

**MINUTES OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2008**

CALL TO ORDER:

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

ROLL CALL:

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

Mr. Masci announced that Stephanie Morelli was observing the meeting for her Journalism class as Tunxis Community College.

MINUTES:

Commissioner Kanute made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Palmieri, to accept the Minutes of the September 2, 2008 meeting as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

VISITORS:

1. Bonnie Sica and Lisa Sorbello - Nature Day. Ms. Sica reported on the Nature Day event which was held in June with the assistance of the Conservation Land Trust members. It was a great event – very successful. The only glitch was the shortage of rest rooms that day. Next year she proposed to have extra port-a-lets. Ms. Sica received hundreds of thank you letters from the classes, individuals, teachers, etc. She said the kids got so much out of it. The school system was very happy with the curriculum-based things. There were a total of 12 presenters. She noted that in the past, Stuart Estra had three days and was able to use a larger budget, especially the tent rentals. This year it was much smaller with only the 4th graders on one day. She was able to get volunteers from the State DEP to man information tables on the trail instead of have a person walking the trail.

The shorter trail consisted of two 20-minute presentations; the longer trail had one 20-minute presentation. A brand new Trail Guide was made up with color photos and a Nature Guide for the short loop. They had a Cheer Contest which the kids enjoyed. The winning cheer was “Go Green” written by a student from Strong School. The prize was a 3 ft. trophy which will be a traveling trophy – whoever wins next year would take it for the year.

Ms. Sica noted that there were seven people from the Conservation Trust who took the day off from work to be a Nature Day. While they enjoyed it, they agreed that one day was enough. Also, they thought it should be kept to just the 4th grade since the 5th graders have a lot going on. In past years, students who entered the Science Fair were also eligible to attend so she felt badly about leaving them out.

Ms. Sica and the Conservation Trust would like to go forward with Nature Day again next year if the board so wishes. Because of the low funds issue, Dale Reidinger collected from the students and gave a check, slightly over \$1,000, to help cover expenses. Ms. Sica passed around copies of the new Trail Guide and Nature Guide. She would like to see them made up into booklets – perhaps some of the \$1,000 could be used for that. The booklets would be for the teachers and perhaps some for the public.

Discussion followed on the desire for a kiosk at Panthorn Park which would hold some of these booklets and perhaps have a map covering in Plexiglas. They were seeking approval of the

board to construct such a kiosk. She felt that the color photos would be such a tremendous help to people walking the trails to identify what they are looking at. It would be done by the Land Trust with perhaps an Eagle Scout. The board was impressed with the guides and thought it was a good idea.

Motion was made by Commissioner Kanute, seconded by Commissioner Palmieri, to give the Land Trust permission to erect a kiosk at Panthorn Park and pursue having the Trail Guides printed in booklet form. Motion carried unanimously.

The board was happy to have the group handle Nature Day next year as well. The date would be Thursday, June 4, 2009, with a rain date of June 5, 2009.

2. Pat Martin and Michelle Bernard – Dance Theater Connection. Ms. Martin gave her long list of credentials as dance and theater instructor who had a school in Southington for 25 years. She gave a summary of the various productions her group had performed in Southington, including the first Children’s Entertainment Series, Mozart’s Magic Flute and Barnum for the summer program. She also did the Children’s Nutcracker at Derynoski during the winter entertainment series. Ms. Martin no longer has a dance studio. She now does only outreach as a charitable organization which works with needy children, the Hospital for Special Care, and others. She expanded on her commendable work with those less fortunate – allowing them to take part in full theater productions for little or no cost. Her company of 25 only receives \$2,000 a month in grants and donations. They have just found a “home” at the Southington Grange. She is looking to get Southington school children interested in participation in her productions. She has not had luck finding available space at the schools and was seeking assistance from the Park Board.

Ms. Martin’s company is scheduled to perform The Nutcracker at DePaolo on December 20th. There would be two performances with the audience coming from foster care, Wheeler Clinic, Community Services, Youth Services, etc. However, she can’t do the performances without student participation. In response to a question, yes, she would charge students to participate, but it would be far less than if they went to a dance studio. As an example, she said at a dance studio one might pay \$265 as opposed to her suggestion of: \$110 if held at the Grange (\$155 in-kind); or \$90 if held at a school with building fees (\$175 in-kind); or \$75 at a school without building fees (\$190 in-kind). The program would include 8 weeks of classes and costume rental.

Discussion followed on the cost of building fees (custodial), etc. that even the Parks and Recreation Department has to pay. Also, the YMCA has after school programs at every school so there would probably not be any space to hold a theater/dance class. Ms. Martin also stated that she would need to know in the next couple of days since she would need to get flyers in the schools on Monday in order to have classes begin on October 15. This is an extremely tight schedule. The Commissioners decided that they needed more time to talk about it to see if they can offer any help. They promised that Mr. Masci would get back to her on Friday. Ms. Martin thanked them for their time and left the meeting.

3. Beth Tomey - Southington Youth Lacrosse. Ms. Tomey said she was not asking for anything tonight. She just thought the board would like to receive an update on her group. They are working with the YMCA for the community based program. In January they will be doing a community program prior to the season startup. It will be free and open to the public, for all ages. There will be a clinic, exhibitions, raffles, some snacks. Something fun for people to see what they’re all about. The lacrosse program starts with 2nd graders. The YMCA will incorporate lacrosse into their youth program, getting some of the younger kids. The league

already provided them with mini-sticks and yarn balls to play with. Ms. Tomey said there was a flood in their building which was not noticed until it started coming out the door. Apparently there was a broken well pipe. It has been taken care of. Now both Girls Softball and Lacrosse have keys to the building. The lacrosse groups decided to hire someone to clean the bathrooms a couple of times a week. Softball group will make sure it is kept up in between and fill the paper, etc. The two groups work well together. Ms. Tomey said they have partnered with other “for profit” groups for clinics and in return they have offered us coaching opportunities. It works well. The board thanked her for attending and giving an update.

COMMUNICATIONS & REPORTS:

1. Evacuation Plan. OSHA requires that the town have a written plan in case of fire. Monitors were assigned for each floor. Bill Masci is assigned to the lower level with Lou Perillo as an alternate.
2. Softball Committee Resignation. This is Al Furrow’s resignation. Mr. Masci spoke with him. Darren Prozzo said he would help. There will be a meeting in December to decide what to do.
3. Press Release re Drive-In Presentation Ceremony. This is the announcement of the grant presentation ceremony held on September 23rd for the \$200,000 grant for the drive-in property. The Council wants to approve items before the money is spent. There was some discussion about the contaminated soil piles. They should be out by the end of the year. Mr. Egidio said that demolition of the concession stand was proposed to go out to bid with the East Summer Street (Goat Island) building demolition. He did not want to combine the two projects.
4. Thank you from Cheryl Scott Management. Thank you note to Jerry Limmer regarding two bands that performed during this year’s Music on the Green.
5. Emails from Jan Kozlowski re Dog Park Rule. Three emails received. This will be discussed under Parks.
6. Letter to Presidents of Organized Recreation Leagues. This is the letter Mr. Masci will be sending to all sports league regarding use of school facilities. Chairman Fontana said he had a meeting with Dr. Erardi and members of the Board of Education about the problems that have occurred when people go directly to the schools to use their fields. Then this department doesn’t know about it and confusion and double-booking could occur. The group decided that if anyone in the youth leagues in town wish to use school facilities (fields), they would have to come through the Parks and Recreation Department. Bill Masci and Fred Cox would collaborate. The other night at the turf meeting, it was inferred that people were still going to the schools to use the fields. Consequently, we wrote a letter stating that they would have to come to Bill Masci first. Eventually, we would like to have a calendar with all the information so that we know where everyone is on each field. The letter will go out tomorrow.

PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS: None.

DIRECTOR OF RECREATION REPORT:

Mr. Masci reported that the Lancaster Amish country trip is sold out. He has two buses going to Radio City - November 16 (sold out) and 18. He just met with Donna Calvi the other day and will be having some new trips for 2009. He handed out the trip plan. It does not include Yankees or Red Sox games. Red Sox ticket prices and seats will be about the same. Kids Series for January is in the planning stages. Will have Halloween in the Village on October 29th. He had a meeting with Mrs. Finelli. Will make arrangements for closing the streets like last year. It will be from 5 to 8 p.m. Dance City Spectacular is December 13 and 14. After tonight’s comments from Ms. Martin, he is not sure about The Nutcracker.

Softball. Mr. Masci spoke with Darren Prozzo. He is finishing up the fall league. Programs will be starting October 6 for the winter - youth basketball, yoga fitness at Kennedy, line dancing and ballroom dancing. Boating course has 20 signed up. It starts October 7 at Kennedy cafeteria. Basketball registration is Oct. 14, 16 and 20 for youth at Derynoski. Kayaks are still going good. Bow hunting has been successful so far – we got 3 bucks and 6 does.

There was an incident at the dog park last week. A man has a half-pit bull/half boxer – very aggressive. Mr. Masci spoke with Sgt. Peter D’Agostino and Lt. Cliff Saucier. They sent an officer there to talk to the guy and told him pit bulls are not allowed.

Rev. Townsley came into to fill out a bow permit and asked why his school’s soccer league is being charged to play. The soccer league is charging them a rental fee. Mr. Masci told him we didn’t know about it. Discussion followed on whether it was legal to charge them and, if so, it should be the town not the soccer league. Mr. Masci will get a ruling from the Town Attorney tomorrow.

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

SUPERINTENDENT OF PARKS REPORT:

Mr. Egidio presented his written report and added information. The department is starting to winterize the pools. They added sand to the Memorial Park playscape. Finished cleaning under the grates of the 60 trees downtown and are installing small stone and filter paper. The board asked him to find out what other surrounding towns do. Mr. Egidio checked with several towns and most of them contract the work out. Glastonbury takes care of it but they don’t replace the bricks, just sweep once or twice a year, and remove snow in some areas. Meriden only does where there are parks (similar to the Town Green). Contractors do the rest. Highway Dept. clears the snow on the sidewalks and our people maintain the trees and sweep every month. Mr. Egidio said he does not mind doing it, but he would like to do it according to his department’s priorities – when we can fit it in. He spoke with the Town Manager, and for this year’s budget will have to put in more part time people for 20-25 weeks.

He gave more detail on Item 18 on the report regarding Panthorn Park renovation. Mr. Egidio is meeting with the contractor next week. Hopefully, the paving will be done by Thanksgiving.

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

REPORT OF PARKS:

Dog Park. Discussion followed regarding the emails from Jan Kozlowski. Mr. Masci said the dog association put up signs about no out of town residents. They do not say it’s from the Parks & Recreation Department; it’s from the Dog Park Association. There was some discussion about what was stated at the last meeting when Jim Gura was here. The board did not tell him to put the sign up. Hotels in the area are advertising the dog park. How can we keep out of towners out? There are some out of town people who are really good. Police Department needs to know which we choose – allow them or not. The sign is still up there. Mr. Egidio suggested that no decision be made until there is a full board – we can put it on the agenda for the next meeting. Motion was made by Commissioner Kanute, seconded by Commissioner Palmieri, to tell the dog park people to take the sign down immediately pending final ruling from the Park Board. The rule will be made at the next meeting on November 5. Motion carried unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Crescent Lake lights are up two weeks now.
2. Drive-in property. Mr. Egidio said there was a live wire in the roadway. When they pulled the meter off the marquee, they never turned off the power underground. CL&P took care of it. He also spoke with the Water Department about putting in a “T” when they put the water line in so that we could tie in when ready. They said they don’t do that. In other words, we would have to dig up the road and tap in later. That doesn’t make sense. He called Tony Tranquillo about it. He will speak with Tom West. Hopefully we won’t have to go further than the superintendent.

Regarding the \$200,000 grant money, Mr. Masci said we will have to fill out paper work to get the actual money. The Park Board is in charge of the grant money with the approval of the Council. Commissioners were not happy that they have to get approval to spend the money. Mr. Egidio pointed out that it has to be used for what we asked for. Commissioner Kanute asked why don’t we go to the Council and ask them to knock the concession stand down? Mr. Egidio replied that some of the property is being used for the contaminated soil (the town gave permission to temporarily store it there). It should be removed by the end of December. We could still take the building down; it is not near the soil. We have to wait for the money to be released by the state. Comment was made that the gas line for the school and the water treatment plant was put in – it is a mess.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Budget 2009-10. Mr. Masci said we will be doing the budget in Munis this year. Line items were consolidated. He will list all the items that are included in each line. On October 8th he is going to the Board of Finance for the transfer request for the YMCA skate park. We have requested a transfer of \$5,500 from the reimbursable programs. Then in May or June we will see where we are and see if we can transfer more.

2. Turf Meeting. Chairman Fontana reported that this past Monday was the turf meeting. It was well attended. The four state representatives were there, members of the Town Council, Board of Education and Board of Finance. There were booster clubs, youth league representatives who spoke. We wanted to show the need factor. Rep. Joe Aresimowicz stated that the Town of Berlin did it with a 10-year bond and the town foot the bill. They rent it out. For our town, we have an advantage that there is drainage on site so the cost would be less than elsewhere. For SHS, the cost would be probably no more than \$800,000. Chairman Fontana will speak to the Town Attorney and then go to the Council. We could try for a grant as other towns have done, but with the current economy, it could take 3-4 years – we can’t afford to wait. Senator Caligiuri made a good point that the four legislators have to be together on this. We will go forward.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, motion was made by Commissioner Kanute, seconded by Commissioner Palmieri, to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Berardinelli
Recording Secretary