A meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission of the Town of Fairfield was held on Wednesday, February 21, 2018 at 7:00 p.m. at the Eunice Postol Parks & Recreation Center, Fairfield, Connecticut.

PRESENT: Scott Walker, Chairman, Jessica Gerber, Alexa Mullady, Chris McCoy, Mary Von Conta, Bridget McBride, David Weber, Brian Nerreau and Bryan Thompson

ABSENT: None

ALSO: Anthony Calabrese, Director; Parks & Recreation Department; Gaylen Brown, Asst. Director, Parks & Recreation Department and members of the public

Chairman Scott Walker called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Walker and the other members welcomed back past member Brian Nerreau who is completing the term of Dorene Herron.

Mr. Calabrese introduced new Assistant Director, Gaylen Brown. Ms. Brown gave a short history of her educational and work background in customer service, spa management and marketing. The staff is pleased to have her join the department.

I. ACT ON MINUTES OF:

December 19, 2017 - Hearing no corrections, the minutes were approved as written.

II. COMMUNICATIONS:

A. Robert Seirup – PAL Bike Rodeo – Sat. May 12, 2018 (rain date 5/13) Jennings Parking Lot
   (See request) This will be a repeat of two prior years.
   Motion: A. Mullady moved, and B. Nerreau seconded to approve the request.
   Vote: 8-0-0 (Ms. Gerber not yet present)

B. Michael Blumenthal – Congregation B’Nai Israel – Summer Services- Friday, June 1, July 13, & August 8, 2018 – Lake Mohegan – Mr. Blumenthal explained that he expects 50-75 people and that they would not hold their services near the bonfire area. When Ms. Mullady expressed concern about the location Mr. McCoy and Mr. Calabrese both stated that there are few beachgoers at that time.
   Ms. Mindy Morgan, 362 Tahmore Dr. expressed support.
   Motion: B. Nerreau moved, and M. Von Conta seconded to approve the request.
   Vote: 8-0-0 (Ms. Gerber not yet present.)

C. William Auer – Farmer’s Market – June 17-September 30, 2018 – Sherman Green – The Auers (William and Maureen) were not present due to a tentative agreement reached with Mr. Calabrese and Mr. Barnhart. Mr. Calabrese explained that the Department hopes to take over the Market while still retaining the Auers as managers. They have agreed to waive any fee and are pleased that the insurance will now be under the Town’s self-insurance so they will not need to take out a costly umbrella policy. They will continue to collect the fees and the insurance from the vendors, forwarding both to the Town. Mr. Barnhart is still obtaining approval from Risk Management and Purchasing. A managerial fee will be included in the contract to be in place if, at any time in the future, the Auers step away from their duties.
   Motion: C. McCoy moved and B. McBride seconded to approve the conditional model as described by Mr. Calabrese.
   Vote: 8-0-1 (J. Gerber abstained as she had just arrived).

D. Dylan O’Connor – Stratfield Village Association – September 7, 8, 14, or 15, 2018 – Owen Fish Park – Mr. O’Connor, 31 Lola St. was present to explain the plan that the Association has to improve the Four Corners of Stratfield and Fairfield Woods Roads. They are requesting the use of Owen Fish Park to hold a Family Fun Day on one of the mentioned dates (still undecided on their part) to raise funds to contribute to these improvements. There was a lengthy discussion regarding their request to sell alcohol.
Mr. Nerreau cautioned against starting a precedent. Most felt that this was a manageable event and nothing like a Clam Jam or Irish Festival. Ms. Mindy Morgan, 362 Tahmore Dr. let Mr. O’Connor know that the Assumption Church carnival is on the weekend of 13-15 and perhaps 7 or 8 is better.

**Motion:** D. Weber moved, and B. Thompson seconded to approve the request on either September 7, 8, 14 or 15, 2018 from between 2pm and 8pm. with the consultation and coordination of the Police Department.

**Vote:** Unanimously approved

E. Adam’s House – Sherman Green – February 18, 2018 – Ms. Ryan explained that the event is more of a small gathering, rather than a “march” as it was described and that there will only be 10-15 people meeting at the Green.

**Motion:** B. Nerreau moved, and C. McCoy seconded to approve the request.

**Vote:** Unanimously approved

III. PUBLIC INPUT: None

IV. NEW BUSINESS: To hear and act upon:

A. Approval of two added bonfire locations – Jennings (2nd location), Lake Mohegan - Mr. Calabrese reported that he would like approval to add two sites for bonfires and that the two sites (as shown on the maps distributed) were vetted by the Fire Department and Public Works. The new fire pits should bring in an additional $15,000 in annual revenue. Some members were not pleased that this notice didn’t give neighbors ample time to be aware and react. Others felt that the agendas are public notice and the department can’t begin to notify everyone of any topic that might interest them. Ms. Gerber asked about neighbors and Mr. Calabrese stated that he had spoken to the two neighbors impacted. Mr. Calabrese felt that this was not a policy change and therefore he was bringing this to them as a courtesy. Ms. Mullady stated that the Commission is not just a policy making Board. Mr. Walker stated that the Charter states in statute 9.11 The Director must bring to the Commission plans for the development and maintenance of public cemeteries, parks, beaches, beach facilities, marina facilities, public gardens and other recreational areas of the Town.

Mr. Thompson saw this addition as an improvement and felt that it was trying to micro-manage the Director by asking him to bring all improvements before them.

Ms. Mindy Morgan, 362 Tahmore Dr. asked that Lake Hills Association be notified. Mr. Walker said that while the Commission is not required to notify the association, the department can do so as a courtesy.

**Motion:** B. Thompson moved, and C. McCoy seconded to approve the fire pits as recommended by the Director.

**Vote:** Unanimously approved

B. Special Event Fee Proposal – Mr. Calabrese explained that after meeting with other area Communities he learned that they charge varying fees for the use of their special event facilities; Stamford-$25, Westport-Free, Darien $800 currently and rising to $1,500. Currently, we charge $300 and the proposal is to raise it to $800. After discussion as to how many events would be affected and which, if any would have the fee waived, the members were quite split on their opinions. Most felt that they needed more information. Some just felt that it was too great an increase.

Mr. McCoy asked for additional information including Beach events vs. Sherman Green events. Ms. Mullady asked that someone, preferably Mr. Flynn, chair of the Board of Finance be invited to come before the Commission to explain their understanding of the revenue stream that Recreation provides and the department’s budget, revenue, and overall fit in the Town’s financial plans. Mr. Calabrese will extend the invitation.

Ms. Anna Wood, 144 Knollwood Dr. remarked that she felt it was too large an increase, especially for non-profits, and that $500 might be more amenable.

**Motion:** B. McBride moved, and B. Thompson seconded to raise the special event fee from $300 to $500.00

**Vote:** 3-6 (McBride, Thompson and M. Von Conta in favor) Motion Fails.

C. Little League Player Fee Discussion – In response to the Girl’s Little League Softball officers questioning their need to pay the department $25 per person, Mr. Calabrese presented a schedule of Leagues who receive blanket permits. He informed the members that in 2014 the town contracted with an
outside company to do field maintenance, lining etc. The Town side have contracts amounting to $800K and the Board of Education has contracts amounting to over $200K. In order to help offset this cost, previous Director, Lombardo began to charge $25 per person for Recreation soccer and adult softball participants. When Mr. Calabrese began he was asked by the Board of Finance why other groups were not also paying. The Boys Little leagues (both National and American) and Girl’s Little League pay the same outside contractor for their dedicated fields only, but also use other fields. He wanted to be sure that all leagues who receive blanket permits pay their fair share and presently FLLS, Legion Baseball, Jr. Babe Ruth, Sr. Babe Ruth and Fairfield Lacrosse have not yet contributed.

The boy’s little leagues actually pay over the $25 per person amount and Mr. Nerreau calculated that the girl’s league pays $20 per person for all their field usage. He had no objection to this charge as long as it was consistent and fair. Ms. Mullady was concerned that the department was now asking them to pay for activities for which they had never been charged before. Mr. Thompson offered an explanation that this charge had been in effect since 2016 but they had basically been given a waiver. He asked that Mr. Calabrese look at past minutes to see where this charge originated and if it had ever been approved.

* Dennis Nolan, 97 Daybreak Rd.- President of Girl’s Little League Softball let the members know that the League has made over $90K in improvements over 3.5 years for the Dougiello Field. He added that their budgets are completed October 1 and they received this email notice on October. 10.

* Matt. McGuire 615 Hulls Hwy- President American Little League – When asked if their leagues would be willing to pay the $25 per person in addition to what they already pay the contractor, he replied that they would not.

**Motion:** B. Nerreau moved, and A. Mullady seconded to collect $25 per person from Legion Baseball, Junior Babe Ruth, Sr. Babe Ruth and Lacrosse.

**Vote:** Unanimously approved (M. Von Conta no longer present).

Mr. McGuire also mentioned that he was concerned about players who attend Fairfield schools but do not reside in Fairfield. It seems that the Little League International charter changed to allow these children, to play in the towns where they attend school, yet the Recreation rules do not permit this. The members did not address this topic since it was not on the agenda. They asked the Recreation staff to be diligent about communication with these leagues. Mr. Walker was concerned that a budget had been passed with the understanding that this expected $8,600 would be collected and now it was being waived.

**D. Penfield Pavilion Rental Rate/Time Proposal** – Asst. Director, Brown, now assuming the Penfield marketing duties, presented a detailed proposal with graphing explanations (see attached). Ms. Brown gave similar venue comparisons and their fees. While she feels that off-peak fees are set properly for the use they command, she feels that the peak season rates can be raised significantly as shown. Mr. Nerreau does not like seeing resident percentages raised more than non-residents. The staff explained that non-residents are taking advantage by asking a resident to contract for them and this is costing the Town a great deal of revenue.

Ms. Mc Bride suggested the following fee structure:

- **Rate 1** Mon–Thurs 12-4, 7-11 Fri 12-4
- **Rate 2** Friday 7-11 Sat 12-4, Sunday
- **Rate 3** Sat 7-11 (* feels could be much higher)

There was also a short discussion about allowing a person who rents both time slots in a day to hold a 5-hour function as requested by most brides. The timing of 11-3 and 6-11 was discussed. Ms. Mullady was concerned not all could afford to rent a full day.

The sense of the Body was that the members appreciated Ms. Brown’s work and liked Ms. McBride’s suggestion and asked that next month she return with a revised proposal reflecting tonight’s feedback from the Commission.

**V. To hear and act upon information in Committee Reports:**

**A. HSR Building Committee** – Mr. Calabrese reported that the committee had been seated and that they are at the last stage to gain the final approval from the RTM to procure the seed money of $250K. The committee will meet every other Tuesday and Ms. Mullady will sit as the liaison from this Commission. There was discussion that the charge was mainly focused on golf and that they hoped the recreational programming options would be strongly considered since they will not only provide opportunities on that side of Town but will generate revenue that the Town is looking for.
B. Marina Sub-Committee – Mr. Walker reported that the sub-committee met on February 13. The Marina Manager reported that as of the 13th all but 156 slips had been renewed and the deadline was the 21st. The Committee continues to work on long-range planning. They await the RACE report, a physical survey of the marina, and are looking into various revenue ideas. Mr. Walker also let the Commission know that a spot on the committee is now open with the resignation of Ms. McBride. Mr. Nerreau volunteered.

VII. BOARD OF EDUCATION REPORT: Ms. Gerber reported:
- The Board met four times in January due to budget reviews. They approved a budget with a 3.1% increase.
- The Board of Education members approved several capital improvements including the Sherman Phase III project for lockers and air conditioning as well as the seed money for a possible Mill Hill expansion project.
- The Board approved the Non-Recurring Capital for the Ludlowe High School paving project and the District-wide IT upgrade.
- The Board approved the teachers’ contract and the custodians’ contract.
- The Board approved the new science curriculum and text books as well as some technology upgrades.
- There will be a Town Hall meeting on Feb. 28 (7:30 at RLMS auditorium.) The recent school shooting in Florida will likely be a focus and the Chief of Police has been invited.

VIII. DIRECTOR & PROGRAM REPORTS: Mr. Calabrese presented a written report due to the expected length of this meeting, see attached. Topics include:
- New hires
- Spring registration, including camp.
- Adding Boat Racks at Penfield and Jennings Beaches.
- Leasing Skate Park to Day One Skate Shop
- Sponsorship programs for large ticket events, Fireworks, Memorial Day parade and others.
- Inventory of Town playgrounds and tennis courts in order to create a replacement schedule
- Budget approval

IX. GOOD OF THE ORDER – Following the previous report form the Director, Mr. Walker and Ms. Mullady questioned the adding of boat racks, and the Skate Park lease without Commission approval. This continued the conversation as noted above (IV. A.). Ms. Mullady remarked that bringing items before the Commission is to protect the director as well. Additionally, members do not like to be caught off-guard when residents remark on topics about which they are unaware. Ms. Gerber remarked that she has in past years seen the Board of Education “pick apart everything Dr. Title tried to do. It is a grey area”.

Mr. Walker summarized what he hoped the Director would bring before the Commission going forward:
- A change to any facility in a physical way.
- The elimination of any significant programs, not necessarily the extension of programs.
- Pricing Structure changes or creations
- If the Director is unsure of any “grey area” topics, he should email the Chairman.

While Mr. Calabrese was not necessarily in agreement with the Chairman’s interpretation of the Town Charter, he will make every effort to comply in the future.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 10:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Joan Ryan, Recording Secretary