

**MINUTES OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT  
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2007**

**CALL TO ORDER:**

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

**ROLL CALL:**

*Present:* Chairman John Fontana, Vice Chairman Megan O. Maruzo (arrived 6:55 p.m.), Commissioners David Kanute and Joseph LaPorte, Director of Recreation William J. Masci and Superintendent of Parks Richard L. Egidio, Sr.

*Absent/Excused:* Commissioner Joanne D. Palmieri

**MINUTES:**

Motion was made by Commissioner Kanute, seconded by Commissioner LaPorte, to accept the minutes of the November 7, 2007 meeting as submitted. Motion carried unanimously.

**VISITORS:**

1. Garrett Meccariello. Mr. Meccariello presented the board with a new business idea for the Rails to Trails linear park. He handed out a flyer for his proposal for which he asked the board's permission: "The Southington Pedicab Company, LLC" which would be a pedal-driven rickshaw type vehicle. The pedicab would take people from one end of the trail in Plantsville to downtown Southington. He is proposing three such vehicles to start but could go up to six. Local merchants would advertise their business on the 34" back of the vehicle and would provide discount coupons. The town would be duly insured. The certificate of insurance would name the town as an additional insured, same as was provided for the hot dog vending business that Mr. Meccariello started this summer. Atty. Bryan Meccariello noted that he spoke briefly with Town Attorney Mark Sciota and Police Chief Jack Daly about the proposal. This would be discussed further under New Business.

2. Carole Milano, Southington Arts Council. Commissioner LaPorte presented a plaque to Ms. Milano in appreciation of her 25 years as President of the Southington Arts Council. She started the arts council on her own under the auspices of the Parks & Recreation Department and has been its first and only president. The board thanks Ms. Milano for all her wonderful work in bringing artistic talents to people of all ages in the town. Commissioner LaPorte also announced that Ms. Milano's name would be added to the Park & Recreation Department's annual Volunteer of the Year Award plaque. Ms. Milano introduced Karen Serincioni who has been working closely with her. Ms. Milano was very appreciative of the plaque and thanked the board for all their support over the years.

3. Ron Newman-SVMFL. Mr. Newman talked about his letter to Council Chairman Barry regarding the need for fields. He has spoken informally with four members of the Council and has received positive feedback. He believes everyone has to get past the "passive" recreation word. Mr. Newman plans to attend the Council meeting on December 10<sup>th</sup> to answer any questions that may arise. (Note: At this time, Commissioner Maruzo joined the meeting.) There was discussion about possibly using the River Street property for practice, although some work would be required to make it playable. Chairman Fontana said the board knows the need for fields. In talking with Mr. Egidio, he learned that to build a field would require a minimum of \$100,000, and that is with no lights. Mr. Egidio said the River Street property could have 4 fields but no lights or would have to use portable lights. They could be used for softball and football (flag and junior league) and for practice only. Mr. Newman said they are looking for a field at Recreation Park. Commissioner Kanute stated that the board would need to get permission from the Council to use the drive-in property since it still has not been turned over to the board.

Mr. Egidio gave some estimates of time and work required to make the River Street property ready for use. He noted that he may be able to get some free fill from a new development in town. The Engineering Department would have to help with leveling, and then top soil would go over the fill and grass planted. He would have to rent a machine for grading.

Chairman Fontana said he heard that a group of people in the community were going to be asked for ideas for use of the drive-in. Mr. Newman said he was asked to be a participant in that group. Discussion followed regarding grant money earmarked for the drive-in property. The road to the treatment plant was a separate grant issue. State bonding has been reduced from \$250,000 to \$100,000 but no money has been received as yet.

Mr. Egidio handed out a map showing the River Street property and the area earmarked for the proposed third middle school. He pointed out the area where fields could be placed for temporary practice fields which could then be used if a school actually were constructed there. There was some discussion about surface drainage that would be needed and where it would go. Commissioner Kanute stated that the budget needs to be ready in January if we wanted to put something in, otherwise have to wait another year. Mr. Egidio commented that he is also working on a 5-year plan for capital improvements which he will review in his report.

Mr. Egidio displayed a map of Recreation Park and the drive-in property, showing the proposed road to the treatment plant and the potential location for a field. Chairman Fontana said he would speak with Chairman Barry about pursuing the committee regarding the property. Commissioner LaPorte commented on the old projector that the board worked so hard to preserve – the only person who knew how to run it has died. Now you can get portable screens that don't need these large, heavy projectors, so we could still show movies if we wish.

4. Doug Brown and Al Furrow-Southington Softball. Commissioner Kanute said he asked Mr. Brown and Mr. Furrow to attend the meeting to present their proposal to run the town's softball program. Mr. Brown said he has been talking to all the softball teams. There have been a lot of problems with the players, the rosters, schedules. He distributed a list of their proposed changes for the Southington Men's Softball League, including belonging to ASA (Amateur Softball Association). Discussion followed on how the league is being run and suggestions they had to make it better. (Note: At this time Commissioner LaPorte and Mr. Masci left the meeting in order to attend a Board of Finance meeting. They returned after about 10 minutes.) Discussion followed regarding out-of-towners, players being on teams in the wrong division, i.e., very good players from a higher-rated league playing in a recreational league, names on rosters, cancelled games, makeup games, etc. Mr. Brown and Mr. Furrow are proposing to take over the scheduling, discipline, have a game presence, run the website – SouthingtonSoftball.com – but are not suggesting having anything to do with registration fees and other items to do with money and administration that would remain with Mr. Masci and his department. There was lively discussion about whether or not the town would have teams belong to ASA or remain "recreational". Suggestion was made to have the top two divisions belong to ASA and keep C-3 as a recreational division. It was the consensus of the board to table this item for further discussion. Mr. Brown and Mr. Furrow would meet with Mr. Masci and get back to the board. Chairman Fontana said we need something in writing as to who would be doing what – it needs to be very clear.

#### **COMMUNICATIONS & REPORTS:**

1. Letter from Southington Valley Midget Football. Already discussed.
2. Letter to Dr. Erardi, Superintendent of Schools. This is a letter written by Mr. Masci regarding the

importance of using school facilities for town recreational programs and some past issues regarding custodial fees at the schools.

**DIRECTOR OF RECREATION REPORT:**

Mr. Masci reported that trips are going well. Programs are in full bloom. A couple of schools gave the department some flack on some facilities. Indoor soccer – when gyms are available he will let interested parties know. Jim Champagne was hired by the Apple Festival Committee to run next year's festival. It must still be ratified by the Council and is on the agenda for December 10. The committee has had a couple of meetings. In response to a question, Mr. Masci said there were no other applicants for the coordinator position. He will be paid \$26,500 plus \$1,500 for administrative costs. He will also be doing the sponsorships and receiving commission based on the sponsorship level. Following Council approval Mr. Champagne will be put on the payroll. Rails to trails. Mr. Masci spoke with the Town Manager who said there is no set time to get money for expansion of the trail or when the design will be complete. Drive-in property. Mr. Masci spoke with newly elected Councilman Nick DePaola, who was not aware that the property was not yet in the department's jurisdiction. Councilman DePaola will bring it up to the Council, so Mr. Masci did not write the board's suggested letter. Dr. Erardi. Mr. Masci said he and Chairman Fontana had a good meeting with the Schools Superintendent. They discussed the bills for matrons, custodians, etc. He understands our situation. Midget football weight limits. Following up on the last meeting, Commissioner Kanute reported that he spoke with Mr. Lord regarding his issue on weight limits and explained that the town does not have enough kids to have one league for 80 lbs. and another for 120-130 lbs. for the 9-10 age group. Basketball registration is continuing. Bill Cekovsky is going in for surgery very soon; trying to get everything set up. Slamma Jamma. Bob Ruderman presented the town with a check of \$963. He is doing very well now. This is the only program that gives money back to the town; it has been very successful. Kayak rentals. We received a check from Suburban Sport. There were 223 kayak rentals; we received \$1 each. It will be put back in the General Fund. Mr. Masci is trying to get some Yankee games with seats in a lower section. Mr. Masci will be talking with Stuart Estra about doing some programs. This will be the 40<sup>th</sup> year for the Apple Festival and the committee is talking about celebrating with fireworks. Parks & Recreation Department is still in charge of entertainment for the festival.

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

**SUPERINTENDENT OF PARKS REPORT:**

Mr. Egidio reviewed his written report. He noted that items 3 and 5 on the list were duplicates. Downtown lights are set to go on at 5 p.m. There was some discussion about the downtown streetlights. They are still under the Parks Department, not Sylvania. Mr. Egidio explained that these were special lights that were installed initially by the Chamber of Commerce. The Town Green lights can be changed by the department since they are low enough. The Center Street and North Main streetlights require a bucket truck and are contracted out. He noted that it cost \$427 to replace 7 lights. He is making a list of some lights that seem to keep burning out. There was talk of getting new heads on the lights because Mr. Egidio believes that water gets into them and shorts out the bulbs. Mr. Egidio spoke with Atty. Sciota who will speak with the Council about changing some of the Bradford pear trees downtown. The department trims them each year but they grow wide and are not really appropriate for the area (there are 60 of them). Mr. Egidio is suggesting taking out 10 or 15 every year, moving them to the parks and replacing them with dwarf trees.

Apple Festival. Mr. Egidio would like a final say from the board on how many tents they put on the Town Green. He noted that one tent that sold caramel apples requires putting sod in each year because it's ruined. The board said not to have any food tents on the Green. Also, no tents larger than 10'x10' except those that were grandfathered in. Last year a window company had a very large tent on the Green. Dog Park. Mr. Egidio is meeting with an electrician regarding installing lights. One pole is up. He has lights from softball when new ones were put up. Another pole will be donated and placed where third base used to be. There will be one light facing the field and two shining on the parking lot. Some new plugs will be put in the building.

Capital Improvement Plan. Mr. Egidio read a letter from the Town Manager asking department heads to update the 5-year plan by December 15<sup>th</sup>. This is a request from the Council. The board reviewed Mr. Egidio's proposed plan and made suggestions which would be turned in to the Town Manager.

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

#### **REPORT OF PARKS:**

Crescent Lake. Mr. Masci met with the Town Manager about winter hours. Last year we just opened and closed. Mr. Weichsel would like to see a skeleton force if there is money available in the budget. Discussion surrounded the possible needs at the park. It was the consensus to open and close and to provide extra coverage during school vacation week.

Goat Island. Mr. Egidio said he is putting a gate there. People are already using it for parking and beer parties. A pipe gate will be installed.

**OLD BUSINESS:** None.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

1. Pedicab on Rails to Trails. There was some discussion on whether there would be a charge to ride the pedicab; it was not clear. Merchants' advertising would pay for the vehicles. The cab is about 3 ft. wide and the trail is 12 ft. wide so there should not be a problem with space. The consensus was to table the item in order to set up some guidelines about speed, granting pedestrian right of way, charge, etc. Mr. Masci would meet with the Town Attorney regarding insurance and other aspects of the proposal and get back to the board. The business would not be able to start until spring in any case.

#### **ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business, motion was made by Commissioner Kanute, seconded by Commissioner Maruzo, to adjourn the meeting at 9:07 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Berardinelli  
Recording Secretary

Next Meeting: Wednesday, January 9, 2008