

Park and Recreation Commission

Minutes

(meeting taped)

Monthly meeting: Monday, October 9, 2007 in the New City Hall.

Meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

By roll call, members present: John Walsh, Nick Serednitsky, James Benanto, Andrew Cota and William Clynch. Al Felice and David Mikos were excused.

Parks and Recreation Director Dennis O'Connell and Athletic Director Joseph Orazetti were present.

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA:

Without objection, the agenda was accepted, as written.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A motion was made by Nick Serednitsky and second by Andrew Cota. Move to accept the minutes of September 10, 2007, as written. Motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC PORTION:

No one came forward.

NEW or OTHER BUSINESS:

Presentation from the New Haven Cutters: Bryant O'Neil, ticket sales representative of the New Haven Cutters, addressed the Commission about their 5th annual camp day planned for next May. The game starts at 11:00 a.m. and children are encouraged to bring their own lunches. Ticket prices are discounted and chaperones are available. It is a good time for all and Mr. O'Neil welcomed Derby's opportunity to partake in the festivities. Also, he stated that the Cutter's mascot does personal appearances and he would gladly attend some of the Parks & Recreation events. Chairman Walsh encouraged him to get in contact with Mr. O'Connell and suggested that he explore contacting the Recreation Camp, as well as the other boy's and girl's clubs in the area.

CORRESPONDENCES:

Nothing was presented.

DIRECTOR REPORTS:

Parks & Recreation Director's Report: Mr. O'Connell reported that Youth Basketball is preparing for sign-ups. He anticipates a very extensive program with approximately 20-25 games per week including the weekend travel leagues.

The Skate Park Report through August 2007 from the YMCA was presented (attached). The report states the average number of youth who have used the park on a daily basis for the month of July is 2.5. The lowest attendance on a given day was 0 and the highest being 7. Registration by town: Ansonia -3, Shelton - 20, Derby - 0, Seymour - 3, Oxford - 0, Trumbull - 1, and Beacon Falls - 0. The park is scheduled to close on October 14th. They anticipate a net loss of approximately \$775. As this is a joint venture with Shelton, Derby and Shelton will share the expense. At the end of the season, the two towns will be sitting down with the YMCA to discuss the park's future.

Pop Warner is winding down their regular season with one more home game.

The Men's soccer league has three more home games to be played.

Mr. O'Connell and Mr. Orazetti reported that they had to adjust the practice fields for the various programs after the Little League field was deemed unhealthy due to excessively dusty conditions because of the poor, dry condition of the field overall. Players with respiratory difficulties were most notably affected. Middle School Boy's soccer has moved to the Bradley fields, reluctantly because of transportation difficulties, and boy's football is now practicing on the Ryan softball field.

Chairman Walsh noted that the Preliminary Report on Outdoor Athletic Fields done almost a decade ago identified the Little League fields problems at that time and that was before the High School Soccer programs had really expanded to what they have now. The condition back then was no better than it is now.

It was noted that the Board of Alderman continues to oversee Witek Park. Scheduling of the fields is coordinated with Board of Alderman President Ken Hughes and he has determined that the level of use now allowed has maximized the amount of use suitable for maintaining the integrity of the field surface.

Members noted that the Ryan football field, once considered the City's premier field, is very overstressed and with the addition of High School soccer use on the field a number of years ago, the condition by the end of the season is alarming. Chairman Walsh stressed that the Board of Education has to get involved in this situation. The Parks & Recreation Commission members approached the Board of Education when they were discussing a new Middle School and at that time requested that additional field space be included in the project. That did not happen.

Members discussed the need to look at all the fields and assess the amount of use the fields can adequately support. Ultimately, what is happening is that at the end of the season the fields are in poor condition and they are not allowed sufficient time to rejuvenate prior to the next season's use. The following year they start out already stressed and so each year this cycle of use just further deteriorates the conditions. At some point in time, the field surface is fully exhausted. All the fields are moving to this point and the Little League field is an indicator of this progression.

The members and directors discussed possible changes in field use to try to balance the level of use. It was questioned whether Witek Park could absorb additional use and could the Amendola Complex (Bradley) be utilized more fully. One thought is to move the adult soccer back to Amendola. This would require additional grooming and lining of the fields as well as returning goals to the fields. Mr. Orazetti noted the difficulties in having the High School programs at Amendola or Witek. He explained that the late bus schedule leaves the school well after 3:00 p.m. In the past it was earlier and was available to be utilized for transport of the players, this is not an option now. The bus company was contacted but the schedule was firm and could not be modified. Ideally, having the fields within the complex best serves the athletic programs. He has made changes due to the Little League field conditions but this has been difficult. He noted that the football programs really need to stay at Ryan because of the equipment that is stored in the field house so moving them is not a viable option. Everyone agreed that the Board of Education must be apprised of the situation and must be part of the solution. As elections are pending, it was decided to wait and invite the new Board of Education to a future meeting to go over this matter. Chairman Walsh distributed materials regarding the previous study for the members to review and he noted that the materials are on line by going to the website and searching for recreation study.

High School Athletic Director's Report: Included with the Recreation's Directors report.

NEW or OTHER BUSINESS:

Chairman Walsh noted that Commodore Hull Road Race will once again be held on Thanksgiving morning. He expressed appreciation of the Police and Fire Departments that assist throughout the race. He noted that James Benanto is the honoree this year.

Mr. Benanto stated that he met with Sheila O'Malley to talk about grants. He stated that the difficulty is that the needs are a huge undertaking. It would be best to focus on one project at a time. In determining the project, the peripheral impacts have to be assessed. For example, if the lights at Ryan were chosen, are the locations of the fixtures correct or would future changes in the field require movement. The Commission will have to make a concerted study of the needs and develop a strategy to move forward in increments that will result in the final envisioned outcome.

It was noted that the railing and lighting project for the Ryan bleachers has been sent back to the Capital Planning Commission. The work will be postponed until they make a decision.

Mr. Clynch questioned if the football light lumens had been assessed and had the covers been cleaned. Mr. O'Connell indicated that the electrician has been out making necessary repairs but the measurements has not been taken as of yet.

Mr. Clynch noted that the field house is quite antiquated and has had to have many repairs recently. He wondered if there were any plans for upgrading the facility and if anything had been done to move the field maintenance equipment out of the field house. The Public Works has been storing fertilizers and lime for years within the structure. Mr. O'Connell indicated that the plans for a storage building never materialized.

Motion was made by James Benanto and second by William Clynch. Move to adjourn at 8:07 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully prepared,
Karen Kemmesies, secretary

These minutes are subject to the Commission's approval at their next scheduled meeting.