning game and the fields are used by various people, causing further grooming in the morning. He also commented

that many times the fields are too wet to play on so games are postponed, only to find that other people used them anyway, making a big muddy mess. He asked if there was anything the board could do to help out in these situations, such as requiring permits to play on the fields.

Discussion followed regarding putting a sign up and what the language might be. Mr. Masci will speak with the Town Attorney to get proper wording that could be used. Mr. Arduini added that he would get a schedule and contact information to the department so that if someone else requests use of the area for a picnic or family reunion or whatever, Mr. Masci could contact an executive board member to avoid any conflicts. Mr. Arduini was asked to call the office in the morning for an update.

COMMUNICATIONS & REPORTS:

1. Letter to Park Board & John Weichsel re overtime. Chairman Fontana said he asked for this letter stating projected overtime so that the board could also be informed. There were a few questions on the items such as how much time is involved and whether Mr. Masci goes on the motor coach trip (no). Mr. Masci said the dances usually are 3 to 3-1/2 hours of overtime and the bus trips are about two hours, including calling everyone to remind them and making sure everyone gets on the bus – basically getting the trip off okay. After discussion, Mr. Masci was asked to include the time and rate in his letter.

The question of overtime has become a topic for the media lately. The town wants to save money and have less overtime. They don't want Mr. Masci at the Music on the Green. If a problem arises, who is representing the board? If 4 vendors show up to sell ice cream as an example, who tells them that they can't be there? If someone is injured and medical personnel ask who is in charge, who is that? Mr. Masci noted that the revenue the department brings in to the town is about \$30,000 more than the budget so he doesn't understand the problem. Commissioner LaPorte added that sponsorships for Music on the Green go to the General Fund and we can't apply more than \$20,000 to the program.

Mr. Masci asked the Town Manager about reassigning some of the line items in the budget, and he suggested having a meeting with the Finance Director and any Park Board member who may wish to attend to review the line items.

Commissioner LaPorte spoke about copies of timesheets. He thought the board was supposed to get them. Mr. Masci told him he could have copies of anything. Commissioner LaPorte was concerned because board members are being asked questions they don't have answers to and would like more information. He asked that Mr. Masci provided information on anyone paid outside the department – chaperones, hand stampers, anyone who gets paid. He asked for names and amounts. Mr. Masci will provide this information in the next report.

PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS: None.

DIRECTOR OF RECREATION REPORT:

Mr. Masci reported that three Red Sox games were added to the trips. He doesn't believe we will get any Yankees tickets because they are too expensive. Crescent Lake – we are just opening and closing now. There is no supervision during the day until April 1. Mr. Egidio noted that the Park Dept. staff is opening the park. Trails Day. Mr. Weichsel asked about the status this morning. Commissioner Kanute said he cannot get anyone interested in sponsorships, even some of the larger companies from last year. He believes it has to do with the economy. He can't do the program without sponsors so it will not happen this year.

Copier. The office copier is slowly wearing out. Mr. Masci contacted American Copy and received quotes for leasing either a color copier (\$259) or a black & white copier (\$199). There is \$4,000 in the budget for a copier lease. It would not be a new item, just replacing one with another. He does not pay for extra copies, just for toner. Now that Community Services Department is out of the building, copier usage will be down so it would not go over the limit. Motion was made by Commissioner Kanute, seconded by Commissioner LaPorte to accept the American Copy quote for leasing a black & white copier as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Suburban Sport called today regarding the kayak rentals. He distributed a list of the rentals which totaled 296 (227 singles and 69 tandems). The town will be receiving a check for \$296. Mr. Masci suggested to the Town Attorney that we change the RFP this year to include squaring up each month rather than waiting to the end to try to avoid a long delay. Charges were \$12 for singles and \$15 for tandems, same as last year, and he gives us \$1 per rental. This can be discussed when we get the RFP.

Hunting concluded last week. There were 40 hunters with 21 deer kills reports (10 bucks and 11 does). A report was handed out to the board. Commissioner Kanute commented that he did a statistical report on the strip of land near Crescent Lake. There were 31 accidents involving deer on the road. Camera at Crescent Lake is working fine according to Commissioner Kanute. There were very few problems.

Mr. Masci announced that he is getting more cancellations from the schools. They don't want things happening on two ends of the building, he presumes because of the noise factor.

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

SUPERINTENDENT OF PARKS REPORT:

Mr. Egidio asked if anyone had questions on his written report. Some discussion followed regarding the grass at the Dog Park. It is a wet area and is problematic. Mr. Egidio suggested using small processed stone in the front area. Chairman Fontana said some towns use small crushed stone, mulch and pine needles. Personnel. In response to a question, Mr. Egidio said he had one person planning to retire this month although no paperwork has been submitted yet. Due to the Budget Containment Policy, he will not be replaced (at least not before June 30th). Other employees have been reassigned and it is working out.

Drive-in. Mr. Egidio had a meeting with John Weichsel, Mark Sciota and two people from the State Department of Responsible Development. They wanted to know our plans for the \$200,000 grant. They did a site visit and were impressed with the list of items we want to do. Mr. Egidio told them he would present the plan to the Park Board and, if approved, take it to the Town Council at its next meeting on January 12. He handed out the list of 12 items in sequence of development for the board's review. Discussion followed regarding how many of the items could be accomplished with the grant money. Mr. Egidio believed 5 or 6 items could be done. Motion made by Commissioner Kanute, seconded by Commissioner Palmieri, to approve the list to take to the Town Council. Motion carried unanimously.

Tennis courts at Panthorn are all paved. The snow came too fast to get the fencing around but there is money left to do it. Mr. Egidio wants to get the fencing done as soon as possible. He asked for permission to get four new basketball poles to replace the old ones removed when paving was done. He has a quote to do them. Chairman suggested when it is all finished we should get some publicity on it so the public will know the job is complete. This will be done.

Motion made by Commissioner Kanute, seconded by Commissioner Maruzo, to accept the report of the Superintendent of Parks. Motion carried unanimously.

REPORT OF PARKS: No additional reports on parks.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Budget 2009-2010. Mr. Masci handed out budget worksheets using the old financial system. Mr. Weichsel requested hard copies by Friday. Once we meet with Emilia Portelinha and make changes to the line items in Munis, it will be done online. The Munis budget is due by January 20. Personnel services show 2% increases as suggested by the Town Manager. Mr. Egidio said he reduced some of the line items by \$17,000. He will not ask for the pick-up truck because he needs a new mower that costs \$33,000. The budget sheets were reviewed. The YMCA skate park was not shown but Mr. Masci said it was because it was cut last year so there was no line item. It will be added. Also the requests of the little leagues were not easily seen on the sheets. There was discussion regarding the new mower and the two old mowers.

Motion made by Commissioner Kanute to accept the budget as presented with the following stipulations: (1) that the \$11,000 for the skate park be included; (2) that \$33,000 for the mower be included; (3) that the board receive a copy of the budget by Monday; and (4) that the one-time allotments for Northern Little League, Southern Little League and Southington Soccer Club are included. Seconded by Commissioner LaPorte and carried unanimously. Mr. Masci said he would hand deliver the budgets to the board.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Sign at Panthorn Park. After discussion, motion was made by Commissioner Kanute, seconded by Commissioner Palmieri, to allow Southington Girls Softball Association to erect a sign stating that a permit is required for use of their fields. Motion carried unanimously.

2. Vendor Policy. Commissioner Kanute made a motion to allow no additional ice cream vendors beyond the two that are servicing the concerts on the green at this time and that consideration be given in the future for any Southington organization wishing to become a vendor. Seconded by Commissioner LaPorte. Discussion followed concerning the other vendors. Commissioner Maruzo felt it was not fair, for instance, that the hot dog person should be there every year. Shouldn't they come in and ask every year? Mr. Egidio added that we only want four vendors down there. Commissioner Kanute amended his motion to state that any vendor wishing to participate in concerts on the green must come before the Park Board to get a permit every year. There was no second and the motion failed to pass. Commissioner Maruzo was not comfortable voting on the issue tonight without a written policy backing it up. Chairman Fontana suggested that between now and the next meeting the members get together to discuss the issue. A policy should be drafted for review.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion was made by Commissioner Kanute, seconded by Commissioner Palmieri, to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Berardinelli
Recording Secretary