

**MINUTES OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2007**

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman LaPorte called the meeting to order at 6:40 p.m. Commissioner Joanne Palmieri was welcomed back to the board.

ROLL CALL:

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

MINUTES:

Motion was made by Commissioner Kanute, seconded by Commissioner Fontana, to accept the minutes of the October 3, 2007 meeting as submitted. Motion carried 4-0-1 abstention (Palmieri).

ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

Chairman LaPorte recommended that election of officers should take place on the anniversary of municipal elections, i.e., in November every two years. There were no objections. He opened nominations for Chairman of the Park Board for the next two years. Commissioner Maruzo nominated John Fontana for Chairman. Seconded by Commissioner Palmieri. Motion carried unanimously. Commissioner Palmieri nominated Commissioner Maruzo for Vice Chairman. The nomination was seconded by Commissioner Fontana. Motion carried unanimously.

At this time, Commissioner Fontana took over the Chairman's seat and chaired the rest of the meeting. He stated that he hopes he could do half as well as Joe LaPorte did as chairman.

VISITORS: None. Stuart Estra is away on vacation and will attend a future meeting.

COMMUNICATIONS & REPORTS:

1. Letter from James Lord re weight levels for midget football. There was quite a bit of discussion on the topic of weight levels. Commissioner Kanute spoke about how the different divisions and age groups came about years ago in an effort to have the most kids be able to play. There is a 50 lb. disparity which he felt was not a problem when you consider the age limit. There have been no serious injuries. In response to a question, Commissioner Kanute said the Park Board does not set the weights but over the years the board has taken some action for safety purposes. Commissioner Kanute believed Mr. Lord's letter is wrong and that he is really talking about the C division, not the B division. He spoke to Mr. Lord personally. Years ago the A division was ages 10-13 and B was 8, 9 and 10. Now it is the opposite. Following further discussion, Commissioner Kanute said he would call Mr. Lord to see if he can explain the divisions a little better. If Mr. Lord is not satisfied and wishes to attend the next board meeting, he would be invited to do so. Commissioner LaPorte said he is a member of the town's Ambulance Committee, and sometimes people hear things that are not necessarily football related. It was noted that when parents sign up their children for football, they are provided with the information on ages and weights at that time, so they know what is involved. Mr. Egidio believed this was an isolated incident as there has not been a complaint in years.

2. Letter from Southington Police re camera at Crescent Lake. Commissioner LaPorte gave a brief background on the camera proposal for the benefit of the new commissioners. The main idea is to thwart vandalism at Crescent Lake. Commissioner Kanute said the installation was going to be combined with something the Police Department is doing, but now it would not be connected to the

canopy infrastructure. A pole needs to be put up and power connected. The price has risen from the budgeted price from last year. Discussion followed as to how best to request the needed amount. Total price is \$18-20,000. The Board of Finance will not want to consider additional appropriation requests mid-year. Commissioner Kanute commented that Lake Compounce gave us some software so we would be looking for perhaps another \$9,000. He said he could call Jim Fazzolaro at the state to ask about possible grant money that might be available. Discussion included suggestion to roll over the budget amount to next year's budget and put in for additional money, find out about any grants, put in a request to the finance board for an appropriation. Also, how this would all affect the timing of placing the cameras – spring or after the new budget? Vandalism has cost the town roughly \$2,500 for the damaged gates, port-o-lets (several), picnic tables, etc. Motion was made by Commissioner Kanute, seconded by Commissioner Palmieri, to write a letter requesting an additional appropriation of \$7,400 to install the cameras and get them running at Crescent Lake, due to the change from the original estimate.

3. Letter from Victoria Triano. This was a thank-you note to the department for their assistance to Councilwoman Triano over her 16 year tenure. It was much appreciated.

DIRECTOR OF RECREATION REPORT:

Mr. Masci reported that there are only partial trips on the report; more are coming in. Radio City trip this weekend is sold out. New York City “do your own thing” trip in December is also sold out. A lot of UConn fans are calling about trips. Mr. Masci is working with Rocky Hill and North Haven. He had worked with Terryville to fill trips in the past, but they disbanded their recreation department. With the elections, there is a new mayor now who will restore all the activities, so we may be back with Terryville soon. Mr. Masci is talking with Mr. Estrá about future endeavors. He said he would make a decision after his current vacation. A few people have told Mr. Masci that they would help with the Kids Entertainment Series and the duck race. Crescent Lake is down one man this week. Mr. Masci asked if we would just open and close during January and February as we did last year. That was agreeable. Quite a few people like to ice fish and still walk the trails during the winter. Apple Harvest Festival Coordinator proposals are due in by 10 AM on November 9. There is one proposal so far from Jim Champagne who is very interested. Kayak report has not been received yet. A couple of Council members have been asking about it. Keith got sick halfway through the project and someone else finished. Mr. Masci has been calling every other day to try to get the report on the rental program. Commissioner Kanute suggested sending a certified letter asking for the report. Mr. Masci said he has spoken to Mark Sciota about it; Atty. Sciota will send a letter. Santa in the Park is scheduled for November 25 (Sunday after Thanksgiving). Tree lighting on the Green will be 5 PM on November 30. Bow hunting ends November 13 and reconvenes December 13-30. We have 6 does, 2 bucks and one button buck. The William DePaolo plaque was taken out of Memorial Park for the winter. It will go back in the spring. Mr. Masci spoke with Mark Pooler of the YMCA about the skate park. There is no charge for kids to use it. We give about \$10,000 each year for supervision. The asphalt is in need of repair and will cost \$7,000; we would like to pay half as a special appropriation. He spoke to the Town Manager about it, and he said to put it in the budget and we'll see how it goes.

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 asked if anyone had questions on his written report in the packet. The department is in the middle of picking up leaves and aerating for the fall, seeding and fertilizing. The workers are very competent; it is a good crew.

Mr. Egidio said we are in desperate need of fields. After midget football, he hopes we can bring them back; they are very bad. He passed out copies of maps of the town-owned property on Dunham Road (the site of the proposed third middle school). There are areas that could be used for practice fields as they are not wooded and are fairly flat – a little rolling would help. If the leagues could use this property for practice and then just use the other fields for actual games, that would be a great help. There was some discussion about asking permission to use the land. Commissioner Kanute suggested writing a letter to the Town Council asking permission for at least temporary use of the property as practice fields.

Mr. Egidio had an idea of putting a Community Recreation Center at the entrance to the drive-in property. We could put \$750-\$800,000 in the budget. Chairman Fontana said if you call it a Fine Arts Center you might be able to get a grant – four towns received millions of dollars to build fine arts centers. Commissioner LaPorte said you have to be practical – if you have a building you have to staff it and maintain it. Fine arts buildings have many restrictions. Commissioner Maruzo said a grant might make the amount a little more palatable. Commissioner Palmieri suggested Bill and Jiggy go on a fact-finding mission – go to other towns and get some direction and assistance about how and where they applied for the grants, etc. Chairman Fontana will check with the lobbyist working on the turf field, too.

Mr. Egidio and Mark Sciota went to look at Goat Island off Summit Street. The Park Department will probably be taking care of the property. There is a 4-car garage on the property that could be used for storage of certain items.

Mr. Masci noted that the budget will be due to the Town Manager on January 18, so he would schedule a budget workshop on January 9th.

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

REPORT OF PARKS:

Crescent Lake. Commissioner Kanute said people think we did something to Crescent Lake to cause the fish to die. Mr. Egidio and Mr. Masci said they received many calls on this. It is due to the low oxygen; it is occurring in surrounding towns as well. We did not put anything in the water. Mr. Masci will put a notice on the bulletin board explaining the problem.

There were no other park reports.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Dog Park. Mr. Egidio said he is working with the president of the association. They want to put two poles with lighting at the park. The poles are there. The president will get someone to put them up with an auger. Mr. Egidio has some 400W lights that were never used from the ice skating pond area. Will probably use a timer or an eye for the lights. There was some comment regarding advertising on the bulletin board – no one had a problem with it. It is not a big issue.
2. Crescent Lake. Already discussed.
3. Rails to Trails. We are going from Plantsville Center to the Cheshire line. The design was done by Milone & MacBroom; they are excellent and have very good ideas. Mr. Egidio repeated the policy for the trail in winter: after the Park Dept. jobs are done, the trail will be cleared. Discussion followed on additional trash cans (not feasible because of location; have to drive to the area to empty), and doggie bag receptacles. Some people are just not cleaning up after their dogs. Mr. Egidio said he will

probably have to trim some of the brush which is overgrown.

4. Apple Festival RFP. Already discussed.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Drive In Theater. Discussed under Superintendent's report. Question arose about the old projectors, cost of upkeep, and difficulty in finding films for them. Grant money for the drive in property was again questioned: there are two amounts, one for the access road to the water treatment facility and the other for "recreation". Perhaps it is time to ask the Council again about having the land turned over to the Park Department. The pavilion we would like to put up would be for community use, especially when it rains. It would have rest rooms and a projection room. Commissioners suggested speaking with Mark Sciota before writing a letter.

2. Plaques for Arts Council. Commissioner LaPorte made a motion to get two plaques – one for the Southington Arts Council and one for Carole Milano who has been its president for all 25 years of its existence. She has done an incredible job and should be recognized. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Kanute and carried unanimously. Mr. Masci will order the plaques. Commissioner LaPorte would like the presentation to take place at a Council meeting. Mr. Masci would speak to the Town Manager about getting on the agenda for the December 10th Council meeting and would invite Ms. Milano and members of the Arts Council.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, motion was made by Commissioner Kanute, seconded by Commissioner LaPorte, to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Berardinelli
Recording Secretary

Next Meeting: Wednesday, December 5, 2007