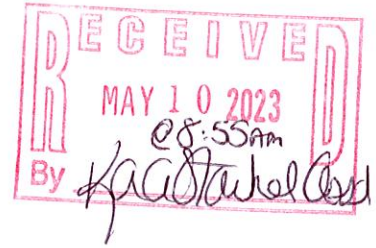


Park and Recreation Commission

Minutes of the Meeting

April 12, 2023



Meeting called to order: Chairman Lewis called the meeting to order at 7:30 P.M.

Commissioners in Attendance: Toby Lewis, George Caye, Genevieve Coursey, James Hennessey, Renee Powell, Srinivasa Chalikonda, Mitchell Marks, Michael Kelly, and Kristen Kozikowski

Commissioners Absent: Miguel Proano

Also in Attendance: Molly Keays, Erica Evans, and Tersee Flores.

Approval of Minutes: Motion made by Commissioner Hennessy and seconded by Commissioner Kelly to approve the February 8th minutes. Motion passed by majority.

Public Input: None present

Report of Council Liaison: Council Liaison Evans reported on the budget meeting that took place on April 11th and how pleased they were to hear Molly Keays, Director of Parks and Recreation report.

Report of the BOE Liaison: Molly Keays, Director of Parks and Recreation mentioned Beth Esstman is the new liaison who will attend next month meeting.

Special Reports/Task: No special reports/tasks.

OSTF: Commissioner Caye reported that there was no meeting this month however, they did present there updated master plan to Town Council on April 3rd.

Report of Parks and Rec. Director: Molly Keays, Director of Parks and Recreation, took a moment to acknowledge the passing of former Commission member Dan Rezende who passed away on March 27th surrounded by family. He was a longtime SWPRD advocate, a selfless champion for the South Windsor Parks and Recreation Department. He served on the committee for almost 20 years, and was a key player in many notable improvements and accomplishments for the department. He was a founding member of the South Windsor Parks and Recreation Monday Night Social Club. Keays, expressed the department was better for having known Dan, and grateful to have shared in his kind, caring spirit and his passion for quality recreation experiences for all. Keays mentioned they are really honored in continuing to provide Monday night social club to the community and put Dan's good work forward. They hired someone to run the Monday night social club. One of the goals is to expand our inclusive programming.

Director Keays provided updates on the following:

- South Windsor Walk and Wheel Ways Committee is gearing up with the 4th grade bike program which is taking place in April and May. In June they will be hosting several bike workshops, learn to ride events, and Monday Walks. In addition Keays announced they are starting a teen cycling club for middle and high school students. They currently have 15 students signed up. Keays mentioned they are going to have 3 to 4 rides this summer and also provide bike maintenance and safety.
- The crew continues to work at the Old Orchard Hill site doing a lot of cleaning and painting inside in addition to, removing and replacing rotten texture wall on the old portables.
- The Splash Pad passed both Planning & Zoning & the WPCA this month and they are hoping to break ground within the next few weeks.
- The athletic fields at Rye Street Park and Nevers are being marked out and line painting has started. The baseball and softball fields have also been prepped for upcoming games at the start of April.
- On May 1st at 3:30 PM there will be a ribbon cutting ceremony for the COVID Memorial at Mayor Michael Donnelly. Jennie Tetreault will send out an invite to all commissioners.
- This season the youth basketball league served 450 youth. In addition, the girls did a jamboree at TEMS with the towns of Somers and Ellington as the numbers were lower for participation. Keays expressed her thank you to all volunteers, and coaches for their dedication.
- The Might Mites program served 150 youth between the ages of 5-8 which allowed them to learn the sport of basketball. Keays mentioned they are hoping to offer two sessions next year as the program is growing.
- Open gym opportunities were offered for the residents to play pickle ball, volleyball, and throw ball while getting the residents to stay active during winter months.
- Monday Night Social Club and the SW Youth and Family Services' Teen Center hosted a special fundraiser BINGO event for the Down Syndrome Association of Connecticut on March 20th in honor of World Down Syndrome Day on March 21st. There were 35 participants and raised \$81 for DSACT to use toward their future outreach programs.
- Fishing Derby took place on April 1st. There was 125 people who attended and despite the weather everyone enjoyed the event. Keays thanked the Wapping Fair for sponsoring the event.
- Easter egg hunt was held on Friday, April 7th at the High School Turf. In addition, a kid's fair in conjunction with the event was sponsored by the Women's Club, donations were made for the South Windsor Food and Fuel Bank.
- Spring and Summer Registration for residents occurred on Wednesday, April 5th and they received 4059 registrations. The sought-after brochure were mailed out, Keays noted the brochure is created in house and the team worked diligently on the brochure.

- Parks and Recreation Sub-Committee met on Monday, March 27th to discuss ways to engage the community. Keays reminded the commissioners of several events to educate the community and invited commission members to attend those.

Chairman Lewis presented a question regarding status of the waiting list.

Keays reported it varies on the program, she discussed in terms of duplicates the staff has been working with every single individual program, checking for duplicates in hopes by the end of this week they would have all removed from the list. The goal is to not have a waiting list or at least less than 50 individuals.

- Keays announced new staff positions which consist of Nathan Foley, Recreation Supervisor who oversees the aquatics and other various contracts. Jennie Tetreault, Administrative Secretary former market manager and preschool teacher. Sofia Kopp, Customer Service Clerk. She mentioned they are currently hiring for the 4th R program and looking at new ways to recruit and retain staff. They only had nine vacancies for summer camp this year and all positions were filled. There were 54 returning to VMP, and currently hiring for less than twenty positions, including substitute guards.
- Shauna Damon the Inclusion and Special Events Recreation Programmer hired four individuals who will just be assisting with events throughout the year.
- CIP 2023-2024 Capital Projects that were presented to the Town Council on Tuesday, April 11th consisting of a new pool cover to replace the one purchased in 2002 and bringing utilities to the John J. Mitchell Fairgrounds to create an event space. Keays highlighted on how well the staff has been doing and gave a break down on the budget for each individual lane.
- Keays expressed how they are continuing to enhance their inclusion policies and programming by adding a few of the new programs listed in the brochure, revisiting the policies, creating more accessible opportunities within the spaces and working with other community partners to offer more services.

Commissioner Coursey asked and made questions regarding the summer programs, if they are still being hosted at Orchard Hill, are there any analysis being done regarding spots added to the programming to accommodate as many kids? Is there any analysis as to how the old Orchard Hill site will hinder or what the difference will be if still at Wapping. Has the Park and Recreation Department looked into before and after care for the elementary school in relation to the schedule changes?

Keays reported that is correct they are starting to move the Administrative base at the end of April and finalize the preschool base by the end of June to be fully operational out of Orchard Hill. She added there is minimal space in terms of rooms, the portables are not in the best condition and until they can evaluate how much it will cost to clean and determine if they are safe to use, they will not be utilized.

Keays discussed working with the BOE to request permission to utilize the new Orchard Hill this summer for few additional spaces. In addition, Keays discussed working together with the BOE and analyze the needs versus the wants. She mentioned they are looking into how they can expand the program, enrichment programs to offset the after school. She is more concern about the before school care. On May 6th technically is when the lottery is supposed to start even though the pre-registration is not completed.

Commissioner Marks discussed the Christian base events in the Recreation department and asked whether they are thinking of expanding opportunities to other religion to approach the inclusivity goal.

Keays expressed they are planning to, they are approaching things as they come up in addition, looking for suggestions from the community

Council Liaison Erica Evans welcomed Commissioner Mitchell Marks. Evans requested information regarding open gym and how we can make the information more accessible. She expressed how excited she is about the increased inclusive program and shared her thoughts referencing a new program created and naming it after Mr. Rezende.

Chairperson Toby requested Keays insight on how the board members can be more helpful.

Keays mentioned the sub committees met two weeks ago and discussed the importance of community engagement, to understand what the community wants and need from recreation. There are several events highlighted which consist of Park and Recreation in general along with the park monthly meetings and adding a couple of community forums in the senior center coffee shop and as requested by the commission Jenny created signup sheets for commissioners to get involved.

Commissioner Hennessey requested the sign-up sheet created electronically.

Chairperson Toby discussed the availability of the Madden Room as he learned it has video capabilities, and requested from the board if they prefer to meet in the Madden Room instead of Council Chambers.

Motion to: move all meetings for the 2024 year to the Madden Room.

Was made by: Commissioner Caye

Second by: Commissioner Kelly

The motion: Carried

Vote: Yea – Caye, Coursey, Kelly, Lewis, Powell, Kozikowski

1 Nay – Hennessey

2 Abstain – Chalikonda, Marks

Discussion Topics

Master Plan: The subcommittee

Commissioner Coursey discussed committee reports and community events, expressed how they are trying to come up with creative ways to get the word out.

Vice-Chairperson Kelly expressed working with Park and Rec staff who are part of the sub-committee, they were able to come up with good ideas and he commended the staff for their creativity.

Commissioner Coursey shared the end goal is to find out exactly what the community needs from Park and Rec so that we can provide a facility that meets the needs and goals of everyone in the community

Other Business: Commission Involvement in Upcoming events

Commissioner Coursey shared the National Recreation and Park association has declared July as Park and Rec month and the association has a great website and tool box on how Parks and Rec department can get the word out and how to get the community involved.

Motion to: for our Town Council Liaison Erica Evans to present the information to the council so that a proclamation may be created and declare July as Park and Recreation month in South Windsor.

Was made by: Commissioner Coursey

Second by: Commissioner Caye

The motion: Carried

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 P.M. A motion made by Commissioner Kelly and seconded by Commissioner Hennessey. Motion passed unanimously.

Next Meeting: May 10, 2023

Respectfully Submitted

Tersee Flores, Recording Secretary