**Park and Recreation Commission**

Minutes of the Meeting

**November 1, 2023**

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

**Commissioners in Attendance:** George Caye, Genevieve Coursey, James Hennessey, Toby Lewis, Miguel Proano, Mitchell Marks, Beth Esstman

**Commissioners Absent:** Srinivasa Chalikonda, Michael Kelly, Kristen Kozikowski, Braden Migneault William Novak, Renee Powell, Erica Evans

**Also in Attendance:**  Molly Keays, Director of Parks and Recreation, John Caldwell, Superintendent of Parks, and Jennie Tetreault

**Approval of Minutes:** Motion made by Commissioner Marks and seconded by Commissioner Hennessey to approve minutes from the September October 4, 2023 meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

**Public Input:** No public input

**Report of Council Liaison:** Erica Evans not present, no report.

**Report of the BOE Liaison:** Councilor Liasson Esstman, states enrollment is up this year across the district, as of October 1, 2023, there are just over 5,000 kids enrolled in k-12. Breaking it down further, she shares that K-5 is up 46 students, middle school is up 35 from last year and the high school is up 50 from last year.

The Board of Ed is also discussing a plan to improve the high school campus and increase recreational assets to the community. Included in these improvements are a lighted field, tennis courts and pickleball courts. The Board of Ed is also working to improve the traffic pattern at the high school.

**Special Reports:** None

**Open Space Task Force**:  Commissioner Caye has nothing to report until their next meeting.

**Report of Parks and Rec. Director:** Director of Parks and Recreation, Molly Keays provides updates on winter programs that are underway, and that they are already looking towards summer programming.

* Director Keays shares that Parks and Recreation has received $1.2 million dollars in bond funding for construction of phase 1A of the crosstown trail. The rest of the phases are still being solidified and are not ready to be constructed.
* Open gyms have begun, these include volleyball, pickleball, adult basketball, and throwball.
* Girls’ basketball clinics (for girls in grades 3-5 and 6-8) will begin November 11 and November 18 at the Ellsworth Gym and are free of charge, however registration is required. The hope is that the clinic will encourage further engagement in the girls’ basketball program.
* Boys’ and girls’ basketball drafts will begin in December as well as coaching clinics for enrolled coaches.
* The Parks and Recreation fall Pickleball league consisted of 50 participants and was a great success. Parks and Recreation is looking forward to offering more lessons, leagues and tournaments in the in Spring 2024.
* The fall cornhole league had 24 people. These individuals were participants of the summer league program that were interested in rolling the league into the fall season.
* Adult volleyball is running two nights a week at TE, it will run through March.
* Director Keays takes a minute to thank the Farmers’ market participants and encourages people to continue to buy local and support them over the winter season. The Winter Farmers’ Market will not take place this year as the new Parks and Recreation Facility is not large to enough and lacks the ADA compliance that would make the market feasible.
* The pumpkin roll-on was on October 14 and saw 220 participants. Dude’s donuts and Broad Brook Brewery were there to support. Imperial oil was the sponsor.
* Unfortunately, the Torch walk was cancelled because of rain, and it was unfortunate it could not be rescheduled.
* Parks and Recreation hosted a movie night at Evergreen Walk, 75 families attended, scooby snacks were served and games were played!
* Preschool’s session A is almost over, and session B will begin in mid-November. Session A was full, but there are still a few open spaces available in session B
* 4th R is also going well. Parks and Rec hosted its annual 4th R family night at Foster Farms. There were 325 participants that attended. South Windsor Parks and Recreation is always thankful for the collaboration with Foster Farms to make this event successful.
* Ski and Snowboard club is full, recreation Supervisor, Nate Foley is looking adding another bus to accommodate the waitlist for the program.
* The Turkey Trot is coming November 18. The event is free of charge, but preregistration is required. Participants are also asked to bring a canned food item to be donated to the South Windsor Food and Fuel Bank.
* Parks and Recreation is also looking forward to “Letters to Santa”, “Merry and Bright” contest, and skate with Santa this season.

Commissioner Coursey asks for updates on the other phases of the cross-town trail, specifically about other grant and state funding opportunities for the next phases of the project. Director Keays states that once plans for these next two phases are solid Parks and Recreation can begin looking for more funding opportunities. Commissioner Coursey also asks Keays about the possibility of adding a flag football league under Parks and Recreation. Director Keays mentions that Parks and Recreation does in fact have a contracted summer flag football camp for kids, but currently there are no other plans for flag football.

**Message from John Caldwell, Parks Superintendent**

**Facility Update**:

* Fall soccer tournament saw 1644 registered players and an additional 5000 visitors. The fields held up well given the rainy conditions that weekend.
* The irrigation systems have been winterized.
* Town garden/landscape beds have been weeded, tall grasses cut back, and fall leaves clean up. The town’s ground keeper “Jeff” has decorated town buildings with hay bales, mums, pumpkins, and corn stalks.
* Overseeding of athletic fields, BOE fields, and building grounds has been done. The process of overseeding is an organic effort to keep weed pressure down.
* Nevers’s soccer field has been laser graded flat with 7000 yards of new soil. The new soil has also been seeded and fertilized.
* Torch walk trails were also groomed and prepped for event. It was unfortunate that the weather did not cooperate, and the event had to be cancelled.
* Porter’s Hill was once again made ready for the annual pumpkin roll by mowing and painting our giant logo on the hill.
* Football had their Saturday Night Lights, and it was a huge success, beautiful weather and the fields were all painted pink (all fields were painted pink).
* The leaf program is underway and will continue through until early December.
* Superintendent Caldwell also shares that they have hired a few new employees, including Spencer Ricky and Beau Bailey, bringing the parks department up to full staff. Superintendent Caldwell also tells the commission that Mike Driscoll has retired this year after 18 years of service.

**Discussion Topics:**

Commissioner Caye shares that he met with Superintendent Caldwell to do a preliminary walkthrough of the new disc golf course at Lawrence Rd. Park. Commissioner Caye hopes to have a final draw up of the course by December or January to present at the PARC Commission meeting. Director Keays thinks that putting the disc golf course at Lawrence Park will help to diversify park use, giving people the opportunity to explore other parks in town.

Chairperson Lewis has spoken with neighbors of the Lawrence Rd, park and they are concerned about pesticide application in the park. Superintendent Caldwell shares that they have never applied pesticides to that park. Currently the parks crew is removing the poison ivy by hand.

Commissioner Coursey asks about any updates on the facility. Director Keays says there will be a special PBC meeting on November 14th. They want the PARC commission to attend the meeting and talk about the history of the project from the viewpoint of the last committee and discuss the Parks and Recreation Department’s needs. Commissioner Coursey wants to know if since our last PARC meeting other locations have been added to the list of possible locations for the new facility.

**Other Business:**

Chairperson Lewis asks for Director Keays to describe the “resolution”. Director Keays says the PARC commission approved some funding along with capital projects to help with the “gap” of the crosstown trail. The money has been sitting in the masterplan account and now has to be transferred to the cross-town trail capital account.
A Motion made by Commissioner Marks and seconded by Commissioner Coursey to transfer a total of $35,000 from the parks master plan account into the cross-town trail capital project account. Motion passed unanimously.

**Meeting adjourned** at 8:02 p.m. A motion made by Commissioner Caye and seconded by Commissioner Mitchell. Motion passed unanimously.

**Next Meeting:  December 6, 2023**

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennie Tetreault