

Park and Recreation Commission

Minutes of the Meeting

September 14, 2022

Meeting called to order: Chairman Lewis called the meeting to order at 7:31P.M.

Commissioners in Attendance: Toby Lewis, James Hennessey, Michael Kelly, William Nowak, Renee Powell, Miguel Proano, Dan Rezende, Erica Evans.

Also in Attendance: Molly Keays, John Caldwell and Leah Margelony

Approval of Minutes: Motion made by Vice Chair Michael Kelly and seconded by Commissioner James Hennessey to approve the June 8, 2022 minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Input:

Girl Scouts Jordin Foran and Hamnah Siddiqui from Troop 10943 presented a proposal for a Park and Campground at 491 King Street for their Girl Scout Silver Award. The Scouts shared a survey through social media, contacting Girl and Boy Scout Leaders and running a booth at the Farmer's Market – hearing back from over 100 families. There was public interest in utilizing this open space for kayaking, canoeing, paddle-boarding and swimming. The survey reported high interest in a dock, sandy beach by the lake, flushable toilets, walking trails, and water access. There was interest from survey responses in community contributions such as other Girl and Boy Scout Troops who would take on projects as their Gold Awards and Eagle Scout Awards. The scouts discussed their requests for gates on the property for security measures. Those who participated in the survey said they would be willing to pay \$50-\$100 a night/day for rental of a pavilion during the day or to rent sites overnight. Revenue would be generated through these reservations.

Jisha from Benedict Drive represented a group of residents in town that play Throw Ball, a popular sport in India. What started as a backyard recreational activity, has grown into 100 women traveling for tournaments. This year they are traveling to North Carolina to play in the National Tournament. The request from residents who participate in Throw Ball is to have an indoor space and league for the Fall and Winter. Vice Chair Kelly asked what type of equipment would need to be purchased. Jisha replied it is the same as volleyball, the dimensions are slightly different. They could play and practice on a volleyball court.

Report of Council Liaison: Liaison Erica Evans thanked Ms. Keays and Mr. Caldwell for their hard work this summer through the programs, pool and parks. Liaison Evans noted that they did a great job keeping up with their crews and staff and everything that is offered to the community. Liaison Evans added that Throwball is a great sport, has slightly different rules than Volleyball and is a high energy fun sport. There were no questions for the council from the commission.

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

Special Reports/Tasks: No report.

OSTF: Mr. Caldwell reported on the Open Space Task Force meeting on Monday, September 12th. Discussed current properties, open spaces and issues with trees in those spaces. Mr. Caldwell reported there was a vote on chairman positions and everyone remained in their current position. The council has talked about the Raymond and Burden property on Main Street with funding to continue to keep

development rights and preserve the land. Vice Chair Kelly asked Mr. Caldwell and Liaison Evans if there is any motion to look at the LA Fitness facility that is going out of business. Liaison Evans spoke on behalf of the commission that it is something considered, but one of many factors that Ms. Keays will be going into depth about.

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

- The end of Parks and Recreation summer season such as Summer Camp that served 1,873 campers this summer. 300+ people each week attended the Summer Concert Series. ABCD Awards that went to three staff and the South Windsor Moms Club. VMP had 1,600 pool pass holders and hosted aqua fitness classes, lessons, swim teams and other events. Family Camp Out at Rye Street had 14 families attend. 3 Friday Flicks at Evergreen with a great turn out with the possibility for a Fall Flick. Specialty camps served 444 youth in sports, cooking and theater. Adult softball had 9 teams registered. First Cornhole League held at the Nevers Park Pavilion.
- Farmers Market continues through to the Fall with double the number of vendors and educational components through PoP (Power of Produce). Vice Chair Kelly asked if the Farmer's Market will be going indoors after October 8th. Ms. Keays reported there will be a Winter Market in November and December, dates are being worked on now.
- Fall registration was on August 21st and had 3,756 registrations for fall programs and activities. Preschool is almost full with over 200 friends participating in the first session.
- ARPA: were awarded \$100,000 to create an outdoor fitness space at Nevers Park. As well, received a donation from Max Challenge from Day of Giving to help aid in the completion of the project. Equipment was received 3 weeks ago. There is a plan in process for construction.
- Staff changes including; two Recreation Supervisor positions opening up as well as the Administrative Secretary Position. Two new Recreation Supervisors started September 12th along with the promotion of the Customer Service Clerk to the Administrative Secretary Position. The Customer Service Clerk position remains open until September 23rd and the Athletic Recreation Supervisor position will close September 16th.
- Commissioner Proano added a comment and shout-out to Ms. Keays and her team for a great job this summer with the staffing challenges and all of the activities going on. Thanked them for maintaining recreation and activities for the adults and kids in town.

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

- The Parks crew did a great job this summer and the summer help has gone back to college.
- The Rising Star Program at the Community Center with Andrea finished up their project at Rye Street Playground that needed 60 yards of certified playground mulch that they spread by hand, shovels and wheelbarrow, they did a great job.
- Buckland Islands had beatification changes done at the ends of each island with Jumbo Belgium Block, planters and new plants. Irrigation was updated with the help of Fournier Irrigation.
- Bronze statue dedication at the Library installed by the Parks Crew, along with a paver walkway and plans to in-set a plaque into the walkway.
- Added 3 new memorial trees to town and 2 memorial benches.
- Plans to work on COVID memorial at the end of this month. Home Depot provided all of the material needed for the memorial as well as a few volunteers to work with the Parks Crew. D'Agata & Perry will supply a Granite inlay in the pavers as well as a 6-foot marker rule made of Granite.
- Regular maintenance on the sports field. 300+ feet of line paint used each week.
- Pickleball ball courts are coming out great, courts will be painted dark blue, blue and green. 8 courts will be available with a 5-foot sidewalk along the length of the courts. 360 feet of

concrete border around the fence with a 12-inch wide wall that goes from the edge of the courts past the fence to avoid weed-whacking that area. There is a possibility the courts will be ready for a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the beginning part of October.

- Rye Street had a car that drove out on the Premiere Lit Field and did donuts with their vehicle. Extensive damage done to the field. The Parks crew tried to fix it as best they could. The teams will be able to play, however there will be dirt patches throughout the field. Police took reports and are gathering video footage.
- Vice Chair Kelly inquired with Mr. Caldwell if Football and Lacrosse are on that field that was damaged. Mr. Caldwell clarified for right now the field is Soccer and Football, however Lacrosse and Softball also use that field in other seasons.
- Vice Chair Kelly inquired about Deck Hockey with Mr. Caldwell, to which he commented that because we invested in the pickleball courts we've made this project a two-part phase. First phase being Pickleball and second phase being Deck Hockey. Due to this investment in the post tension concrete of the courts there is a 20-year warranty against cracking.

Discussion Topics: Vice Chair Kelly brought up the King Street properties, and that it would be good to have use of this parcel of land. Ms. Keays mentioned that they would like to use that property. Mr. Caldwell added that the King Street property is a hidden gem. The Parks Crew did some clearing of trees that had fallen and they will be defining the parking lot.

Vice Chair Kelly looked to Ms. Keays in regards to fitting Throw Ball into an indoor space in early October possibly in Wapping as other schools are booked with Basketball and Volleyball. Vice Chair Kelly asked Jisha if they were looking for a "home field" like Wapping to host games, which was confirmed as to what they are looking for.

Update on Parks and Recreation Implementation Committee: Chairman Lewis asked how much time we have left with the use of Wapping. Ms. Keays explained that we will have use of the gym after school hours, however, will be completely out of the facility by June. The committee is looking into next steps for the transition out of the facility. Early Spring is when some programs and admin staff will be moving as it will take time. Location has not been approved by the council yet, however staff and preschool when they are finished for the season will move over to the new facility. The committee is working to find a solution. Colliers has done a study on building brand new at Nevers Park and Old Orchard Hill. Construction costs are high due to many factors which may cause disagreement on a solution. The past meeting discussed the cost of a new build, and renovating the Old Orchard Facility to be compliant with ADA and up to code with the Fire Marshall. Third option would look at purchasing the L.A. Fitness facility and renovating the Old Orchard Hill Space as there would be a need to split the program since L.A. Fitness meets physical Recreation in regards to the indoor space needed. However, administrative offices, camp, preschool and community rooms have no room at the L.A. Fitness location. The committee will hold a special meeting next week to speak about which plans they want to move forward with. Colliers will do a community presentation for public input. Staff and intended user groups will speak on behalf of their programs and why they need intended space.

Annual Elections of officer and by-laws: Chairman Lewis explained there are elections every 2 years for Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary. Vice Chair Kelly nominated Toby Lewis, as Chair. Commissioner Proano second that nomination. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Lewis made a motion for Mike Kelly to serve as Vice Chair. Commissioner Nowak second the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Hennessey will discuss with Secretary Coursey if she will be returning as Secretary. Motion seconded by Vice Chair Kelly. The motion passed unanimously.

Other Business: Commissioner Hennessey had a follow up question for Ms. Keays with what the plan is for community groups past December for renting rooms. Ms. Keays explained that rentals at Wapping will conclude in December due to a few factors including the uncertainty of where or when the department will be phasing out of the current facility. Ms. Keays is hopeful that there will be community rooms available in the new facility; they will make sure that space, if available, is ready for those groups. Liaison Evans reflected on the minutes from last meetings to add that the Town Council is looking into options for mobile recording so that commissions could pick up a kit and record in another location. Recording is required; however, this will give an option to go elsewhere such as Wapping or a Park as Liaison Evans explained. Vice Chair Kelly inquired about how snow is handled on the courts in the winter months. Mr. Caldwell stated that the courts are closed in the winter.

Meeting adjourned at 8:20 P.M. motion made by Commissioner Hennessey and seconded by Commissioner Powell. Passed unanimously.

Next Meeting: October 12, 2022

Respectfully Submitted –

Leah Margelony