

MEETING MINUTES
Parks and Recreation Commission
Regular Meeting
April 11, 2022

In attendance:

Kevin Bellows, Chairman
Mike Travisano, Vice Chairman
Brian LeClerc
Ken Martin
Nancy Walsh

Also in attendance:

Dmitri Paris, Superintendent of Parks
Noreen Wilpiseski, Program Manager, Recreation

Guests:

Lynn Scully, 29 McGuire Road
Laurie Kasiewicz, 21 Moorland Road
William Selski, 8 Harwood Terrace
Daniel Schopick, Esq., Town Attorney

Not in attendance:

Bill Brown
Jon O'Brien
Ed Ritacco

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m.

Mrs. Scully and Ms. Kasiewicz appeared before the Commission to request permission to collect donations during a reunion picnic for the Trumbull High School Class of 1979 (THS79). The purpose of the event is not to fundraise, however, attendees who wish to contribute to the Scott Jeffries Scholarship may do so during the picnic. The scholarship funds are maintained and awarded by the Trumbull High School scholarship program.

MOTION to hear from Mr. Selski made by Mr. Martin, seconded by Mr. LeClerc. Motion carried by unanimous consent.

Mr. Selski asked for an update on the Gunther Pond Park project; additionally, he noted that the clock across from Town Hall does not keep time properly and asked if it is going to be repaired. Mr. Paris explained that the timekeeping module inside the clock is not communicating properly with the satellite responsible for setting the time and needs to be replaced.

As for Gunther Pond Park, Mr. Paris answered that the contractors for the work have been selected, and the next step is to choose a start date. He noted that Mr. Maurer in Engineering may be able to provide more specifics, but Mr. Paris' estimation is that the work will begin in August.

MOTION to close public comment made by Mr. Travisano, seconded by Mrs. Walsh. Motion carried by unanimous consent.

Approval of minutes was tabled due to a page being missing. The clerk will amend the minutes and provide them to the Commission for approval at the May meeting.

Richard Post sent several updates from the Sustainable Trumbull QR Code team, detailing where codes that link to the survey are located. The survey is now live. The team will continue to work with the Town and the Parks Department on the codes and their content.

Jennifer Iannucci sent further details on her proposed fundraiser in support of Ukraine. Unfortunately, she was unable to change the date of her fundraiser and therefore sought an alternative location.

Ian Hall contacted the clerk to say that the BoFish Tournament would not be seeking permission for the kids' race to include a portion of Twin Brooks Park.

A permit application was forwarded from the Parks and Recreation Department for a water lantern festival. The request is for up to 2,000 people to attend the festival at Twin Brooks Park. Some questions were raised regarding the applicant not being a Trumbull resident. In addition, the construction at the park seriously limits capacity. Ms. Wilpizeski also noted that lanterns are against CT State fire safety statutes. No representative of the organization has requested to appear before the Commission.

There is no update on the Hillcrest Pool. A joint meeting of the Community Facilities Building Committee and Aquatics Facilities Building Committee on Wednesday, April 13.

Mr. Martin asked about the results of the recent budget hearings, particularly in terms of staffing and the Park Rangers. Mr. Paris indicated that he would address those items in his report.

The Commission discussed the request from THS79 to collect donations during their event. As the event is not being advertised as a fundraiser, and is not being held for the sole purpose of fundraising, the Commission voted to approve.

MOTION to approve THS79 picnic permit request made by Mr. Martin, seconded by Mr. LeClerc. Motion carried by unanimous consent.

Mr. Paris began his report by addressing some plumbing concerns, particularly a broken pipe at Beaches lifeguard station affecting the ceiling, a break at Kaechele, and a leak in the Babe Ruth press box.

Work at Town Hall Green will begin this week, improving sidewalks and installing site furnishings, including permanent seating.

The full-size field at Jane Ryan School is again available to Parks and Recreation. The Parks Department is working diligently to get the field ready for use as a practice field. Mr. Paris noted that the field being available is a tremendous help to the department and various leagues.

Work at Indian Ledge Park is set to begin next week, including the BMX lot, lot between fields 1 and 2 and the roadway adjacent to the dog park. Additional work will also be done near the playground and picnic area, including sidewalks and expanding parking.

Sidewalk installation work at Twin Brooks Park has begun. More details and design plans are available on the Parks and Recreation website and social media. Residents are still able to use the park during this phase of construction.

Mr. Paris offered to pause his report in order to allow Attorney Schopick to discuss the fundraising issue with the Commission.

Mr. Schopick noted that once the Commission opens the parks up to fundraisers it becomes difficult to say yes to some and no to others. He suggested requiring liability insurance, a bond for potential damages, and similar considerations. He did not think the town would be liable if an organization was determined to be fraudulent after the fact. Some Commissioners raised concerns that group who meet the criteria may be controversial, however the Commission cannot be in a position to judge the mission of certain organizations. Ultimately, the Commission needs to create a set of criteria to be applied to all fundraising requests. Mr. Schopick will bring the issue to the Town Attorneys meeting next week and let the Commission know what their thoughts are.

Discussion of the Superintendent's report continued. Mr. Paris will evaluate the leak in the Babe Ruth press box and see if turning off the water will fix the problem. Mr. Bellows asked if the league can source the repairs itself since parent volunteers built the original structure.

Mr. Martin asked about plans for the Long Hill Green area. Mr. Paris replied that to his knowledge, there has been no final design concept. The fencing was removed at the insistence of the state. The Economic Development department may have more information on plans for the space.

The courts at Island Brook Park are set to be fully renovated, including the conversion of the basketball court into additional pickleball courts.

Mr. Paris said that the budget process has been very challenging this year. There were no realistic increases, including staffing. His department did a needs assessment, and ultimately decided to reconfigure the Assistant Program Manager position Recreation Department into a full-time Park Ranger position. The assistant program manager is ideally suited to the position having been with the Town for a number of years, and is fully on board with the change. Nothing will happen until the final budget is approved.

Mr. Martin expressed concern that losing the assistant program manager places a burden on Ms. Wilpszeski. She noted that the automation of certain processes and the closure of Hillcrest pool makes it difficult to justify keeping the full-time assistant position, in addition to the program supervisors who assist with summer programming.

Mr. Paris reminded the Commission that the Ranger staff is constantly in flux because of hourly restrictions on seasonal employees. The addition of a full-time ranger allows for more consistent coverage in the parks.

Ms. Wilpszeski gave an overview of upcoming programming that was detailed in her report to the Commission, including movie nights, concert series, and Easter egg hunt.

Mr. Martin noted his concern about safe access to the caretaker's cottage, citing muddy conditions, and asked if some plywood can be put down to make access. Mr. Paris will look at the situation and try to come up with a solution.

MOTION to adjourn made by Mr. LeClerc, seconded by Mr. Martin. Motion carried by unanimous consent.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Submitted by Laura Shiel