



**Town of Ridgefield Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes**  
**Tuesday, November 15, 2022 at 6:30 pm**  
**Meeting held via Zoom**  
**APPROVED**

**PRESENT:** P. Kearns, B. Dobbin, D. Shofi, K. Hulber, E. Bottali, P. Nichols, D. DiPinto, B. Schneider, E. Cipolla, A. Platt

**Guest:** Karen Sulzinsky

These minutes are a general summary of the meeting and are not intended to be a verbatim transcription. A recording of the meeting will be available for 45 days post: <https://www.ridgefieldparksandrec.org/about-parks-recreation/commission>

**Meeting called to order by Chair at 6:35 pm.**

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Barbara Dobbin made a motion to approve the agenda with the following modifications: Move New Business and Old Business before the Business Updates. Seconded by David Shofi. Motion carried 6-0.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion made by David Shofi to approve the October minutes. Seconded by Pete Nichols. Motion carried 6-0.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**1. Vote on FY2024 Capital Budget**

- Reviewed Capital Budget line items; Budget will be submitted to the First Selectman/BOS by end of November.
- Pete Nichols made a motion to approve Capital Budget as presented. Seconded by David Shofi. Motion carried 6-0.

**2. December Meeting Date**

- Due to a conflict with the Town Holiday Party, Commission agreed to keep the monthly Commission meeting on 12/13, but move the start time from 6:30pm to 1:00pm.

**OLD BUSINESS: [Continued at the end of the meeting]**

**Commission Committee Reorganization**

- During the October monthly meeting, Mr. Kearns shared proposed changes to the organization of the Committees and requested feedback from the Commission. Commission agreed with the changes as proposed.



## **BUSINESS UPDATES**

### **Chairman's Report – Phil Kearns**

Updates were covered under New and Old Business and will continue into the Committee reports. Mr. Kearns was involved in the new hire interviews.

### **Director's Report – Dennis DiPinto**

- Over the past month, worked closely with the Budget & Policy Committee, Eileen and Bob on the FY2024 Capital and Operating Budgets.
- Met with Bill Urban from Southport Engineering for review of HVAC plans at Barlow Mountain Pool.
- Met with members of the RAC board to discuss a possible Friends of Parks & Rec project that would involve locker room renovations and enhancements to the observation area at Barlow Mountain Pool.
- Participated in the annual Friends of Parks & Rec Commission meeting.
- Met with Town Highway Dept & Parks Outdoor Maintenance to review snow removal plans for this winter.
- Attended holiday tree lighting ceremony meeting with First Selectman and other Dept. heads.
- Attended monthly revenue meeting at Town Hall.
- Happy to announce we have hired a new Asst. Director of Program Operations who will start in early December. Amy emailed an announcement to staff and Commissioners.
- P&R participated in the annual RPD Trunk or Treat - was a great community event as always.

### **Financial Update – Eileen Cipolla**

- Eileen Cipolla provided the monthly financial report. Projected revenue is ahead of budget and expenses are on-target.

### **Assistant Director Parks Report –Bob Schneider**

- Fall sports are winding down and fall clean-up continues; Warning track at Ciuccolli field is nearing completion.
- Interviews will begin soon for the vacant park maintainer position.
- Main Street clock renovations are being estimated (town funds).
- Assisting Ridgefield Garden Club with a new garden on their property.
- Hot tub repairs at the Rec Center are currently being diagnosed with the help of a local spa expert.
- Gathering material samples for a new Rec Center gym floor with a projected install of February/March 2023.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **Marketing, Promotions & Membership – Evie Bottali**

Nothing new to report



**Aquatics & Programs** – Barbara Dobbin  
Nothing new to report

**Budget & Policy** – Phil Kearns

- Reviewed first round of the Operating budget this afternoon and expect a couple of more rounds before the Commission votes to approve on 12/13/22.

**Buildings & Grounds (B&G)** – David Shofi

- New native plant policy – Mr. Shofi reiterated the Committees hope that the impact on the Parks Outdoor plans won't be too wide-spread.
- Martin Park Pickleball courts – P&Z voted on 11/9/22 with respect to the P&R special permit application, and the special permit was denied. There is an appeal process if the committee so chooses. Mr. Shofi recognized Mr. Kearns, and the P&R staff, including Mr. DiPinto who worked long and hard to provide a solution, including a plan to mitigate sound with fencing and shrubbery.

**Special Services, Community Outreach and Customer Experience** – Phil Kearns provided update on behalf of Kim Hulber who left the meeting early. Nothing new to report.

**CONTINUATION OF OLD BUSINESS:**

**Native Plant Policy**

- Phil attended a BOS meeting to discuss the policy and provide input from P&R's perspective, including concern that the BOS didn't involve P&R in the policy discussion prior to their vote. Mr. Kearns also met with the Chair of the Conservation Commission, and the two agreed to put together a delegation of members from both Commissions to review the policy and appeal to the BOS. Following the BOS meeting, Mr. Kearns sent a letter to the BOS thanking them for allowing him to share his concerns. This letter was shared with the P&R Commission prior to the meeting and is Attachment B.

With no further business, Pete Nichols moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:06 pm. David Shofi seconded the motion and the motion carried 5-0.

**REMINDER:** Next meeting scheduled for Tuesday, 12/13 at an earlier start time of 1:00 pm via Zoom.



## ATTACHMENT A: Proposed FY2024 Capital Budget

### Ridgefield Parks and Recreation FY 2024 Capital Budget

	USE	YEAR 1 REQUESTED		YEAR 2		YEAR 3		YEAR 4		YEAR 5	
November 9th, 2022	LIFE	2023-2024	Year-VIN	2024-2025	Year-VIN	2025-2026	Year-VIN	2026-2027	Year-VIN	2027-2028	Year-VIN
Trucks; Grounds Maintenance											
Parks, Fields and Schools:											
Passenger Vehicles (Police Car trade In if available)	8-10	5,000	2013-8146(6RI)								
Trade											
3/4 Ton truck w/plow	8-10			41,000	2014-7753						
1 Ton Dump w/Plow	8-10	76,236	2013-0716			65,500	2010-2899				
Trade											
1 1/2 Ton Dump w/Plow, Sander	8-10							66,000	2017-8109		
MACK Dump (1999) (highway used)										20,000	1997-6777
Equipment; Grounds Maintenance											
Parks, Fields and Schools:											
Seeder	NEW	20,995									
Turf Tractors All (4)				50,000	2010			80,000	2015	80,500	2016
Toro 4000D											
Field Conditioners (3)				25,500	2004			26,000	2011	26,500	2012
Sprayer - 1						34,500	1997				
Top Dresser - 1						27,500	1998				
Sweeper - (2 )				45,000	2001-2006						
Leaf Loader						40,000	2005				
Mini Sidewalk Loader	10-12	83,485	2012								
Trade											
Field Renovator/Combinator - 1										50,000	
Back Hoe 310D											>
Truck and Equipment Total		185,716		161,500		167,500		172,000		177,000	
Maintenance and Repair of Town Assets											
ADA Compliance	15-20	30,000	ADA Spin/Row room	30,000		30,000		30,000		30,000	
		-15,000	SSF								
New Courts	NEW	32,000	Pickleball Site Engineering	200,000	PBall Courts TBD						
Courts Replacement/Repair	NEW	300,000	Gov. Pk Phase 2								
Courts Replacement/Repair	2-5	35,715	RHS Tennis			570,000	RHS T			20,000	MPE Pickleball
Barlow Pool Repairs											
Barlow Pool Bldg. Major Renovations						26,000	Engineering	412,000	renovations		
Parks, Fields and School Grounds Safety Improve.	15-20	69,408	Dog Park & Ballard Fence	20,000		20,000		20,000		20,000	
Recreation Center Building Renovations				225,000	Front RLR						
Recreation Center Parking Expansion*						306,694	Rec Ctr				
* may require additional capital for traffic controls											
Recreation Center Building Repairs	15-20	30,971	Oak 1,2,3	54,000	Painting Gym			150,000	Dividers		
Recreation Center Building HVAC	15-25	553,000	HVAC-RTU-Gym #4 & #7 COR's					185,000	HVAC-RTUW	185,000	HVAC-RTUW
Parks Safety	5-10	20,000	Rec & Ballard Camera	195,000	Ballard lights (15)						
Synthetic Turf Field E.R. Recreation Area Phase II										2,300,000	
RHS Track Resurface											
Richardson Park Improvements											
Maintenance and Repair of Town Assets Total		1,056,094		724,000		952,694		797,000		2,555,000	
Recreation, Replacements and Improvements											
Revenue Generating Areas											
Martin Park				300,000	Ballhouse	20,000		20,000		20,000	
Play Ground Replacement/Repair				250,000	REC CTR						
Yanity Building Maintenance/Repair	NEW	25,791	(4) bball backstops/AC Office	27,000	major floor resurface	50,000	bleachers			70,000	AC
		-5,000	RBA Contribution								
Aquatic Recreation Expansion/ Master plan Rec Ctr								35,000	Study		
Skate Park											
Recreation, Replacements and Improvements Total		20,791		577,000		70,000		55,000		90,000	
Grand Total		1,262,601		1,462,500		1,190,194		1,024,000		2,822,000	



## **ATTACHMENT B**

To: Board of Selectmen  
From: Phil Kearns, Chairman P&R Commission  
Subject: Follow-up Letter to BOS Meeting Native Species Policy Discussion  
Date: November 7, 2022  
cc: Dennis DiPinto, Jim Coyle, Amy Platt

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Board of Selectmen at the meeting on October 19, 2022. I appreciated the opportunity to provide input on behalf of the Parks and Recreation Commission on the process leading to the approval, and ultimately the adoption of the Native Species Policy by the Board of Selectmen.

The new policy does have significant impact on the Parks and Recreation Department (P&R) who is responsible for the largest area of planted and groomed town land. This includes nine schools, seven parks, multiple municipal buildings, and the land that surrounds them, including Town Hall, the Venus Municipal building, the Recreation Center/Founders Hall Campus and Governor Park.

I understand the decision not to solicit input from P&R was an oversight by the Conservation Commission and the Board of Selectmen, and I am pleased the Board of Selectmen has agreed to consider potential modifications to the new policy. I propose that the P&R Commission, and the Conservation Commission work jointly to offer the Board of Selectmen modifications to the policy for their approval. These would be agreed to and supported by both Commissions.

To this end, Conservation Commission Chairman Jim Coyle and I have already met informally to begin thinking about how we might approach this collaboration and we both anticipate moving forward on it in the near future.

Again, thank you for your time on the evening of October 19<sup>th</sup> and for agreeing to support this initiative.

Respectfully,  
Phil Kearns  
Chairman, Park and Recreation Commission