TOWN OF FAIRFIELD
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
Minutes of August 15, 2018

A meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission of the Town of Fairfield was held on Wednesday, August 15, 2018 at 7:00 p.m. at the Eunice Postol Parks & Recreation Center, Fairfield, Connecticut.

PRESENT: Scott Walker, Chairman, Chris McCoy, Jessica Gerber, Alexa Mullady, Mary Von Conta, Bridget McBride, and Brian Nerreau
ABSENT: David Weber and Jamie Benton
ALSO: Anthony Calabrese, Director; Parks & Recreation Department; Gaylen Brown, Asst. Director; Parks & Recreation Department

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

I. ACT ON MINUTES OF:
June 20, 2018 – Hearing no objections, the minutes were approved as presented.

II. COMMUNICATIONS:
1. Reini Knorr – Fairfield Cares Overdose Awareness Day- August 31, 2018 Sherman Green – Mr. Walker spoke on Ms. Knorr’s behalf and explained the event (see attached). Due to timing issues, Mr. Walker gave Ms. Knorr conditional approval subject to ratification by the Commission, based on the Commission’s previous approvals of similar events.
   Motion: B. Nerreau moved, and M. Von Conta seconded to ratify the chairman’s prior approval of this event based on time constraints.
   Vote: Approved 6-0 S. Walker Abstained

2. Susan Slagle Curtis – Memorial bench Request – Ms. Curtis, 281 Westport Rd, Easton and a Warde H.S. graduate was present to request a memorial bench at Jennings beach for her deceased husband who lived in and was schooled in Fairfield and who loved Jennings Beach. Mr. Calabrese noted that there are no benches along the beach and that they should be able to find an appropriate location.
   Motion: A. Mullady moved, and M. Von Conta seconded to approve the request.
   Vote: Approved 6-0 S. Walker Abstained

3. Kristin Egan – Memorial Bench Request – Ms. Egan, 103 Limerick Rd. was present to request a bench at the Marina for her father-in-law who recently passed and was an avid boater.
   Motion: B. Nerreau moved, and B. McBride seconded to approve the request subject to Mr. Calabrese finding an appropriate location.
   Vote: Approved 6-0 S. Walker Abstained

4. Rep. Brenda Kupchick – Fairfield Police K-9 Unit Walk- Jennings Beach – October 21, 2018– Ms. Kupchick of 213 Farist Rd. requested approval for this second year event that would benefit the Fairfield Canine Unit. They are hoping for up to 200 walkers and do not require a rain date.
   Motion: A. Mullady moved, and C. McCoy seconded to approve the request.
   Vote: Approved 6-0 S. Walker Abstained

5. Dorene Herron - Lower Fitness Center Membership to age 16 – Ms. Herron and her husband Liam, 53 Forest Ave., were present to explain that they hoped to register their 17-year-old daughter and were disappointed to learn that, unlike other gyms in Town, this gym does not allow anyone under 18. She added that all schools teach fitness starting at the Middle School grades and teens are well-versed on most fitness equipment. She does not expect a large influx but thinks it’s a good idea to be in-line with the industry standard and to give options for children and parents who are supporting exercise. Mr. Calabrese explained that the reasoning for setting the membership age at 18 was due to the availability of equipment at the High Schools in Town.
   Motion: B. Nerreau moved, and A. Mullady seconded to lower the age for participants of the Recreation Fitness Center to 16 with parental permission and the understanding that the parent does not need to be present.
Discussion: Kevin Flynn, 67 Sachem Road, a member of the public spoke to say that not all 16/17 year olds are well-behaved and that he feels there is already a problem with parents who are dropping off children at golf courses and beaches. He added that these children already have a place to work out at their high schools. Ms. Herron remarked that we allow these individuals to drive and we should expect that they can behave appropriately in a gym. Mr. Calabrese explained that anyone acting inappropriately would be spoken to, asked to leave, or in a more serious case, the Police could be called. Ms. McBride, who owns a Fitness establishment, explained her liability procedure.

B. McBride amended the motion, seconded by B. Nerreau to state that an additional liability waiver must be signed by both parent and the minor child.

Vote on Amendment - Vote: Approved 6-0 (S. Walker Abstained)

Vote on Amended Motion - Vote: Approved 6-0 (S. Walker Abstained)

6. Michael Romeo – Jennings Beach Concession –Rent Reduction Request – Mr. and Mrs. Michael Romeo, 304 Pepper St., Monroe, were present to state their case for a $2,000 rent reduction. He mentioned the following:

- Three days that required his business to be closed due to a broken exhaust fan.
- The Fire suppression system not being hooked up as it should have been for the start of the season.
- Electrical issues and blown fuses that continued throughout the season until DPW added more circuits.
- Trash issues, ants, flies.

Mr. Calabrese reported that he had tried to negotiate a $600 reduction based on loss of business (three days) and added that cleaning up the area around the concession is the concessionaire’s responsibility. He noted that DPW does not work evenings so occasionally he understands that trash does build up.

Mr. Nerreau thought that in light of the issues that did not require closure, they might offer more than the $600 and he suggested a $1,000 reduction.

Motion: B. Nerreau moved, and C. McCoy seconded to approve the reduction of $1,000 in rent for this summer’s concession at Jennings beach based on loss of business and other various interruptions.

Amended Motion: S. Walker moved, and A. Mullady seconded to amend the motion by substituting $600 for $1,000.

Vote: 2-3-2 (C. McCoy, M. Von Conta and B. Nerreau against), (S. Walker and J. Gerber abstained) Motion fails.

Vote on the Original Motion to reduce payment by $1000: 5-0-2 (S. Walker and J. Gerber abstained) Motion passes.

IV. PUBLIC INPUT:

1. Jan DeBona, 570 Reid St., was present to ask for the reinstatement of boat boys at Penfield. Ms. DeBona stated that none of the older patrons can take their boats down by themselves. She also stated that the weekend transient launching is getting out of hand because there is no one there to manage the area.

Mr. Calabrese noted that this was a budgetary cut. Mr. Walker suggested that Ms. DeBona ask to attend a future budgeting session of the Commission to restate her request.

2. Kevin Flynn, 67 Sachem Road, was present to discuss an email that he had sent to Mr. Calabrese and Mr. Tetreau. He let the Commission know that he feels that the Commission does not give the public sufficient notice on some of their actions and votes. He also feels that they do not meet as often as they are required and that there is an absentee issue among the members. The Commission explained the cancelled meetings which were due to bad weather or summer vacations which is a normal occurrence. The members also noted that they always post in a timely manner which they did for the matter of the June rules change topic that Mr. Flynn was mentioning.

V. NEW BUSINESS: To hear and act upon:

1. Conversation with Board of Finance Chairman, Tom Flynn – Recreation Budgeting – The was a lengthy dialogue between the members and Mr. Flynn who had been invited to speak to the members regarding recreation fees and the philosophy behind what Town expects financially from this Department. A Profit and Loss statement was distributed to all members and to Mr. Flynn showing a net surplus
almost $2 million for the 2017-18 fiscal year ($1.53 million from Parks & Recreation programs and Marina, and $411K from Golf Courses). Mr. Flynn praised the work that the Department does but noted that with the condition of the State budget, the Town is virtually “on its own” and looks to any resource they can for revenue. The Board of Finance expects the Town to continue to “monetize its assets and make sure that it is charging appropriately for the programs and services. This means doing your due diligence, making comparisons, and getting the market rate for the programs you provide.” He always looks for creative programming and making use of spaces where possible. The Board is happy to provide money if they know they’ll get a better return on their investment. He was very pleased to know that the Department offers scholarships on its many programs. Ms. Mullady asked if it would be worthwhile to have someone from the RTM and or the Board of Finance sit in on budgetary meetings where fees are being discussed. Mr. Walker discussed the mission of Parks & Recreation and did not think they were in the business of subsidizing taxpayers and that they shouldn’t raise fees just because they can. He sees the affordable recreation offerings as a value to being a resident. Ms. Gerber was concerned that if fees are raised too high then it will change the way that Parks & Recreation is viewed by the residents. Mr. Flynn explained that all residents will see services suffer if everyone doesn’t do what they can to monetize the assets. All were grateful for the conversation and the Commission agreed to provide “comps” to the Board of Finance whenever needed.

2. Parks & Recreation Beach Bash - Alcohol waiver at Penfield Beach – Asst. Director Gaylen Brown let the Commission know that, following the success of the “Jaws” event at Lake Mohegan, the Department is planning an end of the summer event for adults at Penfield Pavilion. She was present to request permission to cordon off the front of the pavilion on the beach side to place up to nine picnic tables, string the area with lights, and allow attendees to take alcohol onto that portion of the beach.

**Motion:** C. McCoy moved, and J. Gerber seconded to approve waiving the alcohol restriction for the beach at Penfield Pavilion on Aug. 31 for the Department’s special summer event.

**Vote:** 5-1-1 (Ms. Von Conta opposed and Mr. Walker abstained) Motion Carried.

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS: To hear and act upon:

5. Revisit Section 5 of Parks & Recreation Rules & Regulations to include Skim Boarding – Ms. McBride let the Commission know that the vote in June unintentionally left the skim boarding section out of the motion. She believes, and it was confirmed by the other members, that this was not their intent but happened when striking the whole section in the motion.

**Motion:** B. McBride moved, and B. Nerreau seconded to add the following section to the newly revised section 5 of the Rules and Regulations: Skim boarding is not permitted in any of the Town’s swimming areas except for a conditional skim boarding area at Jennings Beach. No Ramps or any other hard objects can be brought into that area and the area can be closed to skim boarding at any time by representative of the Fairfield Recreation Department and Waterfront staff for reasons of safety and crowd management. Swimming can also take place in that area. The use of skim boards in that area should be considered at the participant’s own risk and individuals participating in these activities in what is considered a reckless manner by the beach staff, can be excluded from the skim boarding area by representatives of the Fairfield Parks & Recreation Department and Waterfront Staff.

**Vote:** Approved 6-0 S. Walker Abstained

VII. To hear and act upon information in Committee Reports:

A. HSR Building Committee – Ms. Mullady reported that Silver, Petrocelli and Assoc. are the chosen architects and that of three choices; to renovate on-site, build new on-site or build new at the driving range location, they have chosen to build new on-site since the cost between the first and second options was only a $100,000 variance. The estimated price is currently much higher than the sub-committee hoped so they are going to try to reduce the scope and finishings. The sub-committee has told Ms. Mullady that paddle tennis courts could go where the existing cart barn is but no outdoor pavilion or ice rink are in their plans. Ms. Mullady stated her intention to resign from the committee since there is really no need for a recreation liaison at this point and does not feel her presence is necessary.
B. Marina Sub-Committee – Mr. Walker reported that the sub-committee met on August 14 and Mr. Kenny reported that the slips openings have not changed:
Small - 7 with offers out to all
Medium – 3 vacant with invitations are out and expecting to fill shortly.
Large – 4 open with invitations out to all.
The fuel dock planning continues with final drawings presented by the Engineering Department.
RACE Engineering continues to work with the sub-committee members to create ways to reconfigure the marina while staying within industry standards. This may include larger fairways and the creation of finger docks as opposed to frog hooks. They hope to do this without a significant loss of boat slips; however, they do anticipate some loss which will be accomplished through attrition. They hope to present a plan to the full body next month or in October.

VII. BOARD OF EDUCATION REPORT: Ms. Gerber reported that the Board of Education did not meet in July. Since this Commission’s last meeting they approved the K-5 Music curriculum. They approved some new graduation requirements that will affect this year’s 7th graders going forward. The first day of school is Aug. 30 with orientations on August 29.

VIII. DIRECTOR & PROGRAM REPORTS: Mr. Calabrese presented a written report (see attached). Topics included:
• The summer programs are coming to completion and it has been one of the smoothest summers he remembers. He thanked all his staff for the wonderful special events they have planned and continue to plan.
• Fairfield Teen Theatre programs were a great success.
• Due to the drainage work at Sherman Green this fall, the Vigil for Victims of Domestic Violence will be held at the Town Hall Green.
• Several maintenance items that are completed and ongoing were mentioned including a great many improvements in the Fitness Center.

IX. GOOD OF THE ORDER – Mr. Walker asked the members to further consider the rational to raise fees given the Department’s surpluses and contributions to the General Fund.
Mr. Calabrese reminded members that next month’s meeting will take place on Thursday, Sept 20, due to Yom Kippur.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 9:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Joan Ryan, Recording Secretary