



**UNAPPROVED**

Minutes of the  
Parks and Recreation Commission  
Meeting

January 12, 2016

In Attendance:

Phil Kearns, Chairman  
Barbara Dobbin  
Evie Bottali, Secretary  
David Thaxter  
David Shofi, via phone  
Gina Carey  
Kim Hulber

Paul J. Roche, Director  
Robin Matthews, Asst. Dir.  
Robert Schneider, Asst. Dir.  
Jane Byrnes, Secty.  
Eileen Cipolla, Acctg.

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.

Recognition of Guest:

Ms. Mary Lou Haney & Mr. John Adams, Ridgefield, CT  
Mr. Kearns welcomed guests.

Approval of Agenda:

The agenda as presented was approved.

Minutes:

The minutes as presented were approved.

Financial Status:

Ms. Cipolla reported that year to date revenue for December was ahead of budget and this month is also looking good. Ms. Cipolla stated that we will review the operating budget, under the sub-committee's report. Mr. Kearns mentioned that program numbers appear to be soft due to the loss of the fencing program. The sub-committee will keep a close watch on programs.

Chairman:

Mr. Kearns mentioned that the safety fencing discussion with the Board of Selectmen had been postponed to their January 20, 2016 meeting. Mr. Kearns is planning to attend that meeting.

Mr. Kearns reported that he had spoke with Mr. Adams regarding his request for naming of the Shadow Lake field. Mr. Kearns has also provided the Commission with a copy of the Town's parks and fields inventory for their review.

Mr. Kearns also reported that there has not been any change to the request for emergency funds for the Scotland School field.

Mr. Kearns mentioned that he is working with the Director to look at the Department's master plan regarding the installation of a softball field on the Rec Center property.



Mr. Kearns stated that three Commissioners tenures will expire on April 1<sup>st</sup>. They are; Barbara Dobbin, David Shofi and himself. They will have to meet with the Board of Selectmen and reapply.

Mr. Kearns and Mr. Roche will be meeting with the First Selectman at the end of the week to review the budget requests.

Director's Report:

- The Director has been working with the Tiger Ridge committee on the Ridgefield High School softball field improvements. Mr. Roche mentioned that he had received a donation in the amount of \$5,000 for this project.
- Mr Roche is working with the Town on the Recreation Center's proposal to expand the parking area. The Commission had some questions regarding the timing of this project. Mr. Roche mentioned that he will request a Special Permit with the Planning & Zoning Commission and move on from there, he is looking at late summer.
- Mr. Roche mentioned that he will attend a meeting with the Board of Selectmen on Thursday to tour the Rail Trail site. The Commission discussed the Trail's plan and if there were any concerns from neighbors.

Assistant Director-Recreation:

Ms. Matthews asked if there were any questions on her report. The Commission asked if there were any specific situations for the placing of signage with regards to "children at play." They also asked if the signage for "dogs must be on a leash" had been posted. Ms. Matthews stated that there were no specific incidents, but we were taking a pro-active approach to keep our campers safe, and yes, the dog signs were posted.

Ms. Matthews mentioned that the Department is working with the Chamber of Commerce on the Kids Fest event. The Commission had some questions regarding the extent of our involvement. Ms. Matthews gave a summary.

Assistant Director-Parks:

Mr. Schneider reported on the following:

- Mr. Schneider is working with the Town's Purchasing Department on using a Co-op group for purchasing outdoor maintenance supplies at a more inexpensive rate.
- Mr. Schneider is also working with the Tiger Ridge group on the dugout and he is waiting for approval before sending out bids for the fencing.
- The annual fields meeting is scheduled for February 25. Mr. Thaxter asked to be notified of the final date and time for this meeting. The Commission also asked if there were any new groups requesting field space. Mr. Schneider reported he had a rugby group contact him recently.
- Ms. McKnight and staff are working on a more efficient schedule for billing of facilities.
- Mr. Kearns will be meeting with Town Hall regarding our summer employment needs.
- There may be some challenges with equipment repairs as the maintenance mechanic has been out on disability.



Sub-Committee Reports:

Buildings & Grounds – David Thaxter

Mr. Thaxter reported that Mr. Alicea had presented a proposal to the Planning & Zoning Board. Mr. Thaxter mentioned that the Recreation Center property is still the number one target location for a new softball field.

Mr. Thaxter reported that we are still waiting for a meeting with the Branchville Civic group and Mr. Schneider will follow up.

As suggested by Mr. Schneider, the “drive around” to review the field conditions may be postponed until early spring (March) to get a better sense of field damage, when the growing season has begun. Mr. Roche suggested that we may look at the Scotland field sooner.

Aquatics & Programs –David Thaxter:

Mr. Thaxter had no new business at this time but will be addressing issues in the future.

Annual Goals & Marketing Plans:

Ms. Bottali reported that the December results indicate a softening in our recreation memberships; however, our all inclusive family memberships remain strong. There was a discussion regarding the method and accuracy of tracking of membership numbers with the Department’s software.

Martin Park Beach Promotion:

Ms. Bottali gave a synopsis of the proposed Martin Park Beach promotion proposal. The Commission had several questions on the proposals and the effect they would have on revenue. They also discussed at length the low enrollments last year. It was suggested that the Commission members give their feedback to Ms. Bottali after reviewing the scenarios and financials. Ms. Bottali will review the comments and get back to the Commission after reviewing their input.

A brief discussion ensued regarding the future operations of Martin Park Beach.

Mr. Kearns thanked Ms. Bottali and the sub-committee for their work with the Martin Park Beach promotion.

Budget & Policy-Phil Kearns:

Mr. Kearns presented the Department’s 2016-2017 Operating Budget in detail and asked if there were any questions. The Commission questioned if the sub-committee felt that our numbers were in-line with the Town’s expectations and if cuts would have to be made. Mr. Kearns stated that there were very little adjustments this year.

Mr. Kearns summarized for the Commission the proposed Parks & Recreation Operating Budget for 2016-2017.

After discussions; Ms. Carey made the following motion:

“**RESOLVE**, to accept the 2016-2017 Operating Budget as presented by the Parks & Recreation Commission, Budget Sub-Committee for presentation to the Board of Selectmen.”

The motion was seconded by David Thaxter and passed unanimously.

Mr. Kearns wanted to thank the staff, the Commission and Ms. Cipolla for their hard work with this year’s budget process.



Special Services Issues – Barbara Dobbin:

Ms. Dobbin reported that she will set up a drive around of the Town fields and parks to begin to develop a plan for accessible porta-potties for future installation. She will follow-up with the Town's Social Services Director.

Strategic Plan-Gina Carey

Ms. Hulber reviewed the Long-Range Strategic Plan's approach for the Commission and stated that this plan is being developed to make recommendations based on identifying trends, gathering input from various stake-holders and hypotheses.

Some planned items include:

- Create a draft of Discussion Stimulation – interview guide
- Identify sources and collect data for population, demographics, etc.
- Discuss Parks and Rec industry trends and use staff resources

The committee is asking for volunteers to assist them in gathering information. This information and other input (such as discussions with various groups, interviews, and surveys) will be used to develop the Strategic Plan. Ms. Hulber asked that the Commission e-mail her with their comments. Ms. Hulber is also looking for staff input as well.

Old Business: Shadow Lake

The Chairman reviewed the information that had been distributed at the December meeting regarding the request to rename the Shadow Lake Field. He reviewed as well the inventory of the names and naming history of the Park & Recreation Fields and Facilities that had been prepared by the department and distributed in advance of the meeting. There was considerable discussion of the issue. It was agreed that no exception to the field naming policy should be made and therefore; the policy itself would have to be changed in order to rename a park, field or facility. It was agreed that a subcommittee of Mr. Thaxter, Ms. Dobbin and Mr. Kearns would review the policy.

Regarding the specific request for the Shadow Lake Field name change, meeting guests Mary Lou Haney and John Adams were invited to speak on the matter, which is to name the field in memory of their son, Ryan. Ms. Haney spoke of her son Ryan and his association with the Shadow Lake field. The Commission discussed with them and asked them to consider the idea of naming an aspect of the park rather than the field and used the many benches and trees, the Governor Park Flag pole and the recent Live Life to the Max picnic area as examples where individuals or groups provided funds to Park & Rec for these types of memorials.

Mr. Adams thanked the Commission for their time.

New Business:

No new business at this time.

A motion to adjourn was made by Barbara Dobbin and seconded by David Thaxter at 10:25 p.m.

\*Minutes Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Evie Bottali, Secretary



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# RIDGEFIELD PARKS & RECREATION