

UNAPPROVED

Minutes of the
Parks and Recreation Commission
Meeting

February 24, 2015

In Attendance:

Gina Carey, Chair
Phil Kearns, Vice Chair
David Thaxter
Barbara Dobbins
Kim Hulber
Evie Bottali
David Shofi

Paul J. Roche, Director
Robert Schneider, Asst. Dir.

Jane Byrnes, Secty

These minutes are a general summary of the meeting and are not intended to be a verbatim transcription.

Meeting called to order by Chairwoman at 7:30 p.m.

Approval of Agenda

The Chairwoman asked that the agenda be amended to move the "Director's Report" under Minutes. The agenda as amended was approved.

Minutes:

The minutes were approved as presented.

Director's Report:

Mr. Roche gave a slide show presentation on the proposed "Imagination Station" – Ballard Park playground. The Director mentioned that he is currently working with the committee on fundraising strategies and making appointments to meet with prospective donors. Mr. Roche has met with the lead donor who has presented a challenge grant for \$200,000. Mr. Roche also mentioned that the Ridgefield Press will be putting out an article on the project this week. The Commission had some questions regarding life span, maintenance, flooring, and site amenities. Overall the Commission was excited about this project.

Financial Status:

To be discussed under sub-committee report.

Chairwoman:

Ms. Carey mentioned that the Commission will be voting on new officers positions next month. Ms. Carey would like the Commissioners to think about their sub-committees and if there are any changes to be made. Ms. Carey asked if there were any volunteers for the Chairperson's position and Vice Chair. Ms. Carey mentioned that Mr. Kearns had volunteered to fill the position of Chair, and the Commissioners gave their support for that decision. A vote will take place at the March meeting.

Assistant Director-Recreation:

In Ms. Matthew's absence, Mr. Roche reported that program attendance has been fluctuating due to the cold and snowy weather. The Department is ready to go with the early camp and early Martin Park Beach registrations which begin March 1. We are hoping that the public will take advantage of this early registration and its discount. The Skate Park may have to move its opening due to wintry weather conditions. The Department has been working with Jamie Telegadis on a possible customer training proposal for the front desk staff. Ms. Carey will bring this to the First Selectman. The new front desk staff has started and is working out terrific. Jim Rafferty is now in the new position and he will be working more with membership and customer service. Child-sitting continues to be a great success now that it has become part of the All Family inclusive membership.

Mr. Roche mentioned that the Department had gotten some good press regarding the recent budget deliberations.

Assistant Director-Parks:

Mr. Schneider reported on the following:

- Mr. Schneider reported that the Recreation Center roof has been cleared of snow and the crews are having a challenging time clearing off the Town facilities, including the schools of ice and snow.
- The recent fields meeting went well, however sports may have a late start due to weather conditions.
- Mr. Schneider mentioned that he is currently interviewing for the upcoming summer outdoor maintenance positions.

Sub-Committee Reports:**Budget & Policy-Phil Kearns:**

Mr. Kearns gave a summary on the recent budget meeting with the First Selectman and a Board of Finance representative regarding the Parks and Recreation revenue.

Mr. Kearns reported that revenue is ahead of projected budget and expenses continue to remain stable. The department is waiting to see how if the early summer camp registration campaign will be successful. Mr. Kearns reported he is waiting to hear from the First Selectman regarding the date for the next meeting with the Board of Selectmen regarding the proposed budget.

Ms. Carey mentioned that Mr. Kearns did a fabulous job with the budget preparation and deliberations again this year. The Commission agreed.

Buildings & Grounds – David Thaxter

Mr. Kearns stated that there continues to be discussion among some of the field user groups about the Field Use Criteria, especially around the amendment from the fall of 2013. While the rationale was discussed at the Commission meeting when the vote for that amendment was held, it is felt that the rationale should be better documented to address future questions. Mr. Kearns stated that Mr. Shofi has been working on this document.

Programs & Long Range Planning-Evie Bottali:

Ms. Bottali reported that memberships remain strong in the All-Inclusive section, but are soft in the Recreation area. Ms. Bottali mentioned that the information coming from the data base is now more inclusive and it helps to make the reporting more accurate.

A lengthy discussion ensued regarding the monthly membership renewal letters and the monthly membership payment procedures. Mr. Roche mentioned that the department is currently reviewing these procedures and doing some restricting.

Special Services Issues – Barbara Dobbin:

Ms. Dobbin summarized for the Commission the proposed policy regarding Special Services fees. One of the strategic goals of the Ridgefield Parks and Recreation organization is to provide recreation programs and facilities that are accessible to all individuals. In order to support this strategic goal, Parks and Recreation assesses a special services fee on various programs and activities to assist in the funding of such accessibility. These fees are collected in a Special Services Fund.

After a discussion, Ms. Dobbin made the following motion:

“The Commission hereby agrees that the Special Services Fund spending of less than \$500 require the approval of the Director of Parks and Recreation. Any expenditure of more than \$500 requires a proposal to be presented by the Special Services Committee to the Parks and Recreation Commission, and approval by the Commission.”

The motion was approved and passed unanimously.

After a discussion, regarding the Out and About program and the Special Services fee, Ms. Dobbin made the following motion:

“The Commission hereby approves the proposal from the Special Service Sub-Committee requesting that no more than \$13,000 be spent for the Out and About program in calendar year 2014-2015, and that an approval and review will have to be made annually on the expenditure for the this program.”

The motion was approved and passed unanimously.

There was some discussion regarding raising this fee in the future, but no decision would be made at this time. The Commission also talked about the Out and About program and may at some point revisit the program.

The sub-committee may review the current accessibility department projects.

Aquatics-David Thaxter:

Mr. Thaxter mentioned that the department is looking to start a stand up yoga class on the paddle board for next summer. The department has also ordered smaller boards for younger participants. Mr. Thaxter asked if there were any issues with the Barlow Mountain pool. Mr. Roche stated there were no issues at this time. Mr. Roche mentioned the Accountant is questioning and working with the Board of Ed on the utility expenses at Barlow Mountain pool.

Strategic Plan-Kim Hulber

No current issues.

Old Business:

No current issues.

New Business:

Covered under Chairwomen's report.

Motion to adjourn was made by Barbara Dobbin seconded by David Thaxter at 9:30p.m.

*Minutes Approved: _____
Evie Bottali, Secretary