



UNAPPROVED

Minutes of the  
Parks and Recreation Commission  
Meeting

April 21, 2015

In Attendance:

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

Paul J. Roche, Director  
Robin Matthews, Asst. Dir.

Jane Byrnes, Comm. Secty.

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

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

**Approval of Agenda & Minutes**

The agenda and minutes were approved as presented.

**Financial Status:**

In Ms. Cipolla's absence, Mr. Kearns asked that the report be covered under the Budget and Policy, Sub-Committee report.

**Chairman:**

Mr. Kearns, new Chairman submitted to the Commission the proposed new Commission Sub-Committees. Mr. Kearns asked for any changes or comments, having none; Mr. Kearns thanked the Commission for their support.

**Director's Report:**

- Mr. Roche gave an update on the current Ballard Park project – Imagination Station playground and mentioned that this has been a very successful month for fundraising. The Friends of Parks and Recreation are close to reaching their fund raising goals for this project. The Commission discussed the timing of the installation of the playground and what would happen to the current playground after its removal.
- Mr. Roche reported that he is working with LINC and the First Selectman on the installation of the accessible trail, and he feels that the project is moving ahead nicely. Mr. Roche stated that there may be an article in this week's Ridgefield Press on the project.
- The Lounsbury House project will be covered under New Business.

**Assistant Director-Recreation:**

Ms. Matthews asked if there were any questions on her report.

- Ms. Matthews mentioned that the department will have both kayak and paddle board tours of the beach area.



- Ms. Matthews also reported that she had submitted The Prospector Theater for the National Recreation and Parks Association inclusion award for 2015. Ms. Matthews mentioned that we may not be able to meet the award's criteria.
- Ms. Matthews mentioned that we may have to look at a better way to secure the Martin Park Beach entrance/exit gate, or even the possibility of replacing the current gate.

Mr. Kearns asked for financial details on the Run Like A Mother event. Mr. Roche mentioned that Parks and Recreation was a co-sponsor of the event this year hoping to obtain some community awareness for our programs and activities. Mr. Roche stated that the department will wait for the outcome and make a decision to co-sponsor the event in the future. The Chairman also questioned how successful the Martin Park Beach promotion was with regard to the number of people who renewed their memberships and the number of those who are new memberships. Mr. Kearns will follow up with Eileen Cipolla, Accountant for these numbers. The Commission was pleased with the camp promotion with revenue coming in above projections.

**Assistant Director-Parks:**

In Mr. Schneider's absence, Mr. Roche stated that the winter weather has held up field renovations and many fields are not in top shape causing trouble for spring play. Ms. Huber asked the Commission if they had received an e-mail survey regarding baseball in Ridgefield. Ms. Huber will forward the e-mail she received to the Commission.

**Sub-Committee Reports:**

**Buildings & Grounds – David Thaxter**

Mr. Thaxter reported that Mr. Schneider has been under a great deal of pressure trying to get the fields ready for spring sports and that field demands have been great. Mr. Thaxter stated that there have been no issues with the field use schedule.

**Annual Goals & Marketing Plans:**

Ms. Bottali reported that memberships continue strong specifically recreation and family memberships analysis to help understand membership trends. The Commission discussed the SPIN and TRX add-on membership revenues. Ms. Bottali mentioned that the sub-committee will be meeting with the staff to talk about next year's membership promotions.

**Budget & Policy-Phil Kearns:**

Mr. Kearns reported that the Commission had gone before the Board of Finance with the 2015-2016 budget and the meeting went well. There were some questions regarding whether the Recreation Center has had any impact on the local businesses. Mr. Kearns stated that the revenue numbers are good and camp is strong. The Director mentioned that the camp is a very good value and the children enjoy the program.

**Special Services Issues – Barbara Dobbin:**

Ms. Dobbin reported that the sub-committee had met with Ms. Bonstalli, Parks and Recreation Out and About Supervisor and Mr. Philips, Director of the Town's Social Services Department regarding future ideas for the Out and About program and to discuss ideas on transportation for this program.

**Aquatics & Programs -David Thaxter:**

Mr. Thaxter reported that Ms. Matthews covered the Martin Park gate in her report; he also stated that the hiring of summer staff is going well. Ms. Dynia and her staff are working hard to get both the Spray Bay and Martin Park Beach open and in great shape. The beach staff



will be using the membership card swipe system so that members will have to use their card to check in at the gate. The Spray Bay will open only on weekends until school is out and the department has had several party requests already. Mr. Thaxter mentioned that the increase in salary for lifeguards has helped with the staffing issues. The Zoom Flume will be up and running again this summer and Mr. Thaxter stated that he does not have any outstanding issues with the beach.

The Commission did question a possibility of having a food vendor on site. Mr. Roche stated that he has tried to solve this issue, however; there currently seems to be no interest. Mr. Shofi suggested that maybe our staff could provide water, sports drinks in a cooler to help members out. Some other ideas were to have vending machines, etc. Mr. Roche and Mr. Thaxter will follow up on some ideas.

**Strategic Plan-Kim Hulber**

No current issues.

**Old Business:**

No outstanding issues at this time.

**New Business: Lounsbury House/Community Center Garden Proposal:**

Mr. Roche stated that he has had a request from the Lounsbury House/Community Center to build a formal garden on the site to be used for weddings and other events. Mr. Roche then presented the Commission with a proposed plan for the Lounsbury House formal garden. Mr. Roche felt that this was a good plan for the site and he felt it should have the approval of the Commission.

After a discussion, Barbara Dobbin made the following motion:

“The Commission hereby approves the proposed Lounsbury House formal garden design as shown on the plan presented. Further, the Parks and Recreation Department will incur no costs for maintenance or installation and any future changes to the design/plan must be brought to the Parks and Recreation Commission for approval.”

Mr. Kearns asked if there were any objections having none; the motion was seconded by David Thaxter and passed unanimously.

Ms. Carey asked about the condition of the fencing around the Lounsbury House. Mr. Roche stated that he will look into any damage that might have occurred this winter.

Ms. Carey gave a summary of the Economic Development Council's first meeting. Ms. Carey mentioned that the Council is comprised of a broad cross section of Town organizations and Town Departments whose purpose is to create ideas on how to foster economic development in Ridgefield.

Ms. Carey will Chair the next meeting and report back to the Commission.

David Shofi mentioned that he would like to share a favorable comment he had heard regarding the Rec Center. He mentioned that some members moving to Ridgefield from other states had said that the Rec Center is a great place to gather and to meet their neighbors. Mr. Shofi stated that they felt that because of the lay out of Ridgefield neighborhoods, residents felt they don't get a chance to meet their neighbors, but were happy to have this opportunity at the Rec Center.



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**RIDGEFIELD PARKS & RECREATION**

Kim Huber mentioned that there has been some trouble parking at the dog park due to the mud. Mr. Roche stated that we will be doing some hydro-seeding in the near future at the site which may help the issue.

Motion to adjourn was made by Barbara Dobbin seconded by David Thaxter at 8:45p.m.

\*Minutes Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Evie Bottali, Secretary