

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING
Minutes of the December 17, 2014 Regular Meeting

A meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission was held on December 17, 2014, 10th Floor Operations Conference Room, Stamford Government Center.

In attendance were:

Commissioners: Joe Andreana
 Dave Winston
 Lyda Ruijter
 Althea Brown

Staff: Kevin Murray

Guests: Valerie McNeil – Resident

 Capt. Beth Erickson – Lione Park

 Representative Rodney Pratt – Lione Park

 John Tromba – Stamford American Little League

 Andrew Dyjak – Stamford American Little League

 Jeff Goodman – Stamford American Little League

 Eddie Prielo – Girls Softball

 Rich Lyons – Girls Softball

 Dana Thibodeau – Girls Softball

 Colleen Magarian – Girls Softball

 Jay Inzitari – Rippowam Park

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 p.m. by Joe Andreana, Chair.

Mrs. Cooper and Laurie Albano did not attend the meeting.

Review of the November 19, 2014 Regular Meeting Minutes.

- On page 8 the minutes should read: Mr. Andreana requested that discussion regarding park's policies and procedures be placed on the December 2014 Agenda, not the November 2014 Agenda.

Ms. Brown made a motion to approve the November 19, 2014 Regular Meeting Minutes as corrected.

Seconded by Ms. Ruijter

Unanimously Approved

Staff Reports

Kevin Murray – Parks

- Mr. Murray reported to the Commission on the results of the Parks & Recreation Internal Committee meeting, giving them a list of items that were approved. See attached.
- Mr. Andreana stated that the St. Patrick's Day Parade should go on the Consent Agenda.
- Per Commission's request, Mr. Murray provided a list of park closing hours.
- Mr. Murray also provided the Commission with a copy of the Snow Operation/Park Routes for their information.
- Mr. Murray attended a Stamford Hazards and Community Resiliency workshop on December 1, 2014.
- On December 15, 2014, five companies were selected for interviews for park designs for Veterans' Park. Mr. Murray will not be able to be part of the selection committee due to his busy schedule; there will be two City designees in the interview process, which concluded today.
- Busy with Christmas Tree lightings throughout the City – Hope Street, Latham Park, Jackie Robinson Park.

- Budget Instructions came out for the 2015 Operating Budget. OPM wants all departments to produce a program based budget going forward.
- There was a Dorothy Heroy Capital Project plan meeting on December 11, 2014. Internal City Committee recommend engaging a design firm to do a survey of the property; complete evaluations of the pools, recreation building, drainage system, and septic system, design a landscaping and hardscape plan for the building and pool area, complete a full design of the pool or replacement structure and to provide cost estimates for all proposed renovations.
- Kaboom Playground approached the City in regards to McKeithen Park on Lawn Avenue. The conference call was informal in regards to stakeholders, Land Use, Corporate Council, Associations and the church on the street. The City will look into it. The playground equipment will be donated; the City will be responsible for it too. Mr. Winston stated that the City/Commission should request a preferred type of playground equipment that the City could easily maintain.
- Mr. Murray with the Grants Office applied for America the Beautiful Grant. The plan is to do inventory of all City park trees, this is a Municipal Urban Forestry Planning and Maintenance Grant, which will match funds up to \$12,000 per year. The plan is to start with this first and then move into the City street scape afterwards. They will be targeting 1,400 trees that we lost in the past two storms.
- Mr. Murray provided the Commissioners with a written Engineering Capital Park Projects update.
- Ms. Brown would like a sign at Boccuzzi Park that states the closing time is 10:00 p.m.
- Mr. Andreana reinstated that the deadline to take down banners and signage from the ball fields is October 31st. If any commercial signs are still up at this point, they need to be removed before Christmas and the league given an ultimatum, if signs are not picked up by January 15th, they will be discarded.

Ms. Ruijter made a motion to move up on the Agenda Representative Pratt and Captain Erickson.

Seconded by Mr. Winston

Unanimously Approved

Mr. Winston made a motion to add Jay Inzitari from RMS Construction to the end of the New Business Agenda.

Seconded by Ms. Ruijter

Unanimously Approved

Representative Rodney Pratt and Captain Beth Erickson – Opening Driveway at Lione Park.

- Representative Rodney Pratt stated that in the last two years Lione Park has become very popular. Neighbors brought to his attention the vehicle congestion there on the weekends making it difficult for Emergency Vehicles to get out, they have to back out. On Veterans' Day there was an emergency and the Emergency Vehicle had to back out all the way back to Merrell Avenue and then eventually getting to the hospital.
- After speaking to some of the neighbors, surrounding businesses, the Boys & Girls Club, the Hospital, Police, Fire Marshall and Department of Public Safety he would like to open up Delaware Avenue.
- Captain Erickson is the new Police Captain in charge of this district; she spoke to Captain Mullin who was in charge of this district for the past eight years to get his suggestions on it. Captain Mullin did not oppose the idea; the demographics of the area have changed. Captain Erickson stated that they would like to stay a little neutral just until they can look at their stats. Previously the street was asked to be closed due to the drug dealing in the area, they would like to look into it a little bit more, but at this point it does not appear that its going to necessarily be an issue, it has definitely quieted down as far as drugs, but she would like to confirm it.

Ms. Brown made a motion to approve request to open up the gate at Lione Park and letting the traffic thru.

Seconded by Ms. Ruijter

Unanimously Approved

Old Business

Bob Katchko – Permanent Sign for Vine Road Field.

- Jeff Goodman for Bob Katchko. Mr. Goodman stated that currently Stamford American Little League does not have a permanent sign at the Vine Road Field, and would like to have a permanent sign put up within guidelines on the backstop facing Vine Road.
- Mr. Andreana stated that the Commission would not have an objection to a 3' x 8' sign. Going forward the Commission wants all signs to reflect a standard in the City. The sign cannot be larger than the Springdale sign. The approval is contingent upon covering up the Katchko Construction on the scoreboard in the off season.
- Mr. Andreana stated that he noticed a fence that was placed from the driveway of the houses across the top of the sidewalk, almost to the driveway down at the field, behind the backstop. This fence was never approved by the Commission. Mr.

Goodman does not know what fence Mr. Andreana is referring to and will look into it.

- Mr. Goodman informed to the Commission that the tree that was dying at the Vine Road field has been replaced.

Ms. Ruijter made a motion to approve the installation of a 3' x 8' sign at the Vine Road Little League Field on the backstop area facing Vine Road.

Seconded by Mr. Winston

Unanimously Approved

Bob Katchko – Permanent Sign for Northrop Field.

- Jeff Goodman for Bob Katchko. Mr. Goodman stated that there is currently a permanent sign on the backstop at Northrop Field that was installed a long time ago.
- With the Northrop/American merger their league is now Stamford American Little League. The permanent sign has a Northrop website, which does not exist anymore; their biggest concern is that there is incorrect information on the sign.
- Mr. Goodman proposed overlaying vinyl on the existing sign to acknowledge the Northrop Little League for the years they were in existence.
- Mr. Winston would like to know the actual dimensions of the existing sign. Mr. Murray will measure the sign and update the Commission next month.
- If the sign is no bigger than 3' x 10' the Commission will be OK with it. If the sign is bigger than 3' x 10', then the approval will be for a 3' x 8' sign. The league will put the wording that they feel appropriate on the sign.

Mr. Winston made a motion to approve a 3' x 8' sign at Northrop Field for the Stamford American Little League. If the existing sign is within limits, slightly larger, the Commission will approve an overlay sign based on staff's determination of suitability that is not over 10 feet.

Seconded by Ms. Ruijter

Unanimously Approved

Bob Katchko – Lights for Either Vine Road or Northrop.

- Jeff Goodman for Bob Katchko. Mr. Goodman stated that Stamford American Little League would like to request that lights be installed at either the Vine Road Field or the Northrop Field to accommodate league growth. Stamford American Little League just merged with Northrop Little League and they have close to 400 kids right now. They would like to have additional playing time to accommodate the league growth. The league feels that by lighting a field and having more playing time in other fields, it would alleviate the neighbor concerns at Kane Avenue Field.

- Stamford American Little League is the only league in Stamford that does not have a lighted field.
- Mr. Andreana explained that the City is in budget cutting mode. Capital Budgets were submitted in September. The Capital Budget was cut and we lost out on some money for critical park issues. We are going more and more to public/private coalitions, where the private sector is coming up with funding for improvements. There is no way the Commission can approve or even recommend lighting a field based on City funding.
- The estimated cost of lighting a field is \$100,000.
- Mr. Andreana stated that this request will also need Zoning Board of Appeals approval and neighborhood approvals, a Public Hearing will be needed.
- Mr. Winston stated that if Stamford American Little League comes up with the funds to install the lights, the Commission could consider it, depending on neighborhood approval.

Mr. Winston made a motion to table the request until further developments.

Seconded by Ms. Ruijter

Unanimously Approved

New Business

Dana Thibodeau/Bobby Valentine Sports Academy – Field Permit/Sanctioning Request.

- Ms. Dana Thibodeau stated that on the Agenda they were designated as Bobby Valentine Sport Academy and explained that they are affiliated with Bobby Valentine Sports Academy, which means that they are a separate, independent team, they are not part of Bobby Valentine. He has allowed them to use his facility to do some indoor training, they are doing some marketing with his name on their shirt, but they are completely stand alone, separate from Bobby Valentine Sports Academy.
- Ms. Thibodeau explained that the group of 12 girls that they have, the majority of them have been playing on the team since they were 10 years old. Now that they are at the 14U age category, there is not an option for them within any of the other programs in Stamford for this age group.

Because there is no 14U program in Stamford, they are going to become affiliated with the Babe Ruth Xtreme Tournament Trail, which is a new program for Babe Ruth. They will be following that tournament trail to continue to play with practices and games throughout the months of May thru June.

- Mr. Andrena explained that the Field Use Policy, the League Policy and the Recreation Department Policy is that to work within the established sanctioned leagues. Since there is a Girls Babe Ruth League, the Commission considers that Ms. Thibodeau has to try to work within the Babe Ruth League, which is the sanctioned league in Stamford.

The authority of the Commission and the Department of Recreation have a problem forcing leagues to do things, usually it's worked out within the league hierarchy. It is up to Ms. Thibodeau to work with the league. Mr. Andrena suggested that they contact Babe Ruth District or Regional Administration to try and resolve the issue. They should send a letter with their intentions and see what the response is. Pending that response, if that forces the issue to be put under auspices of the Stamford Babe Ruth Softball Program, the question then becomes field use, and Ms. Albano has indicated that once they are in the program, there could be fields assigned. Fields cannot be assigned if they are not within the program.

- The Commission will be looking into all their policies, hopefully in the next year. They will try to resolve some issues, can't say whether there will be policy changes, right now the existing policies need to be followed. If they do not get satisfaction or support from Babe Ruth, come back to the Commission, there might be other steps they might be able to take to help the issue along.
- Mr. Rich Lyons stated that they do not want their finances co-mingled or their rosters, they want to be a separate entity.
- Our current policy does not allow new teams.
- The Commission has no jurisdiction on school fields, and suggested that Ms. Thibodeau check with the Board of Education for field availability.

Jay Inzitari – RMS Construction – Use of Rippowam Park.

- Mr. Jay Inzitari from RMS Construction stated that they will be doing some work at the corner of Rippowam Place and Washington Boulevard. Part of the building approval was to re-do Rippowam Park; maintain the park, sidewalks and landscaping.
- Mr. Inzitari requested permission to use Rippowam Park for staging. The construction period is about 12 months, starting February 1, 2015.
- Mr. Andrena believes that if the park is taken away, and not being able to be used, the Parks Department should be recompensed for that use. Mr. Andrena asked if RMS Construction would be willing to resurface or have resurfaced a playground for the City. Mr. Inzitari stated that RMS Construction will not be willing to do something else in exchange. They are already doing Capital improvements for the City.

- Mr. Inzitari will re-design their barrier area and leave the park open. They will be using the park for staging for the construction of the park only, not for the construction of the building.
- Ms. Brown wanted to make sure that there will be public access to the park. She also wants to make sure that the park will be welcoming to the neighbors after it is finished and all the changes are made.
- There is a landscape plan that has already been submitted and accepted by Planning and Zoning. Ms. Brown requested that a copy of the landscape plan be submitted to the Commission.
- Mr. Andreana requested that photos of the existing conditions be taken. The re-landscaping should not be less than it is now.

Mr. Winston made a motion to approve the proposal to permit the renovation of Rippowam Park. The park will not be alienated until the actual work is being done at the park. A copy of the landscape plan has to be submitted to the Commission.

Seconded by Ms. Ruijter

Unanimously Approved

Discussion Regarding Park's Policies and Procedures.

- Mr. Andreana mentioned that Mrs. Cooper had put the policies into categories, Mr. Andreana re-format it and asked the Commissioners to rank in each of the categories, move or add as they think is necessary and return back to him before the January 2015 meeting, right after the first of the year.

Correspondence

No Correspondence.

The next Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting will take place on Wednesday, January 21, 2015.

Motion to adjourn the meeting by Ms. Brown

Seconded by Mr. Winston

The meeting adjourned at 9:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted
Margarita Arenas
December 23, 2014