

Park and Recreation Commission

Minutes of the Meeting

May 11, 2022

Meeting called to order: 7:30pm

Commissioners in Attendance: George Caye, Srinivasa Chalikonda, Genevieve Coursey, James Hennessey, Michael Kelly, Toby Lewis, Renee Powell, and Miguel Proano

Also in Attendance: Molly Keays, John Caldwell, and Janet Huot

Approval of Minutes: Motion made by Michael Kelly and seconded by Renee Powell to approve the April 13, 2022 minutes. 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/Tasks: Molly Keays, Director of Parks and Recreation, provided updates on the Parks and Recreation Implementation Committee;

- The committee has met several times. The last meeting was Monday, May 9, 2022. As previously mentioned, they have identified a few sites for the potential Parks & Rec facility. Colliers will be performing test fits to see if any of the locations are viable for them. After the test fits, the committee will engage the community. The committee will be touring other CT facilities that are similar to what we are looking for recreation.
- Molly answered various questions. There is no official timeline to complete this project, but the hope is that the community can be engaged by summer. This project should not be rushed. July 1, 2023 is the official date to be out of the Wapping building. The committee is considering the old Orchard Hill School as a swing space to be shared with Building Maintenance, but the goal is to find a permanent solution. The total is still being worked out for the 60,000-90,000 sq.ft. facility be planned for the gym/aquatic space. Colliers will map out the pricing. The committee is leaning toward not doing project phases at this time.

OSTF: John Caldwell reported that there was not a lot of discussion at the last meeting. A memorial bench will be added for a young woman who passed away. The committee also went over the master plan and some of the key locations, and added a couple new locations. They looked at the map to target properties that the committee would be interested in if they came up for sale, or to let the owners know they are interested in purchasing in the future.

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

- For the first time, in a long time, there are no Covid protocols in place. They are monitoring the situation with the department of health.
- The cross-town trail has made some progress. Eversource got back to them regarding their findings. Some findings are not favorable. Molly met with Barton & Loguidice last week to discuss their findings. They will prioritize the high value town properties where the trails can be built and constructed. We will then go back to Eversource to see if we can negotiate the corridors with them. We will then apply for more grants for some shovel ready projects.
- At this point, Parks is moving forward with the pickle ball courts, and holding off on the deck hockey due to funding. The cost of materials and labor have gone up significantly. The courts will be completed to the highest standards. They will be utilizing post-tension concrete which is superior to the proposed bituminous concrete. The courts should be completed by mid-summer.
- The upcoming Capital Projects were all passed, and funding of \$200,000 has been awarded for the masterplan implementation. They will be working on that as of July 1, 2022.
- Summer programs are filling or full. Summer staff has been hired.
- The egg hunt was very successful.
- April vacation camp was brought back for a few days this year.
- Pre-school is thriving. Session C had 60 out of 70 slots filled and Session D is full.

- The 4th “R” public registration lottery will be held on Saturday, May 14, 2022. This will be brought back up to 100% capacity. They will need a lot more staff.
- Athletics are going very well, and there has been very little rain.
- The Farmers’ Market will be resuming on June 4, 2022. Over 35 vendors will be there. Traffic will be handled during the Strawberry Fest. Only produce vendors will be there that day.
- VMP will be opening up for Memorial Day weekend.
- The budget was passed on Monday, May 9, 2022. The special revenue fund was adopted with expenditures totaling \$2,719,058.
- A question was raised regarding the life expectancy of the pool at VMP. John commented that life expectancy is a guess at this point. The pool will potentially be another referendum. The engineers took a look at it, and their conclusion is that the ground that the pool is sitting on is settling slightly. There are some ways to make repairs, but repairs will be costly. Nothing urgent needs to be done. The pools are safe.
- Revenue for Recreation is posted after July 1st which places it in the next fiscal year. We have recouped some revenue and have had a couple hundred thousand paid in the last month or so, through user fees, etc. The majority will go into the next revenue year.

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

- Jen Filer and John gave a report to the council regarding the Monarch Butterfly and how important they are to the environment. Mayor Pendleton gave the Monarch Butterfly Pledge. There are currently three butterfly gardens currently in our community and they plan on expanding that. Parks never mows the large open spaces until the second frost to help the bees and butterflies. The butterflies really like Milkweed which is \$250 for 8oz of seed.
- The Community Gardens are ready to go. Dave Turkington had information stations built at the community gardens using repurposed wood. There will be a seed and plant exchange area on the info station.
- His crew built a fire pit behind VMP for the Patriotic Commission for their flag burning ceremony.
- The pools are being filled. No big algae issues. They will be ready to go.
- New signs have been placed at Avery Gardens, the one at Deming Gardens, the Farmers’ Market sign is ready to be placed, and the Porter Hill sign has been revamped to make it more aesthetically pleasing. These signs now have a similar look.
- As said before, the pickle ball courts will be built. The post-tension concrete is a superior product. There will be two courts, and may have a sidewalk between them. May not have money for the lighting. He would still like to have the deck hockey, and believes that his crew might be able to do the build. Waiting for final pricing from contractor.
- John spoke of how proud he is of his 12 guys. They are working hard and getting a lot done. Parks is starting to concentrate on mowing.
- Question was raised regarding the proper way to dispose of flags. John spoke of the boxes around town (one at Town Hall, the Town Garage, Wapping, etc.). The Patriotic Commission picks them up each year and has a ceremony. They will be able to test out their new fire pit behind VMP.
- Question was raised regarding the splash pad. Molly said the Rotary Club will be holding a fundraiser, and funds will be raised. No other progress. This will not be for summer.
- Genevieve read a letter thanking the Parks and Rec for their support to the Girl Scout campout that was supposed to occur on May 6, 2022 up near Pavilion at VMP. It was rained out, but they were grateful for the support. They look forward to rescheduling another in the fall. The scouts donated cookies to them.

Other Business: None

SWW&WW: (See Molly’s second bullet point above.)

Meeting adjourned at 8:05pm– motion made by Miguel Proano and seconded by George Caye. Passed unanimously.

Next Meeting: June 8, 2022

Respectfully Submitted by Janet Huot (Filling in for Kerry Macchi)