

**MINUTES OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT
THURSDAY, JUNE 4, 2009**

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, Commissioners David Kanute, Joseph LaPorte and Joanne D. Palmieri; Director of Recreation William J. Masci and Superintendent of Parks Richard L. Egidio, Sr.

Absent/Excused: Vice Chairman Megan O. Maruzo

MINUTES:

Commissioner Kanute made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Palmieri, to accept the Minutes of the May 6, 2009 meeting as submitted. Motion carried unanimously.

VISITORS:

1. Jerry Limmer – Music on the Green. Mr. Limmer said he didn't know if two letters were submitted but wished to comment on them. One was from Eldon Hafford, executive director of Bread for Life. He wishes to collect nonperishable items for the food pantry during the concerts. Mr. Limmer had no problem with that; however, they want to park their van on the street where it is reserved for the senior buses (to make it easier to load the donations). Mr. Limmer believed that would not be an ideal location for an additional vehicle. Sgt. Lowell DePalma said that it would not be allowed. After some discussion, the board agreed but believed the Bread for Life van could probably park in the bank driveway.

The second letter, which was in the meeting packet, is from Bill Lynch, manager of The Vacation Center, regarding having the three finalists in the weekly karaoke contest to be held at Macchiavelli's compete on the stage for their finale at one of the Music on the Green concerts. The karaoke contest is a fund raiser for Social Services. They are asking for it to be during the intermission. While Mr. Limmer believes the cause is a good one, he does not think it is a good idea for several reasons: (1) it will take about 30 minutes – the sponsor is paying for the band and it wouldn't be fair to them to showcase other singers; (2) it would start a precedent; (3) most of the bands have their repertoire all set for the two hours and sometimes don't get to finish due to our restricted time constraints; this might set them back further; (4) the breaks are only 15 minutes during which time the trophies for the cars are given out, announcements are made, people like to see the cars, get some food from the vendors and local restaurants. There simply wouldn't be enough time during the break. Mr. Masci noted that a suggestion had been made to do it after the concert, but that wouldn't work because of timing – the stage must be closed up, police leave, etc. We have to watch the overtime.

Commissioner LaPorte said it is for a good cause but there is a commercial aspect to it.

Chairman Fontana felt that the sponsors are paying and the restaurant is getting free publicity; it didn't seem right. Commissioner Palmieri felt it would disrupt the whole program. Mr. Limmer said he suggested that they have their contest finale in conjunction with the Apple Festival in October; he could accommodate them then; they didn't want to wait that long. Commissioner Kanute suggested the Italian Festival in July. Commissioner LaPorte said he has some openings on Sunday, July 26, in the afternoon around 2-3 p.m. Mr. Masci will speak with Mr. Lynch and

suggest that timeframe.

Motion was made by Commissioner Kanute, seconded by Commissioner Palmieri, to not allow the association of the fund raiser with the concerts on the green. Motion carried unanimously.

2. Joe Proud re Disc Golf Competition. Mr. Proud addressed the board regarding his request to have the first annual Panthorn Park Disc Golf Course Championships on Saturday, August 29, 2009. The course is off by itself so they would not be looking for use of the park except for accessibility to the bathrooms between the lacrosse fields and softball. Someone with keys would have to open them. The disc golf group would be responsible for cleaning the bathrooms. It was mentioned that Sean Florian has keys. The event would be capped at 72 players. Mr. Proud would like to have a clinic sometime in July to get more local people involved. It would be a one-day clinic with no charge. The board had no problem with this as long as the date is OK. Mr. Proud will submit a letter with the information. Disc golf has been gaining in popularity. Mr. Proud said they were on CPTV recently and the Record-Journal has them on the website.

Motion was made by Commissioner Kanute, seconded by Commissioner LaPorte, to grant permission to hold the Disc Golf Championships on August 29 at Panthorn Park subject to working out the bathroom issues, and to have a disc golf clinic after checking the date for availability. Motion carried unanimously.

3. Michael Abacholi – Southington Lacrosse Association. Mr. Abacholi addressed the board regarding use of the fields at the River Street property for lacrosse practice. The program has grown 30% from the previous year; they are up to 200 participants (girls and boys). He said practicing on game fields destroys them; also the fields at Panthorn do not have good drainage so you really can't practice on them. Two years ago they were practicing at DePaolo. That was fine when you had two-thirds of the kids showing up for practice. As the kids get better, they want more practice. Derynoski is now for the boys program because they need a full field. The girls need at least a half field. Mr. Abacholi commented that the high school came down in the spring and practiced at Derynoski and ripped up the fields.

Discussion followed on the condition of the fields at River Street, how many fields could be put there, where people would park, etc. Mr. Abacholi said the SLA is more than willing to get the fields ready for use. The group will be looking for donated labor, dirt, etc. There was some discussion of drainage required for the fields. There was some talk of the best place for parking. Mr. Egidio said directly behind the barn is wetlands but there is plenty of room for parking. The board supported the idea of using the property but told Mr. Abacholi that the Town Planner would need to be consulted; it may need PZC approval. A meeting will be arranged with the Town Planner, Town Engineer, Mr. Egidio and possibly one or two commissioners to discuss the issue. Mr. Abacholi asked if the barn could be used for storage of equipment. Right now Community Services is using it for storage but there is probably room. Comment was made that the fields could also be used for football.

COMMUNICATIONS & REPORTS:

1. Letter from Joe Proud re Disc Golf Competition. Already discussed.
2. Letter from Bill Lynch re Karaoke Contest. Already discussed.

3. Letter from Rich Kvietkus re Memorial Park. This letter acknowledged donated time, expertise and building supplies of various people and Bradco Building Supply in Hartford for their assistance in getting a new roof on the Memorial Park field house. Mr. Egidio was thanked for supplying the dumpster for the project.
4. Letter from John Myers. This was a thank you letter to everyone who participated in supporting the Robert Wood Johnson grant application for the town wide initiative to combat childhood obesity and other health related issues. Mr. Masci wrote a support letter.
5. Letter regarding Youth Theater issue. Mr. Masci explained that there was an issue with two youths in the program. One was suspended because of a bullying incident. Meeting was held with Lisa Carroll, the coordinator. They will handle it by taking the child “under their wing” and monitoring the situation.

PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS: None.

DIRECTOR OF RECREATION REPORT:

Mr. Masci said the Bronx Zoo trip did not have enough interest and was turned down. There was discussion about Crescent Lake monitoring. Commissioner Kanute said on a Saturday there were 51 cars in the lot. On a Friday afternoon there were 27 cars. The park is definitely being used. Parking is tight. Mr. Egidio said he is looking into pricing in order to go up to the next level for parking. Monitoring was extended to 15 hours. Commissioner Kanute spoke about some rock climbing enthusiasts who put permanent tricams on the cliff and wanted to put something on their website about it. He told them not to do so. He is concerned with liability issues. Other members agreed. The Defender program is going great. They started with about 12 people. Two weeks ago there were 24. Mr. Masci said he is advertising for them. They will play in Panthorn Park center field on the other side of the ball field on June 27 and July 11, beginning at 10 a.m.

Programs at the schools are concluding. Kayak on Saturdays should be kicking off pretty well. Commissioner Kanute said the security camera can zoom onto the lake and see people kayaking. Midget football and soccer are having registrations. Playground program filled three sessions for 100 kids plus. Anyone on scholarship would be over the 100 mark. Youth Theater was discussed earlier regarding the problem with a boy. They are doing rehearsals. They will do three plays this year.

Budget. Mr. Masci said he needs some help. He got the cuts back from the Board of Finance and two areas were cut back from the budget request. One is subsidies which includes the Festival Choir, Arts & Crafts, wrestling mats and YMCA. We will be short \$6,000, and Mr. Masci asked how to spread the cuts – equally, percentage or cut something out entirely? Discussion followed regarding the Festival Choir. Most of the money goes to pay the director. Most of the members are not from Southington. There are 40 singers plus the director.

Commissioner Kanute made a motion to drop the Festival Choir \$6,000 and keep everyone else intact in the subsidy program. Discussion followed. Commissioner LaPorte suggested finding out who the active members of the choir are, where they are from, and get a financial report. Commissioner Kanute withdrew his motion pending receipt of that information. Mr. Masci will investigate and get back to the board.

Mr. Masci said that Organized Recreation was cut \$7,000 and asked how that should be apportioned. Commissioner Palmieri made a motion to reduce the organized recreation allotment equally between all of the 26 members by the shortage (roughly \$300 each). Discussion followed regarding using a percentage rather than a set dollar amount since some of the groups receive a very small amount. Mr. Masci said he could work up the numbers to see what might be more equitable and bring it back to the board. The motion was amended to reflect this. Commissioner Kanute seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Color copier. Mr. Masci got a quote for \$200 for six months. One drum is for color copies which would only be used by this department, and a black and white drum for everyone else who uses the copier. It won't cost any more than the present copier lease. Motion was made by Commissioner Kanute, seconded by Commissioner LaPorte, to approve the color copier lease with American Copy. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Masci reported that our revenue is approaching \$198,000 for giving back, plus, we have \$39,000 for Trails Day; looking at about \$225,000 in revenues back to the town. Commissioner Kanute asked why can't we try to get some of the money appropriated for the drive-in field? They cut the \$18,000 from the budget. Mr. Masci said he would set up a meeting with John Weichsel, Dave Kanute, Joe LaPorte and John Fontana to discuss the request.

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

SUPERINTENDENT OF PARKS REPORT:

Mr. Egidio handed out a proposed sign refurbishing for the marquee at the drive-in from Sign Pro. The current sign is not usable as it is falling apart. The sample sign would have the town logo and Southington Parks & Recreation on the top. The commissioners were pleased with the proposed look. Mr. Egidio said he had a \$1,500 commitment from KBE Construction towards the cost. The total cost would be about \$4,000 so would cost the Parks Department about \$2,500 next year. It has to be done. Mr. Egidio said he contacted the Historical Society regarding the old marquee but received no response. He called the State to see about grant money but there is none. It won't be taken down, just refurbished.

Commissioner Kanute made a motion to appropriate up to \$4,000 for the sign at the drive-in with \$1,500 being donated by KBE Construction. Seconded by Commissioner Palmieri and carried unanimously.

Mr. Egidio's written report was in the packet. He had a question about last month's approval for Caroline McCarthy to have a hot dog truck at Memorial Park. We informed her it would only be during the summer season. Mr. Egidio asked how long the board wanted her sitting there when she goes. It was the consensus that as long as the concession stands are not open, it is OK to stay as long as there is business.

Mr. Egidio reported that he hired three part timers and they are working out very well. Commissioner Kanute suggested that the board write a letter to our foreman and to the men, thanking them for being more responsive, doing their jobs well and keeping our town and parks looking so nice. Everyone agreed that they are all doing a good job. Mr. Egidio thought the letter would be very nice and would be encouraging. Chairman Fontana said he would draft a

letter to be signed by all commissioners.

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

REPORT OF PARKS: None.

OLD BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Italian Festival Directional Sign. The festival committee has requested that a directional sign be placed on the green, at the corner near the clock, as has been done in past years. There was no problem and the request was approved by consensus.
2. Broken windows at Factory Square. Art Secondo, president of the Chamber of Commerce, said that our town mowers chucked rocks during mowing on the trail, breaking some windows at Factory Square. While Mr. Egidio said it could have been done by vandals, after the new budget in July, we will pay to repair them.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion was made by Commissioner Kanute, seconded by Commissioner Palmieri, to adjourn the meeting at 7:45 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Berardinelli
Recording Secretary