

Park and Recreation Commission

Minutes of the Meeting

April 3, 2024

Meeting called to order: Vice Chairperson Michael Kelly called the meeting to order at 7:34 PM

Commissioners in Attendance: Jackie Balboni, George Caye, Michael Kelly, Mitchel Marks, Renee Powell, Kristen Kozikowski, Toby Lewis

Commissioners Absent: Srinivasa Chalikonda, Genevieve Coursey, James Hennessey, William Nowak, Miguel Proano, Braden Migneault

Also in Attendance: Molly Keays, Director of Parks and Recreation, John Caldwell, Superintendent of Parks, and Sofia Kopp

Approval of Minutes: Motion was made by Commissioner Powell to change attendance on the meeting of March 6, 2024. Commissioner Powell was not present at the March 6, 2024 meeting. Motion made by Commissioner Caye and seconded by Commissioner Marks to approve minutes from the March 6, 2024 meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Input: None Present

Report of Council Liaison: Nothing to Report

Report of the BoE Liaison: Commissioner/Liaison Mitchell Marks informed the commission that the Board of Education held a joint session with Town Council to give the council a time to ask about the Board of Education's budget. The Town Council then held a public hearing on April 1st for members of the public who may have questions or comments about the proposed Board of Education budget. The final approval set date of the budget is May 15th as of now.

Special Reports/Tasks: Nothing to Report

Open Space Task Force:

- Commissioner Caye informed that there was recently a meeting of the Open Space Task Force and Desmond's Pond was the main topic of discussion. Desmond's Pond is owned by CT Water Company and around 4 years ago, the Open Space Task Force looked at Desmond's Pond to potentially take ownership of the land if it became available. Ownership would be passed to the town through a donation from CT Water Company. However, due to some revelations in regards to the drainage of Desmond's Pond among other things, the interest has changed and will be re-evaluated at a later date.
- Open Space Task Force also discussed participating in the Parks and Recreation Earth Day Event at Rye St. Park on April 20, 2024.
- Commissioner Caye mentioned that the Clapp House Preservation was briefly discussed within the recent Open Space Task Force Meeting.

Report of Parks and Rec. Director: Director of Parks and Recreation, Molly Keays reported on:

- South Windsor's Parks and Recreation Youth Basketball League finished on March 24th. Director Keays wanted to thank the volunteer coaches for all the time dedicated to the league as they play such a big role. The girl's division did a basketball clinic run by Alex Gosselin on March 23rd at the high school. Alex is the high school's freshman girls' basketball coach as well as one of the Parks and Recreation department's camp directors.
- Director Keays mentioned that this year there was a shift in the department's registration dates with camp registration being moved a week earlier to effectively serve the community as well as help the front office with its operations. Camp registration for residents was on March 27th with

April 3rd having the remainder of registrations for the department's various other programs. At the time of this meeting, there were a couple spots left of Session A and B of the department's day camps. Director Keays wanted to thank her staff for all their help during this registration period.

- The Vacation Day program will be held next week on the week of April 8th to the 12th. There will be 60 kids every day for the program.
- The lottery for 4th R will be held the first weekend in May.
- Preschool session C has finished and session D will start up soon!
- Director Keays wanted to thank Kim LaChapelle and Max Challenge for their continued support for a variety of projects in town as well as always been supportive of Parks and Recreation and trying to find opportunities to give back. The department received some proceeds from the Max Challenge Day of Giving event that will then go towards health and fitness programs and offerings.
- The Egg Hunt was held on March 29th at South Windsor High School's turf field with 30,000 eggs distributed. The event had a great number of volunteers as well as Parks and Recreation staff helping with the event. The Woman's Club also hosted a fair inside the high school at the same time. Director Keays mentioned how the Egg Hunt kicks off our Spring/Summer event season with the Fishing Derby being on April 6th and the Earth Day event on April 20th.
- Director Keays and Superintendent Caldwell went to the Town Council meeting on Monday April 1st to present, along with the CIP commission, 2 proposed capital projects: the VMP pool cover replacement as well as improvements to the John J. Mitchell Fairgrounds with next steps coming in May in regards to funding. Director Keays and Superintendent Caldwell will be presenting the department's budget to the Town Council on Tuesday April 9th.
- QA+M was hired through the public building commission to do a facility assessment and conditions assessment. Director Keays discussed with Tom Akari from QA+M in March in regards to how the department uses the facility as well as current programs and ideas for future programs. Employees from QA+M have come in to the Parks and Recreation facility to do a conditions assessment and are drafting up ideas. They will be working with the public building commission to continue on with these assessments.
- A new Athletics Supervisor was hired for the Parks and Recreation Department, Ashley Elder!

Walk & Wheel Ways:

- Walk & Wheel Ways held a Bike Maintenance Event on March 16th that provided opportunities for individuals in the community to learn basic bike repairs. Director Keays is hoping to re-vamp advertisement efforts as well as switching weeks to up attendance for the future.
- Walk & Wheel Ways is currently busy transitioning into the 4th Grade Bike program that starts back up on April 15th, and will continue with 2 more sessions this spring.
- Walk & Wheel Ways is also working alongside Director Keays for phase 1A and 2 of the Crosstown Trails. Currently, Director Keays is working on getting in front of inland/wetlands and then putting together documents for construction of phase 1A as well as trying to finalize the design for phase 2 so grant opportunities can be looked into and applied for. A walkthrough of phase 2, weather permitting, will be held on the week of April 8th.
- The teen bike program will be starting up in the next month and will be looking for participants and volunteers.

Message from John Caldwell, Parks Superintendent:

- Renovations of the 12 baseball fields in town have been completed as well as all the line painting for all of the High School Board of Education fields such as track and field discus and javelin, lacrosse fields, soccer fields, with the nets being put up as well.
- The Parks crew started on some Spring cleanup early with stick, log, and tree pickup.

- Significant work done at the Major Donnelly Preserve where around 150 feet of boardwalk got replaced. Part of a boardwalk was removed and a geo-textile fabric was added with stone and stone dust on top.
- The outdoor fitness center by Nevers Park is coming along nicely with a rubber surface being placed below the fitness equipment.
- Hired new staff that will tentatively start April 15th, Joshua Quinn!

Discussion Topics: No Discussion Topics

Other Business:

- Vice Chairperson Michael Kelly asked if there were any comments about the second section of the Master Plan that was meant to be discussed at this meeting. Commissioner Caye discussed having the parks of South Windsor being smoke free and mentioned how other towns are doing it as well. Director Keays mentioned how this had been brought to the Town Council's attention. Superintendent Caldwell then asked Liaison Lewis if a letter should be brought forth to the Town Council from PARC with Liaison Lewis agreeing.
- Commissioner Caye mentioned a few various projects within the Master Plan that have since been completed such as the Rye St. Pickleball Courts. Director Keays agreed that a lot of the projects on the Master List have been completed and that in the Capital Projects there are things planned out for 5-10 years.
- A POCD survey was conducted but gave way to vague results of wants of the town.
- Liaison Lewis mentioned that there should be an effort to solicit a response from a higher percentage of the town to get more of an understanding of priorities and wants of the town, since it may be challenging to justify the cost of a big project with a small survey response.
- Superintendent Caldwell asked if a question could be asked on a referendum with Liaison Lewis mentioning that it is a potential however, the issue with a referendum is the cost as well as getting proper participation.
- Vice Chairperson Kelly mentioned that with a referendum question, a dollar value would also have to be apparent as members of the town would want to know the cost of projects.
- Director Keays mentioned that the facility assessment will have a dollar value. As well as a cost breakdown to renovate the current space.
- Director Keays mentioned the potential of re-inviting the concept of a commission page to the Parks and Recreation brochure. Commissioner Caye added the potential of adding questions since the whole town receives the brochure so it could bolster responses.
- The action from this idea would be Jennie Tetreault sending the PARC commissioners previous pages of the commission pages from previous brochures to view, to try to work out an idea for the Fall/Winter 2024 brochure. The idea would be to have this finalized by June to ensure it could make it into the Fall/Winter 2024 brochure.
- Chairperson Jackie Balboni mentioned to list out the benefits of the pool and Director Keays agreed mentioning how it would be recreation for all. Superintendent Caldwell mentioned the idea of a therapy pool and Director Keays mentioned pools can now be designed that are multi use and with effective scheduling, the pool can be successful.
- Vice Chairperson Kelly asked Chairperson Marks about any interest of the Board of Education for a pool for the high school with Chairperson Marks mentioning the main topic of work has been the high school improvement plan and the Board of Education hasn't discussed a plan for the pool recently.
- Chairperson Caye discussed the property over by the Scantic River and how there was a walkthrough done to look over the land for trails/ and access point for kayaks and canoes. It was mutually agreed that it would be a lot of work in terms of leveling the land as well as clearing access to the Connecticut River. A study was done to determine what it would take to get this done.

Meeting adjourned at 8:23PM with a motion being made by Commissioner Powell and seconded by Commissioner Marks. Motion passed unanimously.

Next Meeting: May 1, 2024

Respectfully Submitted,

Sofia Kopp