



UNAPPROVED

Minutes of the
Parks and Recreation Commission
Meeting

May 17, 2016

In Attendance:

Phil Kearns, Chairman
Evie Bottali, Secretary
David Thaxter
Gina Carey
Kim Hulber
David Shofi, VIA Telephone
Barbara Dobbin, Vice Chair

Paul J. Roche, Director
Robin Matthews, Asst. Dir.
Eileen Cipolla, Acctg.
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 Chairman at 7:35p.m.

Recognition of Guest:

The Commission welcomed Shannon Carey, Ridgefield, CT and Jim Rafferty, Parks and Recreation, Weekend Supervisor.

Approval of Agenda

Mr. Roche asked that an executive session to discuss personnel issues, be added to the agenda. Also, under Old Business, Shadow Lake Naming Request, be added as item (a). The agenda as amended was approved.

Approval of the Minutes:

Ms. Bottali made a correction to the minutes of the April meeting; on page two, under Assistant Director-Recreation, item three, should read: "Recreation Station and Stop-n-Go after school programs remain very popular with approximately 75 children enrolled." Also, on page two, under Buildings and Grounds; should read, "The Buildings and Grounds sub-committee members met with the Branchville Civic group....." The minutes of the April meeting were approved as amended.

Financial Status:

Ms. Cipolla reported that the Town budget was approved by the voters and both our capital and operating budgets have also been approved. She will send the Commission a copy of the approved budget next week. Ms. Cipolla reported year-to-date revenue was above target for the month of April and they are keeping a close watch on expenses. Ms. Cipolla mentioned that we are still waiting for some adjustments in the athletic field revenue, which was caused by a timing issue.

Chairman:

Mr. Kearns stated that he will cover Budget Subcommittee items under his report.



Mr. Kearns summarized for the Commission a request for an appropriation of \$12,000 for the purchase of inflatables. Mr. Kearns asked Mr. Rafferty to add his comments on this request, as he is the Birthday Party Supervisor. Mr. Rafferty told the Commission that the inflatables are a very important attraction for children's parties at the Recreation Center; however, our current inflatables are old and outdated. Mr. Rafferty feels that the purchase of new inflatables will attract residents back to the Rec Center which will help increase our birthday party revenue. The Commission had questions regarding the choices for a type of inflatable, size, storage, use for summer camps, and longevity of the equipment. There was some discussion regarding the purchase of three different inflatables if the pricing was within approval. After discussing the pricing the Commission all agreed with keeping the original \$12,000.00 and felt the Department can use its discretion in picking the equipment and making the best deal possible.

Mr. Kearns made the following motion:

"The Commission hereby approves the Parks and Recreation Department spending, in support of programs, the necessary funds, anticipated to be approximately \$12,000, to purchase inflatable obstacle courses."

The motion was seconded by Gina Carey and passed unanimously.

Mr. Kearns also had an additional item to discuss with the Commission. While working on the Strategic and Master Plans, it was determined that conceptual drawings of alternative master plan configurations for the Recreation Center campus could be prepared by an architect. Mr. Kearns explained the goal of this process is to see what the potential configurations look like so that we know what our options are and so that we do not make decisions that would limit other, potentially more important options in the future. The focus is on the physical layout of the Recreation Center campus. While the Strategic Planning Committee is working on long range priorities and plans, it is believed that the options below include any possible alternatives coming out of that that might impact the campus. Mr. Kearns presented nine items for discussion, some included:

- Expand wellness center
- Expand swimming pool
- Expansion to the building to provide additional programs
- An outside swimming pool
- An additional multipurpose athletic field (suitable for soccer, lacrosse, rugby etc.)
- The addition of a softball field or ball field that could be used for softball and baseball
- An outdoor family area (picnic area, pavilion, camping area, small event area)
- Outside courts (Pickleball/paddle tennis)
- Additional parking to accommodate any or all of above

Mr. Kearns made the following motion:

"The Commission hereby approves the Parks and Recreation Department to spend a sum, not to exceed \$4,000 to create conceptual drawings of alternative master plan configurations for the Parks and Recreation campus."

The motion was seconded by Barbara Dobbin and unanimously passed.



The Commission decided to put together a sub-committee made up of individuals from the Budget, Strategic and Buildings & Grounds sub-committees. David Thaxter, Barbara Dobbin and Phil Kearns volunteered to serve on the new sub-committee.

Mr. Kearns stated that he will follow up with the First Selectman regarding the status of the Recreation Center's parking lot expansion.

Mr. Kearns also asked for any changes in the current Commission sub-committee positions. All Commissioners were happy with their current committees and they will remain for an additional year.

Director's Report:

- Mr. Roche stated that the recent Chamber event, "Kids Fest" went well in spite of the weather conditions.
- Mr. Roche gave a summary on the recent decision to cancel the cross pond swim activity at Martin Park Beach due to safety reasons. There was a lengthy discussion regarding the activity and the safety issues. It was recommended to the Director by the lifeguard staff to cancel this activity due to the safety and liability issues. The Commission discussed this and agreed with the Director's and staff decision to cancel the activity. The Commission suggested that we review the safety procedure for the actual Triathlon race.
- The Director stated that he is working on the Strategic Plan looking at neighbouring YMCAs for their best practices and future programming. He will be visiting and interviewing their personnel in the near future.
- The Tiger Ridge project is moving along nicely with the outfield fencing installed today.
- The Director is working with the Social Services Director on some items, which will be covered under the sub-committee report.
- Mr. Roche is also working on the Sturges Park cabin project, which will also be covered under New Business.
- Mr. Roche is working with a committee to install lights in the Dog Park and fundraising has begun.

Assistant Director-Recreation:

Ms. Matthews reported that the recreation section has been very busy with events and planning for the summer activities. She reported:

- Summer Camp and Martin Park Beach staff orientations and training are moving along on time.
- RecTrac software upgrade was implemented staff training is on-going. We are finding just a few small issues with the new program. Ms. Matthews mentioned that Beth McKnight did a great job with the RecTrac training and set-up of the program.
- Martin Park Beach registrations are going well and the staff is preparing for opening on Memorial Day weekend.
- The early registration discount promotion for our Adventure Day Camp was a success, and many of the camp weeks are filled
- Staff is currently working on the fall season of programming.
- The fencing program is still soft, but Ms. Matthews feels that the program will grow.
- Some recent events included; Kids Fest, Run Like A Mother, and family fencing.
- The spin classes are beginning to pick up with higher participation.



Assistant Director-Parks:

Mr. Schneider reported:

- Work continues at Tiger Ridge; new fencing has been installed
- Crews busy with upcoming events; Memorial Parade, Main Street hanging plants, Martin Park Beach clean up and floats installations.
- Working with East Ridge Middle School principal to use tennis courts for Pickleball.
- Working on Sturges Park project with Friends of Parks and Recreation
- Working with High School Athletic Director on a transition with his new replacement.
- Hired new summer staff
- Working on Dog Park renovation with installation of wood chips and will repair fencing
- Work on replacement of sewer pipe at Governor Park
- Vehicle service work has been done by Highway Department and Parks and Rec mechanic will return within the next two weeks

Sub-Committee Reports:

Buildings & Grounds – David Thaxter

Mr. Thaxter mentioned that he had a discussion with Bob Alicia regarding the development of softball fields at the Recreation Center campus. Since the Commission is in the process of developing a Master Plan for the Recreation Center Campus, a potential to develop softball fields at the site will be studied in the plan. The Commission also discussed other potential field sites which include Veterans Park and East Ridge Recreation sites.

Aquatics & Programs –David Thaxter:

Mr. Thaxter mentioned that the hiring process for the Martin Park Beach lifeguards and gate guards is going nicely. Also, the hiring for the Spray Bay is going well and Joyce Dynia has hired a supervisor. Mr. Thaxter mentioned that birthday parties are increasing in popularity at the Spray Bay. Mr. Thaxter stated that the staff was thankful for the support with the cross pond swim decision.

Annual Goals & Marketing Plans:

Evie add your report please.

It was suggested that Ms. Cipolla and Ms. Bottali work on a linear chart comparing All - Inclusive Family memberships only on a month to month basis and track revenue numbers until the software system is completed.

The Commission discussed taking a pro-active approach with people of expired memberships. There was some discussion regarding a possible promotion to renew memberships on time. Ms. Bottali mentioned that the Martin Park Beach promotion was a great success with numbers higher than last year.

Budget & Policy-Phil Kearns:

Mr. Kearns covered above.

Special Services Issues – Barbara Dobbin:

Ms. Dobbin mentioned that Paul and Robin had visited the New Canaan YMCA with Tony Philips to look at their Special Needs program. The Department is studying our current programs. The Commission stated that the Department is doing some research with other Parks and Recreation Departments and local YMCAs for their input.

Strategic Plan-Gina Carey



Ms. Carey stated that the sub-committee would like to thank Phil Kearns for his help in organizing the Strategic Plan, and that by the end of May they will have the plan for the stakeholders that the committee wishes to meet and interview. The committee is looking for

support from the Commission for the one-on-one interviews when the questionnaire is put together.

Old Business:

Ms. Dobbin stated that the Director has been in touch with the Adams family and the Director has approved the wording for the signage.

New Business:

Mr. Kearns gave a summary of the Sturges Park Master Plan which includes the construction of a cabin along with other additions. Mr. Kearns is working with the Friends of Parks and Recreation and a committee to raise funds to construct a rough, (no plumbing, no bathrooms and little electricity) cabin at the site. David Thaxter will be Treasurer, along with members Don and Jim Sturges. The committee has raised three-quarters of the funding already and is well on the way. Mr. Kearns gave a summary of the details of the cabin and the proposed users groups. Mr. Kearns mentioned that the committee will be going to the various Town organizations for the needed approvals. The Commission had some questions regarding security for the cabin and Ms. Carey mentioned that the Danbury Girl Scout property has a great security system worth looking at for ideas.

A motion to adjourn was made by David Thaxter and seconded by Gina Carey at 9:15pm and go into executive session.

Executive session ended at 9:28pm.

*Minutes Approved: _____

Evie Bottali, Secretary