

Park and Recreation Commission

Minutes of the Meeting

October 12, 2022

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

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

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 September 14, 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: No special reports/tasks.

OSTF: No report.

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

- Basketball had its own registration on Wednesday September 8th - aside from the Winter/Spring brochure registration in August. 400+ youth already registered. With this increase in youth wanting to play basketball - hoping to add a new-higher-level league of basketball to the program.
- Farmers Market had its last market last Saturday. Few weeks off then the Winter Market will be at Wapping for 3 weeks. Jennie Tetreault did fantastic; doubled the vendors from last year, high attendance each week, did great with the Power of Produce program, encouraging and advertising to shop local. SWHS Band had 144 students perform.
- The Community Band had their make-up concert Thursday September 15th at Evergreen by Ben & Jerry's
- 150 attendees gathered at Evergreen Walk for an outdoor screening of Hocus Pocus.
- 4th "R" has 230 children currently enrolled in the program for Before and After School. Vacation days are back, and there is a family night coming up for the 4th "R" program.
- Preschool is 100% full for parent child classes and 80% full for 2-year-old + classes.
- Upcoming fall events; Pumpkin Roll at Porters Hill Friday October 14th. Next Saturday October 22nd 12-4:30 - Halloween Hullabaloo at Wapping.
- ARPA funding; \$100k through DEEP to conduct a study from Vibert Road to the Property owned by the Town (220 Scantic Road) to clean up river and transform into a linear park
- Splash Pad anticipated for Summer 2023.
- Hired an Athletics Recreation Supervisor, Michael Wieliczka, who comes with years of non-profit and recreation experience. The Customer Service Clerk position will be filled by early November.

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

- Parks Department is up to full staff, 12 employees and one part time staff.
- Wapping Fair, Football Jamboree and Apple Festival have all come to an end for the fair and festival season.
- Damage at Rye Street has been repaired and cameras have been installed for better coverage of the fields and parking lot.
- 1355 Ellington parking lot addition to Wapping Park is complete.
- COVID Memorial paver-ed portion is complete and benches have been installed. Home Depot is supplying two Magnolia Trees. Waiting on granite portion towards the end of this month.
- Pool wrap up roundtable with other towns including; Bloomfield, Manchester, Newington, Glastonbury, East Hartford and Wethersfield. Opportunity to share ideas and operation information. Other towns were impressed by the teamwork and collaboration between Parks and Recreation, Pollution Control and Building Maintenance in South Windsor.
- Started aggressive aeration and over seeding program to help establish new growth and control weed pressure so they are able to cut back on the use of pesticides.

- Pickleball will have a ribbon cutting ceremony on October 24th at 10 A.M. Stayed on budget while adding a 4-5-foot cement area that runs off to a catch basin off the court to feed rain water to the brook down below. Handicap ramps being installed at the entrances. Looking to create permanent handicap parking closer to the pickleball courts.
- Parks crew works with Public Works for the fall and winter for the leaf harvest and snow removal on the roads and lots.
- Two big projects forecasted; outdoor fitness and the splash pad.

Discussion Topics

Master Plan: Chairman Lewis initiated an open discussion in regards to how the commission should move forward updating the Master Plan. Vice Chair Kelly shared the frustration in the work that goes into the Master Plan and suggested a Strategic Plan to coincide with the Master Plan. Ms. Keays suggested updating portions of it every year such as surveys. Having the staff do more surveys after programs. There is a need to assess current and future needs and develop a plan to budget long term or phased developments/improvements with surveys and needs assessments. Last surveys looking into the community were from 2018.

Chairman Lewis suggested planning 15 minutes work sessions to capture ideas and add into the agenda as an item. Materials requested and prepared prior to next meeting was a one-page document with the intended plan for up to ten years out that can be worked off of each meeting.

Chairman Lewis also spoke in regards to surveys and where they can be posted such as the town website, social media, programs and events.

Commissioner Hennessey requested an update on the future home for Parks and Recreation – Colliers came back with pricing ranging 60-80 million for a brand-new turn-key facility. Committee is looking into other alternatives. Will be moving to Old Orchard Hill Temporarily and doing minor repairs to make sure the facility is suitable for the department. From there, Reassessing what the community is looking for through surveys and revisit the towns appetite for another referendum of that size. Commissioner Caye reiterated that the BOE turned the building over to Parks and Recreation, at some point it will need to become ADA compliant. Looking at a referendum to upgrade Old Orchard Hill for the Recreation Department.

Commissioner Coursey inquired with Ms. Keays about what recent surveys looked like. Ms. Keays shared with the commission that they do typical program surveys but have not done a big picture survey. It was suggested that we add facility/infrastructure questions within current program surveys. As well it was suggested by Vice Chair Kelly that the survey be included some way in the brochure that is sent out to every house in South Windsor. It was made clear that the Parks and Recreation Commission should be the driving force behind the survey, to help find a permanent home for the department. The first work session will focus on getting a survey prepared to go out.

Other Business:

Meeting adjourned at 8:19 P.M. – motion made by Commissioner Hennessey and seconded by Commissioner Caye motion passed unanimously.

Next Meeting: November 9, 2022

Respectfully Submitted –

Leah Margelony