

**MINUTES OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2008**

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, 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 LaPorte made a motion to accept the Minutes of the January 9, 2008 meeting. Commissioner Palmieri made a correction. She had abstained from voting on the December minutes because she was not in attendance. Commissioner Palmieri seconded the motion to accept the minutes as amended. Motion carried 4-0-1 abstention (Maruzo).

VISITORS:

1. Chris Babon - SGSL. Mr. Babon presented the request of the Southington Girls Softball League to add a pavilion to the girls softball field area at Panthorn Park. The pavilion would be 24' x 48' and funds would be raised by the league. Mr. Babon showed large pictures of the proposed area, which would be next to the concession stand and rest rooms. Due to the existing grading, some fill will be required to extend the hill. He gave a brief description of how the pavilion would be constructed. Some type of soft fencing would be added to prevent children from running onto the field. They will make provisions for lighting later on. Mr. Egidio stated that Mr. Babon would probably have to go before zoning for approval. He believed a plot plan for the park was available for Mr. Babon to use for presentation purposes. Mr. Babon indicated that the approximate cost was \$26,000 with a wall but the wall has been eliminated so it would be less than that.

2. Ron Newman-SVMFL. Mr. Newman thanked the board for having the public meeting on Monday regarding the former drive-in property. He was pleased with the comments of those in attendance and believed he cleared up some images people had about what a field would look like. He asked if the board had any question on the fact sheet he had distributed; there were none. There was some discussion regarding available reasonably priced dirt to raise the area where the proposed field would go. Mr. Egidio said he has some material on site that could be used but has to be moved. He also may be able to get some material from a site on West Street; he will check into it and confirm that it is still available. Mr. Newman asked that someone inform him when the board plans to present the plan to the Council. He noted that he had a backup plan if they had to put a flag field somewhere else. Commissioner Kanute commented that the board would most likely have to go to design, get bids and money, etc. so timing may be tight. He added that he tried to find out the status of the \$215,000 state grant but was unable to reach either Rep. Zalaski or Sen. Caligiuri, although Caligiuri's office stated that the funds were approved. Chairman Fontana said it is guaranteed; it is just a matter of time when we would get it. Mr. Newman added a comment that sidewalks all around the park are needed for safety reasons; can they be included in the board's overall plan? Mr. Egidio said it is a town road so the request would have to go to the Town Manager and the sidewalk committee. It is not a Park Board matter. Chairman Fontana mentioned that with his years of experience building fields at the high school he does not believe that a football field could be ready for playing in the fall. There is not enough time for seeds to germinate and take hold.

3. Rick Koczera. Mr. Koczera sent an email to the department documenting the proposal he made at Monday night's hearing. It is food for thought. He gave a brief summary of his twenty-year background in pre-construction and the construction arena. He believes because the characteristics of the drive-in property are already level, some site costs could be reduced. He gave some examples and indicated his willingness to help the board in any way to get the project moving forward. Commissioner LaPorte asked if he would be able to draw up a similar conceptual plan including the board's input to present to the Council. He said he would. The board complimented Mr. Koczera on the proposed plan he presented and thanked him for offering his assistance. He would be informed of the date of the special workshop meeting to discuss all the ideas.

4. John Mayo. Mr. Mayo wished to make a couple of points following the hearing he attended on Monday. First, he inquired about what he believed was the \$250,000 cost of showing movies at the park. The board clarified that the amount he mentioned was for the proposed pavilion which would also house the projector, rest rooms, etc. Secondly, someone in the audience on Monday said that movies in the park would be attractive. Mr. Mayo believes that with the flood plain there would be a lot of mosquitoes, and people would be busy swatting themselves and moving around possibly causing a chaotic situation. He noted that it would be different from Music on the Green which begins and ends early. Movies would start much later when it is dark and the mosquitoes would be out. Several commissioners said the mosquito problem was exaggerated. They have been going to the park for years and have never had a problem nor have they heard of players having problems with mosquitoes. Mr. Mayo thought it would be a good idea to check out one of the towns who do movies in the park to see what their situation is, in order to compare apples to apples. He offered to help out in this endeavor.

Commissioner LaPorte showed Mr. Mayo an ad for an inflatable projection screen and projector if the board wished to go that way. It is very inexpensive, probably \$1,000 for the screen and a professional projectionist. It is something we might try. Commissioner Kanute added that showing movies is not the main thing for the property but is something we would try and see how it works. He said the board wants to do the best it can for the most people. Mr. Mayo stated that it was not his intent to "throw cold water" on the project at all. He wants what is best for the town. He believes there is a need for green space, a field for the football people, and additional parking. The board thanked Mr. Mayo for his comments and his offer to help.

Commissioner Maruzo said that another idea she had that was not mentioned on Monday night was an ice skating rink. Mr. Egidio said there is a rink at Recreation Park but there were problems with it in the past regarding holding water. Also the freezing temperatures have to hold for several days, etc. Now there are special things that hold down the plastic so the ice rink might work.

COMMUNICATIONS & REPORTS:

1. SGSL Pavilion Letter. Discussed under Visitors.
2. SMFL – Geese Problem. This was an email from Rich Kvietkus regarding the problem at Memorial Park. Mr. Egidio had a letter from Ellen Black who is a geese control person who controls them by egg addling. This is a humane and permissible way to control the geese population. The Animal Control Officer was asked for his opinion and he said get a dog and hire this lady. The dogs come three times a day to scare off the geese. Mr. Egidio would look into it and get back to the board.
3. World Class Lacrosse. The request from William McGowan to have a lacrosse clinic was

tabled. Mr. McGowan was not able to attend the meeting tonight.

4. SMFL – Use of DePaolo Fields. This is a request from Southington Midget Football to use DePaolo Middle School fields. The item was tabled since Chairman Fontana will be having a meeting regarding this item and others with the Superintendent and BOE Chairman very soon.

DIRECTOR OF RECREATION REPORT:

Mr. Masci reported that Requests for Proposals (RFPs) would be going out March 12 with a closing date of March 28 for the Rails to Trails taxi service and also one for kayaking. There was a request to keep the kayaks at Crescent Lake in a trailer. The Town Attorney said he would have to sign an agreement so the town would not have responsibility for the trailer. Trips. Mr. Masci was supposed to meet with Donna Calvin but her father passed away. Once she is back we will have many more trips going. An overnighter is planned for Niagara Falls-Canadian side; also has one to Amish country.

Stuart Estra has resigned (letter in the packet) from Trails Day, School Nature Day and the Kids Entertainment Series. He has two things going in March which he will finish. He has offered to help anyone who may be interested in taking over. He has all the records and is willing to share information. Mr. Masci said he has no idea of the magnitude of Trails Day. Bonnie Sica said she is willing to get a committee up for the School Nature Day. Stuart can put her in touch with the Birds of Prey person. We have all his contacts. Kathy Reinhardt and Tops Market are willing to sponsor. There is money in the Kids Entertainment Summer and Trails Day Festival had \$41,000. We requested \$8,000 to carry us for Kids Winter Entertainment. Whatever money is left in Trails Day would have to be requested for rollover.

Apple Festival. The theme was selected – “Bushels of Fun;” it was Bob Miceli’s idea. Fireworks. Mr. Masci had a meeting with the Fire Chief, Assistant Fire Marshall and Police Chief on the location at Derynoski School. Since we will use nothing more than 4” shells, we need 300 ft.; 5” shells need 350 ft. It is OK. A concern was mentioned that the fireworks might disturb Southington Care Center or Bradley Hospital. Mens Softball League had a meeting. Parameters will be drawn regarding what we are going to do. Girls softball will pick a night to have their games. Registration Dates for softball and golf will be set up when John Vitale gets back from a vacation. Boating starts on the 18th; he has 31 signed up so far and expects to have 50. Crescent Lake. There is no ice but people have been going up there.

Mr. Masci spoke with Zeke Zalaski today about the grant money. This week is their first session. He will bring it up. He expects to have an answer next week. Budget Workshops with the Board of Finance are scheduled. Mr. Masci passed out the schedule. The Parks & Recreation budget will be reviewed on **March 26 at 6:00 p.m.** in Council Chambers. The public hearing on the Town Manager’s budget is set for **April 7 at 7:00 p.m.** at Derynoski School.

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’s written report was in the packet if anyone had any questions. The department has been doing a lot of maintenance – some trailer repairs, picnic table repairs, cutting a lot of brush. Commissioner Maruzo commented that Nick Arena is very good; he came almost immediately when the fence at the dog park was reported needing repairs. Discussion followed on the downtown trees. Mr. Egidio said they will continue trimming them but he is planning to replace

some that are too overgrown. A couple of downtown merchants feel the trees are obstructing their windows and their business. The trees are not in a good location and perhaps they need to come out totally. Mr. Egidio will review the situation with Tony Tranquillo before doing anything. Any trees that are removed will be replanted in the parks. Chairman Fontana commented that it looks beautiful now but if you replace trees here and there with different types it will not look good. Tree trimming will begin next month.

Chairman Fontana had a long talk with Mike Seidel regarding the downtown lights. He has been tracking the outages. He is writing a report on the lights; we should have it soon. The department helped with the luminaries for the Petit family. The Highway Department helped by using a Vac-All to pick them up. It was a big job.

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

REPORT OF PARKS:

Drive-in Theater. Mr. Egidio said he has a meeting scheduled for Monday morning at the drive-in theater to talk about the road to the sewer treatment plant. Will have a report next meeting. According to the map, the road will hug the wood line. He believes they will start work on the road in the spring. Commissioner LaPorte wondered if we should show the Council what we are considering in a conceptual plan before we get an engineer and spend any money. The pavilion alone would cost about \$100,000. It would be enclosed on one end, have a kitchen and rest rooms. It could be rented somewhere down the line for a charge. Companies could have picnics, there could be birthday parties and many other things. Mr. Egidio believes it should have a good sized rest room. An access line could be run to the sewer (right now there is septic). There was discussion on how much it would cost to put in some dirt and make a field. There is a low spot that would have to be filled.

Commissioner Kanute made a motion to go to the next Town Council meeting and request permission to get the area up to subgrade. Seconded by Commissioner Maruzo. Motion carried unanimously.

Following discussion, it was the consensus to have a special meeting on Wednesday, February 20, at 6:30 p.m. including Rick Koczera to develop a plot plan for the drive-in. Mr. Newman attempted to reach Mr. Koczera who had left the meeting to see if he was available. He left a message to call the office.

More discussion followed on current parking habits. Need to do something to get rid of on-road parking. Suggestion was to have the Police Department begin ticketing the cars parked on the road. No Parking signs are already posted. Commissioner Kanute said they could probably issue warning tickets the first couple of weeks. Another suggestion was to post a date when tickets would begin being issued to illegal parkers.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Crescent Lake. Commissioner Kanute asked if it was possible to put another sign with the hours in another place. The one on the gate is not able to be seen when the gate is open. People need another reminder of when the park closes. Mr. Egidio said he could put another sign either on the fence or the other side of the gate.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Budget Meeting. Already discussed.
2. Girls Softball Pavilion. Commissioner Kanute made a motion to give Girls Softball permission to put up a 24' by 48' pavilion next to their concession stand in the upper part of Panthorn Park assuming zoning and building departments give approval. Motion carried unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, motion was made by Commissioner Kanute, seconded by Commissioner Maruzo, to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Berardinelli
Recording Secretary

Next Meetings:

Wednesday, February 20 – Special meeting

Wednesday, March 5 – Regular meeting