

**MINUTES OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2008**

CALL TO ORDER:

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

ROLL CALL:

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

Excused: Commissioner David Kanute

MINUTES:

Commissioner LaPorte made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Palmieri, to accept the Minutes of the August 7, 2008 meeting as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

VISITORS:

1. Jim Gura –Dog Park Association. Mr. Gura was asked to attend the meeting to discuss problems at the dog park. He said the problem is that we have people who disobey the rules of park. He has had meetings with the people. He spoke about an incident a couple of weeks ago where two dogs attacked a purebred dog from out of town. Some discussion followed on whether the town wished to make a ruling that only town residents could use the park at the discretion of the board. The association members have no problem with that. The dog park is heavily used. There is no way to police the park. Mr. Masci has instructed them to take the license plate number of the parties who are not following the rules or causing problems. Aggressive dogs are not allowed at the park but people bring them. The police have been called on occasion but their response is, if they have someone available they will send them down. Mr. Gura stated that the group has spent about \$2,000 on signs but some people ignore them. Also, it is not usually the out of towners who are causing the problems, and they do take part in dog association fund raisers. Many townspeople say they pay taxes.

Rick Maris, a dog park board member, stated that a lot of hotels advertise that there is a dog park nearby. It's a draw for them. It was also mentioned that people traveling from New Jersey to Maine have a place during the long ride to stop and let their dogs exercise. No one had a problem with that.

Chairman Fontana said one of the initial discussions about the dog park was out of towners. Some days it is so busy it can't even handle town people. If a sign is erected it should come from the town and not from the dog association. Also, it should say in small print, "if you are asked to show your license, you must do so to a member of the dog board or any Park Commissioner." We may need to carry identification cards.

Mr. Gura stated that in the fall the association plans to segregate part of the park so that the grass can grow. They had the Vo-Ag students there in the spring; it was great, and they enjoyed themselves, too. There is a promo at the dog park for wolf rescue. The association has no problem with nonprofit organizations promoting something there, but no one who will be making money on it is allowed.

Chairman Fontana suggested that Mr. Gura keep track of offenders so you would know when it is the second offense. We can tell them they are not allowed after that. Give the information to Bill Masci. The board thanked Mr. Gura and the other board members for attending the meeting.

2. Bonnie Sica was expected to attend to give a report on Nature Day but she did not show.

3. Richard Goff – Memorial Park Tennis Courts. Mr. Goff presented a petition requesting repairs be made to the tennis courts. He felt that maintenance on the courts has not been done “up to snuff” and that they have been neglected. He also questioned why the town was spending money for the courts at Panthorn Park when they are better than the courts at Memorial and Recreation Parks. The board informed Mr. Goff that there was a suit brought against the town due to an incident at Panthorn. It was a big problem and had to be addressed, therefore, the courts at Panthorn are being repaired. It was not the Park Board’s decision. Mr. Egidio added that the courts at Panthorn are 30 years old and need to be redone.

Mr. Goff also stated that the dimensions of the courts at Memorial do not meet USTA specifications. Mr. Egidio noted that these are recreational courts and not professional tennis courts. No one has complained about them for all the years they have been there. Mr. Goff proceeded to state the USTA court dimensions and the actual dimensions at the park, which are short by about 6 “ east/west and 4 ft. north/south. He also said the nets have holes in them. Commissioner LaPorte believed the courts should be OK for people using them on Sundays (as Mr. Goff stated) and for exercise. If maintenance is a problem, we should check it out. We have to try and work with what we have. Mr. Goff said if you put 4 courts together in a row, then there is no need for fencing and spacing in between. He admitted that the dimensions on courts 1 and 2 are OK. Court 3 (on the basketball side) is only 7’6” which is 5 ft. short. His request is to repair the courts at Memorial and Recreation Park and to paint them. Chairman Fontana assured Mr. Goff that we would check them out.

Mr. John Lessor stated that Spring Lake Village just replaced their courts and suggested the board may wish to contact them for cost estimates. Mr. Egidio already did that. Suggestion was made to just fill in the cracks when they are small, before they become a big danger and expense. Mr. Egidio said the repairs are done every two years and it costs \$2,200 for each court. Cracks along the netting are due to the weather (concrete expanding and contracting).

4. John Myers & Mark Pooler – YMCA Skate Park. Mr. Pooler distributed a history of the YMCA skate park beginning in 1997 and gave a summary of how it evolved over the years with the aid of the Parks & Recreation Department. The town had been giving \$11,000 toward maintenance of the skate park since 2000. This year the item was cut from the budget. Chairman Fontana stated that the YMCA received a grant of \$125,000 for the skate park, and it was assumed that the town’s contribution was not needed this year. In the future, we would need a letter from the YMCA requesting the town’s help. Mr. Masci said he might be able to transfer some funds from the Trails Day account since it probably will not need the total amount in the account this year. It would have to go to the Board of Finance.

5. Ms. Betty Stanley – Use of Panthorn Tennis Courts. Ms. Stanley addressed the board with information on the “Mission: Wolf” program. She spoke of her recent involvement with the group and plans to have the Ambassador Wolf Program at Briarwood College in Southington on October 28, 2008. The “Ambassador” wolves travel around the country and will be coming to town from Queens, New York. She is seeking a place for the wolves to get some exercise when they arrive. Tennis courts are ideal for this since they are fenced in and the fences are high. She was hoping to be able to use Panthorn Park courts since they are so close. Mr. Egidio stated that the fence is coming out on September 8th in order for the repairs to be made to the courts. They should be completed sometime in October but he couldn’t be certain they would be ready in time

for the wolf program. Discussion followed on other possible locations. It was believed that Recreation Park courts could be closed for an hour or two for this purpose. It is pretty well secured. Ms. Stanley was instructed to call the office as soon as she had a better time frame of arrival of the wolves. Mr. Masci will work with her on this. Ms. Stanley also mentioned that they would like to get the press out there while they are exercising if possible and asked how to go about it. Mr. Masci said he has someone to call and could arrange for the press to be there. She just needs to keep in contact with him to make sure he has all the information needed. Ms. Stanley believed she would know more definite times at least a few days before the event, and she would call the office.

Ms. Ruth Stanley added that there is a short video on Mission:Wolf on the internet at cbs4denver.com that shows the wolves at the sanctuary in Colorado.

COMMUNICATIONS & REPORTS:

1. Town Clerk Notification re Park Board Meeting. This was the notice of the change in meeting date.
2. Dog Park Incident – July 31, 2008. This was discussed earlier.
3. Dog Park Incident – August 17, 2008. Already discussed.
4. Email from Ms. Stanley – Wolf Ambassador. Already covered under Visitors.

PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS: None.

DIRECTOR OF RECREATION REPORT:

Mr. Masci reported that most trips are sold out. We filled a bus to Radio City with just the town and are sharing a second bus with North Haven. It is an 11:30 a.m. show followed by lunch at Carmine's. Camera at Crescent Lake. There was an article in the Record Journal that the camera was not operational but it is working. However, according to Commissioner Kanute, there is no surveillance at night because it is too dark. We need to put a light on the pole. Mr. Egidio will see if the electrician can hook up a light that we have (old softball lights). He said we would have to ask for another \$3,000 so that we can record what is seen. Currently there is no video tape, just monitoring. Commissioners were surprised to hear that nothing is being recorded. In this day and age, at least one day's worth has to be recorded. Mr. Egidio will speak with Lt. Pocock about that and get back to the board. There was concern that cars are parked near the houses, too far to be seen by the cameras.

Mr. Masci is talking to a group about performing The Nutcracker as part of the winter series. The Town Manager is very impressed with the weekly meetings with Bill and Jiggy. He is better informed of what the department is doing; hopefully it will help during the budget process. All applications are in the schools except for special events. All the programs for winter into spring are done.

Music on the Green crowds have been phenomenal. There are two more concerts after tomorrow (one is a makeup). Commissioner LaPorte said he believes that having concerts after Labor Day is too much. He feels that they should start at Memorial Day and end on Labor Day. Question arose as to how much each concert costs. Mr. Masci responded that the bands are paid by sponsors, but for the police and the people working the stage, etc. it is approximately \$2,200. After some discussion it was decided that this topic would need to be discussed at a meeting.

Pools. Recreation Pool will be open this weekend from 11 to 7 Saturday and Sunday, weather permitting, then closed for the season. The pool at Memorial has been closed. Eric Swallow

appreciated being able to use the pool because the YMCA was not available. Fall league games will all be played at Panthorn.

Chairman Fontana asked Mr. Masci to set up a meeting before September 24th with John Fontana, Joe LaPorte, Bill Masci and Mr. Prozzo. A report will be made at the next meeting.

MUNIS signature system. Mr. Masci said sometimes it is difficult to get commissioners' signatures on purchase orders (three signatures required: department head and two commissioners). Mr. Weichsel said he did not mind being the third signature on an emergency basis. Commissioners agreed with this plan.

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

SUPERINTENDENT OF PARKS REPORT:

Mr. Egidio said his written report was in the packet and he did not have anything to add unless anyone had questions for him. Commissioner Palmieri asked about the signs for Crescent Lake. Mr. Egidio said that something was done there. Mr. Egidio said he would email Lt. Pocock tomorrow to request a full explanation regarding the cameras to use at the Board of Finance meeting. He would really like Lt. Pocock to attend the BOF meeting to respond to questions they may have.

He passed around a picture of a new Rails to Trails sign. Drive-in theater soil is not available; can't do anything right now. Some of it is contaminated, some is being saved. Mr. Egidio said his hands are tied. He is working with the Town Engineer and Nickerson but he does not believe anything will happen this year. The remediation process is very long. Mr. Egidio is working with the Historical Society on the marquee.

Chairman Fontana brought up the subject of staff taking their coffee breaks in the pavilion at Plantsville Center. He realizes they are entitled to breaks, but right there in the open it does not look good. Mr. Egidio will speak to the men and take care of it.

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

REPORT OF PARKS:

Western. Question was asked regarding who owns the park, the town or the Little League? The sign says Western Little League. Bonnie Sica called to say that the sign should read "Western Park." It was originally Board of Education but the town took it over. It would not be good for practice fields as it is very wet there. Chairman Fontana recalled someone about a year ago wanting to put a building there – where? Commissioner LaPorte recalled that it was to be on the high side of the park.

Recreation Park. Mr. Egidio said he is working on the wading pool. There was a leak. They put dye in and are tracking it. He will report again next month.

Crescent Lake. The caretakers are very uncomfortable collecting money for permits in that remote area as suggested at the last Park Board meeting.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. YMCA skate park request. Motion was made by Commissioner Palmieri, seconded by Commissioner LaPorte, that the Park & Recreation Commission agrees to continue to support the

efforts of the YMCA with regard to the skate park and to have Mr. Masci write a letter to the Board of Finance requesting that the line item be restored to the budget and requesting a transfer of \$11,000 from the Trails Day line to the skate park line. Mr. Masci is to include a copy of the skate park history with the letter. Mr. Masci indicated that the balance in the Trails Day account would be \$30,400. Motion carried unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Department Work Load. Mr. Egidio had a meeting with Town Attorney Mark Sciota. The department now has two or three more open space areas to take care of. He mentioned Whippoorwill Road, Wedgewood Road, Kensington Avenue and East Summer Street where they will be knocking the buildings down. The town has approximately 160 open space areas. Question arose whether the small open spaces between houses could be deeded to the abutting property owners rather than trying to maintain it.

Mr. Egidio was also asked to work on the pear trees downtown (there are 60 of them). They have been working on them and on the grates below the trees. He has had a couple of guys working on it all week. This type of work will have to be done twice a year. They also have to take care of the grass between the pavers. Chairman Fontana asked if other park & recreation departments in other communities handle this type of work, or is it done by Highway/Public Works? He asked Mr. Egidio to make some calls of surrounding towns to find out who takes care of sidewalks, trees, etc. Mr. Egidio said he will have to ask for another person because they cannot handle the volume of work. In response to a question, he said he has nine men. Commissioners wondered what types of duties are handled by the Highway Department and if they could do some of this work. Mr. Egidio did note that he does have an arborist cut the trees but other workers could do the grate work.

The board asked Mr. Egidio to: (1) compile a list of job duties for Highway Department and Parks Department; and (2) make a list of open space areas that might be deeded off. Mr. Egidio said he would also look into the little machine for sweeping gutters.

2. Dog Park. Further discussion took place regarding the incidents mentioned earlier. Question arose as to how many cases are there in relation to how many people use the park? The answer was not many.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, motion was made by Commissioner LaPorte, seconded by Commissioner Maruzo, to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Berardinelli
Recording Secretary