

Park and Recreation Commission

Minutes of the Meeting

June 8, 2022

Meeting called to order: Chairman Lewis called the meeting to order at 7:30pm

Commissioners in Attendance: Toby Lewis, Renee Powell, William Nowak, George Caye, James Hennessey, Genevieve Coursey

Also in Attendance: Molly Keays, John Caldwell, and Caitlin O'Neil

Approval of Minutes: Motion made by Commissioner Hennessey and seconded by Commissioner Powell to approve the May 11, 2022 minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Input: None present

Report of Council Liaison: None due to the absence of the liaison.

Report of the B of E Liaison: None due to the absence of the liaison.

Special Reports/Task:

7.1 Update on the Parks and Recreation Implementation Committee

Director of Parks and Recreation Molly Keays commented on an update for the Implementation Committee stating that little progress since the Parks and Rec Committee met last. Ms. Keays commented that they had retained Colliers to evaluation three different sites to review suitability for a Park and Recreation Center. Ms. Keays commented that the three sites in question are located at Nevers Road, Old Orchard Hill and the Priests property. Once Colliers has completed their study of the sites, the Committee will then review and give a recommendation to the Town Council. Ms. Keays commented that the Implementation Committee would be meeting on Monday, June 13th to meet with Colliers to discuss scope of the project and review the needs for Parks and Recreation. Chairman Lewis questioned if the sites being reviewed are for a short term solution or a long term solution. Ms. Keays responded that they are looking to find a long term solution/facility. Adding that in the meantime, they would be working with the Town Manager to determine a short term solution. Chairman Lewis asked for additional questions from the Commission. Commissioner Nowak questioned the time frame for a new Parks and Recreation Center. Molly Keays responded that they are hopeful to be in a new facility in four years. Commissioner Hennessey commented that he read that L.A Fitness/Esporta would be closing and questioned if this site was being considered. Ms. Keays responded that she would be this site up to the Committee.

7.2 PARC Meeting location and recording status

Commissioner Caye motioned to move the Parks and Recreation Commission meetings back to Wapping School. He added that he understood the issue with needing to be recorder and commented that he felt this could still be achieved at Wapping School. Commissioner Hennessey questioned if there was an ordinance that required them to be recorded live. Chairman Lewis commented that due to COVID they needed to be live but did not think that was the case any longer. Molly Keays commented that she would just need to receive approval from the Mayor and Town Council, however, since many other Commissions do not require their meetings to be live and as long as they audio record the meetings, this should be fine. Commissioner Nowak commented that he felt Wapping would be the best location for the Commission as it is the center of the Parks and Recreation in South Windsor. Commission Hennessey questioned if there would be enough room at this site. Chairman Lewis responded that there is enough room and it was also where the Commission held their meetings for many years. Chairman Lewis called the motion and the motion passed unanimously. Chairman Lewis commented that he would draft a letter to the Mayor with the request.

OSTF: George Caye reported there was not an Open Space Task Force meeting in June.

Report of Parks and Rec. Director: Molly Keays, Director of Parks and Recreation, provided updates on the following:

- The official start of Parks and Recs busy season, excited to have summer camps, programs and events.
- Outdoor projects, such as the pickleball court would be covered in more detail by John Caldwell.
- Approved for the upgrade of lights at Rye Street Park.
- Programs update: preschool would be ending this week and they had an almost full session. Ms. Keays commented that they were able to have an end of the year pool party, which was well attended. 4th R had a

lottery on May 14th, went back to full capacity for the upcoming school year. Ms. Keays commented on the challenge in finding enough staffing. Currently looking into new retention methods for staff. Ms. Keays added that they are excited to go back to full capacity for 4th R and they have a 98% retention rate. 4th R also had their end of the year pool party recently.

- Preseason events at the pool included preschool and 4th R pool parties, pool parties hosted by the elementary schools, and Boy Scouts swim test.
- New and returning items in terms of athletics: badminton returning, youth cricket had a clinic on May 14 with approximately 20 participants. Ms. Keays commented that there would be another cricket clinic at the end of June and a youth cricket league would start in the fall. An adults cornhole league began last week with 11 teams. Adult softball returned and is still a popular program. Wrapping up yoga, which runs indoors during the school year and now with summer beginning it will transition to outdoor joga which focuses more on the social aspect.
- The farmers market had its kick off this past weekend with approximately 1,250 attendees for opening day. Molly Keays commented that they received a great deal of positive feedback and many vendors sold out.
- Chairman Lewis questioned if the farmers market would be held this weekend with the Strawberry Festival occurring. Molly Keays commented that both events would take place together.
- Recently held a lifeguarding class and most who attended are now employed with South Windsor and the pool is now fully staffed with lifeguards, however, looking to fill other positions at the pool. Commissioner Hennessey commented that the State of Connecticut had to raise wage scale for lifeguards and questioned if South Windsor was going to do the same. Molly Keays responded that they would be discussing this, currently having a difficult time finding staff for many positions in the town.
- Summer camp is full and on a wait list.
- Lastly, they received \$100,000 in funding to create an outdoor fitness space. Working with a company to purchase this equipment and the Parks Department would be installing.
- Also, looking to work on a building a splash pad, which is slated to be completed in 2023. Funding had been secured through the town and fundraising.

Commissioner Caye questioned if the fitness space would be located at Nevers Park. Molly Keays commented that it would be located throughout near the trail at Nevers Park near the rotary baseball field. John Caldwell commented that it would be on the foul side of the right field fence. Mr. Caldwell added that the Parks Department must install this equipment. Mr. Caldwell discussed the flooring for the outdoor fitness center, which is going to be rather expensive. The soft rubber that they are looking into costs approximately \$80,000 and added that they are looking into other options.

John Caldwell, Superintendent of Parks, provided updates on the following:

- Commissioner Nowak questioned the maintenance for the pool. John Caldwell commented that the pool is getting old, and they did have some serious problems this year. However, the pool still looks good and the Parks Department has worked hard to maintain it.
- Commissioner Nowak questioned if the future Recreation Center they are looking to build would have a pool. Molly Keays commented yes, they are looking to include an indoor pool in a future Recreation Center. Chairman Lewis questioned if the VMP site would be a good fit for a Recreation Center. Both John Caldwell and Molly Keays commented that they did not think this site would be large enough. Commissioner Nowak commented that Molly Keays did a nice job with funding the department. He then questioned how the pool fund was looking. Ms. Keays commented that the pool is more of an amenity for the town and the pool does not generally generate revenue for the department. With that said, the staff for Parks and Recreation has done a good job by bringing revenue in through concessions and renting the pool to other organizations and for birthday parties. They do not anticipate making significant amount of money but will have a better idea of revenue in the fall. Ms. Keays commented on additional fitness classes being added to the pool that may generate some money as well. Commissioner Nowak questioned if there was a visitor fee. John Caldwell commented the fee for a non-resident is double than the amount for a resident. Mr. Caldwell commented that with the removal of grills, the pool does not get shut down as frequently because of illness. Molly Keays added that they did lose revenue from big storm at the end of the summer last year.
- John Caldwell commented on the upcoming busy weekend with the farmers market, lacrosse tournament at Rye Street Park, and the Strawberry Festival.
- The fire pit for veterans was completed recently at VMP.
- Parking on Ellington Road is almost complete
- Gardens are established and a large amount of compost was used.
- Little league had opening day with a large turnout.

- Mr. Caldwell commented that the Priests property took a hit about two years ago after a storm and the department, along with the Environmental Club out of the high school, has begun planting new trees on the property.
- Trees lost at Rye Street Park and the department cleaned up an area by the pond and regraded and reseeded it and installed the fence railing.
- There was testing the previous night for Maintainer I position. They had 47 applicants of that 27 showed up. Mr. Caldwell commented that it has been difficult to find workers and surrounding towns are having the same issue as well.
- Rye Street field has recently been finished.
- John Caldwell thanked Commissioner Caye on finding affordable disk golf baskets, which would have a home and be installed soon at Lawrence Road Park and maybe some other locations. Looking forward to offer these to the public and hoping to open up a disk golf league.
- Mr. Caldwell added that his crew has been working very hard and have been doing work to the Buckland Road islands.
- Commissioner Nowak commented about the sidewalks recently built in town on Pleasant Valley Road and Clark Street and questioned what other areas will sidewalks be added. Molly Keays suggested Commissioner Nowak to contact Director of Planning Michele Lipe for more information on sidewalks being built in town.

Other Business:

SWW&WW:

Meeting adjourned at 8:01 pm – motion made by Commission Hennessey and seconded by Commissioner Caye passed unanimously.

Next Meeting: July 13, 2022

Respectfully Submitted –

Caitlin O'Neil