



Minutes of the
Parks and Recreation Commission
Meeting

June 19, 2018

In Attendance:

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

Dennis DiPinto, Director -Via Phone
Robin Matthews, Asst. Dir-Rec
Bob Schneider, Asst.Dir-Parks
Eileen Cipolla, Acct.
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 Phil Kearns at 7:30 p.m.

Approval of Agenda:

Mr. Kearns requested that New Business be moved up on the agenda. The agenda as amended was approved.

Recognition of Guests:

Mr. John Burke, Ridgefield CT was introduced to the Commission.

New Business:

Mr. Burke summarized for the Commission a senior program entitled Silver Sneakers, which provides fitness for seniors at no cost to them. Cost is partially covered by insurance.

Mr. Burke would like the Commission to consider bringing this program to the Recreation Center. As most of the Commissioners had never heard of the program, they had some questions regarding the intricacies and asked for time to do some research. Mr. Kearns mentioned that the Commission's sub-committee would review the program and its options as well as the Department, before making any decisions. Mr. Kearns stated that he would get back to Mr. Burke after the Commission has had time to review the program.

The Commission thanked Mr. Burke for his time and suggestion.

Minutes:

The minutes were approved as submitted.

Financial Status – Eileen Cipolla:

Ms. Cipolla reported that revenue continues to be soft in the areas of programs and aquatics; however, membership has held to budget. There was some discussion regarding the outdoor maintenance snow overtime expense and who was responsible for covering the overage. Ms. Cipolla mentioned that she still feels that the June numbers will come in on budget.

The Commission mentioned that the department might need to do an e-mail blast to promote Martin Park Beach as the school year is coming to an end.



Mr. Kearns asked Mr. DiPinto if there were any questions by the First Selectman at the recent Town revenue meeting. Mr. DiPinto mentioned that there were no surprises at the meeting.

Chairman's Report – Phil Kearns:

Mr. Kearns reported he has been working closely with the Director on many aspects of the department.

Director's Report- Dennis DiPinto

The Director reported that he attended a recent building renovation committee meeting. There was a lengthy discussion regarding the changes and timing on the project.

The Commission asked if there were any comments from the public and members regarding the renovation. Both Ms. Matthews and Mr. DiPinto stated that there have not been any comments; however, this may change once work begins in the wellness locker rooms.

The Skate Park Supervisor and Director have met to discuss summer programming at the Park.

Visited Martin Park Beach to look at the ADA mat, which was installed last week. The department will be ordering a few additional pieces to complete the mat so it reaches the changing rooms and showers.

A few members of the staff attended an ADA Municipal training session at the New Canaan YMCA. The session was very informative and the department is waiting for the Town-wide independent survey results before moving forward.

The Director will be working on meeting with the Board of Education on possibly collaborating with their afterschool program.

The Director has been meeting with the recreation staff on new program development and future outreach activities.

The Director met with the Director of the Chamber of Commerce to review our involvement with co-sponsoring some of the Chamber events.

Mr. DiPinto met with Jamie Telegas regarding staff training tools on customer service and the customer experience. Some of the staff will be working with Ms. Telegas on various sessions over the next few weeks.

The Commission suggested focusing more on the customer experience for future training.

Mr. DiPinto mentioned that he, the First Selectman and Mr. Kearns had met again with the Ridgefield Aquatics group regarding a competitive indoor swimming facility. Mr. Kearns summarized for the Commission the request from RAC regarding a competitive indoor swimming facility. Mr. Kearns stated that the meeting went well and that RAC will look at funding for a feasibility study.

The Director is working on his individual SMART goals along with assisting the staff to complete their SMART goals in conjunction with the Strategic Plan. He is hoping to have this ready by early July.

The Director reported that he and Mr. Schneider have met with the outdoor maintenance staff regarding equipment training and review of OSHA guidelines. There was much discussion regarding training of the staff and qualifications.



The Commission had some questions regarding Parks & Rec's accident statics. Mr. Schneider mentioned that all our training manuals are up-to-date. A brief discussion ensued regarding our on-the-job training and staff experience.

The first four CHIRP concerts have run smoothly. The Director mentioned he had stopped by this evening and the Park was busy. He also mentioned he had met with the sound technician to check the decibals during the first concert.

The Director will be attending a Town wide drill at the Emergency Operations Center on Wednesday. Mr. DiPinto explained that this was a State run drill with the Town's Directors attending.

The Friends of Parks and Recreation has received a donation to purchase and install a human/pet water fountain along the Recreation Center trail.

Mr. DiPinto attended the Special Olympics annual dinner representing the Friends of Ridgefield Parks and Recreation.

The Director continues to work with Assistant Director-Recreation and the Aquatic Supervisor on sharing ideas for additional aquatic programs.

Ms. Carey mentioned that in a recent Ridgefield Press article, it discussed the theatre (ACT) at the Schlumberger property. Ms. Carey was looking for the Commission's thoughts on this property and future events. The Commission stated that they would not take a position on this topic.

Assistant Director-Recreation- Robin Matthews:

Aquatics:

- Ms. Matthews reported that the staff is busy with staff training, orientation and waiting for the summer camp to begin.
- Martin Park Beach is open and running smoothly and the ADA mat has been installed. The Zoom Floom will be put in the water on the 30th of June.
- The MPB food vendor has been working out well.
- The Spray Bay is now open seven day a week and is staffed by those with special needs.
- Summer swim registrations came in a little low, however, the department is working on some new program ideas. We would like to run a CIT (Counselor in Training) program similar to our summer camp, for WSI aids.
- Ms. Matthews mentioned that the department would like to move the Wobble Wobble play mat to the beach during the summer months.

Recreation:

- Ms. Matthews is currently working with staff to rewrite their goals and objectives to better coincide with the Strategic Plan.
- Working on three special events for the year.
- Working on a Wellness program to accommodate those with Parkinson's disease.
- Working with Director on the MacDonald-Pin Dance program. Ms. Matthews mentioned that her recommendation is to try to rejuvenate the program this year.
- Summer camp registration continue to come in slowly and we have added the week of August 20-24 to the schedule.
- Working with the recreation staff on several new program ideas for the fall.

Ms. Hulber asked what criteria the department uses to evaluate new program ideas to decide which ones go and which ones do not. Ms. Matthews described the current procedure.



The Commission had several suggestions; including surveying through Survey Monkey our current members to get feedback on what kind of programs they are looking for in the future. The Commission stated that they could give assistance to help the department come up with a vetting plan. Mr. DiPinto and Ms. Matthews will work together with the Commission on developing a plan.

Mr. DiPinto mentioned that this would be a goal for the future as the fall schedule for programs is fast approaching and it would give the department time to meet with the sub-committees to develop the policies.

Ms. Matthews has been meeting with the Commission sub-committee to review the facility reservation policy and procedures.

Assistant Director-Parks – Mr. Schneider reported:

- Mr. Schneider stated that the outdoor maintenance staff is working on the installation of the pump for the Zoom Floom at the beach.
- Working on staining the beach's pavilion.
- Mr. Schneider mentioned that the fields are experiencing some large "clover" growth due to the pesticide management program.
- Spring sports are finishing up and an independent web site will be set up for all baseball schedules.
- Crews are busy preparing the Rec Center site for summer camp.
- Crews are doing some repairs at the Ballard Playground.
- Mr. Schneider is working with the Town on insurance requirements for the recent two fountain accidents.
- Mr. Schneider mentioned that the security camera was very helpful with the recent vandalism in Ballard Park.
- Working at the high school for preparation for the July 4 fireworks.

The Commission asked who is responsible for the maintenance of the Town's triangles. Mr. Schneider gave a summary on the history of the triangles and stated that currently the Town Highway Department is responsible for their up-keep. A brief discussion ensued regarding future possibilities and partnerships that could help maintain these triangles.

Sub-Committee Reports:

Buildings & Grounds – Phil Kearns

Covered above under Director's report.

Aquatics & Programs –David Thaxter:

Covered above under Asst. Director Recreation's report.

Annual Goals & Marketing Plans- Evie Bottali:

Mr. Kearns mentioned that he and Ms. Bottali have been working together to develop a more actionable monthly marketing report. The new report format will provide current month as well as cumulative to date membership & revenue information to identify the strengths and weaknesses.

Budget & Policy-Phil Kearns:

Mr. Kearns stated that he had nothing to add; however, Mr. Kearns would like the Commission sub-committee to meet, along with the Director, to discuss the Silver Sneakers program request. The sub-committee will set up a meeting. The Director shared some of the information he had obtained regarding this program.



Special Services Issues & (Community Out Reach) – Barbara Dobbin:

Ms. Dobbin reported that the sub-committee and staff have begun to look at the departments practices on who uses the Parks and Recreation facility and under what terms. There seems to be a gap in continuity and the group will get together later this fall to develop some new practices.

Strategic Plan – Gina Carey

Ms. Carey reported that the sub-committee is currently reviewing the Director's goals. Ms. Carey will meet with the Director next week to insure that we have good solid goals for his direct reports that align with the calendar year and the Strategic Plan.

Ms. Carey also mentioned that the sub-committee is in the early stages of working on the customer experience and customer service plan with the Director.

There was a discussion regarding the next steps in developing a customer experience/customer service vision for the department.

The Commission mentioned that they are looking for a vision to better understand our customer's preferences, both through emotional and personal connections. They suggested taking a different approach to help provide a positive experience, catering to meeting the customer's needs from their feedback.

Mr. Kearns mentioned that the Commission needs to be mindful of the many things the staff and Director are currently working on in conjunction with generating revenue and new programs. The Commission needs to set priorities for the department.



Old Business:

No old business.

New Business:

Covered above.

A motion to adjourn was made by Barbara Dobbin and seconded by David Shofi.

Meeting adjourned 9:38pm.

Minutes Approved: _____
Evie Bottali, Secretary



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RIDGEFIELD PARKS & RECREATION

Old Business:

No old business.

New Business:

Covered above.

A motion to adjourn was made by Gina Carey and seconded by Barbara Dobbin

Meeting adjourned 9:50pm.

Minutes Approved: _____
Evie Bottali, Secretary