A meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission of the Town of Fairfield was held on Wednesday, March 20, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. at the Eunice Postol Recreation Center, Fairfield, Connecticut.

PRESENT: Scott Walker, Chairman; Mary Von Conta, Bridget McBride, Jessica Gerber, Jamie Benton, Chris McCoy and Brian Nerreau
ABSENT: David Weber and Alexa Mullady
ALSO: Anthony Calabrese, Director; Parks & Recreation Department; Gaylen Brow, Assistant Director; Parks & Recreation Department; Justin Cathcart, Marina Manager; Chelsea Seres, Program Coordinator;

Chairman Scott Walker called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.
Mr. Calabrese introduced new Program Coordinator, Chelsea Seres who gave her background and some projects that she has already begun to work on, including soccer and summer camps.

I. ACT ON MINUTES OF: January 16, 2019 – Hearing no objections the minutes were approved as written.

II. COMMUNICATIONS: To hear and act upon:
1. R. Dylan O’Connor – Mr. O’Connor of 31 Lola St was present to request approval for the 2nd Owen Fish Park Four Corners Revitalization Fundraiser. Mr. O’Connor was still undecided as to the date but has narrowed it down to either September 7 or 21. All aspects of the event will mirror last year. When asked about the new property owner/developer of the Stratfield Market, Mr. O’Connor let the members know that the developer is in support of their project and is willing to be consistent in the landscape that is planned.
Motion: M. Von Conta made a motion, seconded by J. Gerber to approve the request for either September 7 or 21 with approval by the staff.
Vote: 6-0-1 (S. Walker abstained)
2. Al DiGuido, Al’s Angels – Cornhole Event – July 6, 2019 - Sherman Green- Dan Viera, 10 Buttercup Lane, Shelton was present to represent Mr. Di Guido and the Al’s Angels and Live Fun non-profit organizations. Mr. Viera explained that the corn hole portion of the event would be an add-on to the Saturday night concerts that are already scheduled and presented by the groups.
Motion: B. Nerreau made a motion, seconded by C. McCoy to approve the request for holding a corn hole event on July 6, 2019 during the Sherman Green Concert.
Vote: 6-0-1 (S. Walker abstained)

III. PUBLIC INPUT: None

IV. UNFINISHED BUSINESS: To hear and act upon:
1. Water Lantern Festival Proposal – Ms. Brown reported that, in response to the questions and concerns raised by the members during the January meeting, she explored the event that One World Festival puts on and had conversations with the Newington Parks and Recreation Director. She and Mr. Calabrese concluded that they feel that they could and should put the
lantern event on themselves with no interaction from One World Festival (see 1/16 minutes). They will call it Light Up The Night to be held at Lake Mohegan on September 7 (Raindate 9/8). Currently, Pink Pledge has expressed interest in partnering. Some members gave some suggestions that Ms. Brown will take into consideration and all thought it was a good idea for the Department to try the event themselves. It will be a non-alcohol event.

Motion: B. McBride made a motion, seconded by B. Nerreau to approve the request.

Vote: 6-0-1 (S. Walker abstained)

V. NEW BUSINESS: To hear and act upon:

1. Marina Appeals – Mr. Walker explained the issue to the members who were all furnished with all the necessary appeals prior to the meeting. Appeals were received from five boaters who had not furnished all the paperwork by deadline and were subject to a $250 fine as well as sixteen boaters who had missed the deadline to renew completely. Mr. Walker suggested that the two issues be discussed separately. Ms. Gerber asked why, after so many years following 2015 when there were numerous missed deadlines and rules were put in place, did they find themselves with such a large number of missed deadlines and appeals. It was explained by both Mr. Cathcart and Mr. Walker that notices were sent as in the past. Mr. Cathcart did note that, due to a glitch, one group of D-Dock boaters (D 46-63) did not receive the initial email. Mr. Cathcart noted that of the 16 in this group who did not receive the emails, all but two renewed on time. Mr. Walker added that previous manager Andy Kenny evidently returned to previous manager Robin Bimmel’s manner of constant notification, by sending multiple emails, setting up robocalls, etc. Mr. Cathcart and staff sent email renewal notices on 12/17/18, 1/31/19 (to D group who were missed) and 2/5/19. Members agreed that this is how it should be done in the future and that two notifications were more than sufficient to remind slip holders to renew.

There was discussion as to why this came to the Commission as opposed to an Appeals Committee. Mr. Walker stated that he made this decision for urgency sake. Some felt it was very difficult to evaluate one reason over another. Mr. Walker agreed stating that some had very legitimate reasons, such as family deaths, etc. while others were merely “snoozers”. A member of the public took offense to that remark.

a) Late Fees

Motion: M. Von Conta made a motion, seconded by C. McCoy to assess all those appealing a $250 late fee to be paid by April 15.

After learning that the April 15 date would create a problem in starting to notify the waitlisters, Mr. McCoy, withdrew his second, and the motion, finding no other second, failed.

Ms. Gerber was concerned that this would create a precedent and each year we will have more and more appeals if we don’t stand our ground.

Mr. McCoy believed that some leniency should be afforded because the department was transitioning to a new manager.

Motion: M. Von Conta made a motion, to assess all those appealing a $250 late fee to be paid by April 15 due to the fact that confusion was caused by the change in marina manager.

There was no second and the motion failed.

Ms. McBride remarked that she believed $250 was too steep a fine. Mr. Walker explained that the rules cannot be rewritten at this time but could be revisited in the future.

Several members of the public who were appealing spoke to the issue asking for leniency. Arthur Hersh, 1 Oak Bluff Road who was not appealing but felt that $250 was steep but 500 people got their paperwork in on time and there are too many people on the waitlist. He would only accept a death in the family as an excuse.
Motion: M Von Conta made a motion, seconded by B. McBride to refer the entire appeals process back to the appeals sub-committee.

Following discussion, Ms. Von Conta withdrew her motion.

Motion: B. Nerreau made a motion, seconded by M. Von Conta to deny all five So. Benson boaters who are appealing the $250 late filing fee.

Vote: 5-1-1 (McBride opposed, Walker abstained) Motion passed. According to the rules all paperwork must be filed by April 15.

b) Missed Deadlines -

Mr. Nerreau remarked that after reading all the appeals, he felt that there were only a handful that had legitimate excuses and the rest just missed the deadline. Mr. McCoy felt that leniency was due because of the “change in regime”.

Motion: C. McCoy made a motion, seconded by M. Von Conta allowing any individual who missed the deadline to pay the $250 late fee and has up until 4/15 in lieu of losing their slip.

After discussion Mr. McCoy amended his motion.

Amended Motion: C. McCoy amended his motion, and it was seconded by M. Von Conta to allow the 16 people appealing be granted an extension of 4/15 to complete their paperwork and pay the $250 late fee in lieu of losing their slip.

After discussing the fact that people who had not yet appealed would have any amount of time to come and appeal, and there are at least two people who decided not to appeal thinking they had no legitimate excuse.

Amended Motion: C. McCoy amended his amended motion, and it was seconded by M. Von Conta to allow the 16 people appealing along with anyone who contacts the marina manager be granted an extension of 4/15 to complete their paperwork and pay the $250 late fee in lieu of losing their slip.

After Mr. Cathcart reiterated that the 4/15 date would cause waitlist issues, Mr. McCoy withdrew his motion in its entirety.

Motion: C. McCoy made a motion, seconded by M. Von Conta allowing anyone who has not yet submitted paperwork for the 2019 boating season to submit completed paperwork along with $250 late fee provided that they make contact with the Marina staff by close of business day on 3/27/19 to communicate their intent to retain their slip.

Vote: 4-2-1 (Gerber and Nerreau opposed, Walker abstained)

2. Social Media Platforms – Ms. McBride expressed concern that the department might not be making full use of social media platforms. She understands that they are using Facebook quite frequently but felt that especially Instagram could be very useful for promoting events and programs. Ms. McBride believes that if someone could commit to posting at least three times a week it could make a difference and she wondered if the Commission should get involved in making sure this was part of the Recreation plan. Mr. Calabrese explained that he had set up an Instagram account in 2015. Following his recent hiring of Chelsea Seres, he believes that he, Ms. Brown and Ms. Seres can handle the social media platforms quite well and it is part of their duties with all programs and events. Ms. Brown thanked Ms. McBride for her input and stated that while the Instagram account currently has 338 followers they will all do a better job going forward to use the platforms.
3. Sledding Rules - Ms. McBride made the members aware of an incident that occurred at Sturges Hill during a recent snowfall on March 3. According to some, there were threatening activities and even some injuries. Ms. McBride asked if there should or could be signs posted. After discussion, and advice from the Risk Management Department as explained by Mr. Calabrese, members felt that it was not necessary to regulate this activity and that common sense would have been to call the police if needed. No action was taken.

VI. To hear and act upon information in Committee Reports:
A. Rules Sub-Committee - Mr. Benton reported that they continue to work. Their next meeting is April 2. They hope to present to the full Commission in April or May.

B. Marina Sub-Committee – Mr. Walker introduce Matt Taverna of RACE who explained Option 11 to the members and the public. This is the option that was derived from all the past months of sub-committee work. It maintained recommended fairways, installed finger docks and addressed the portion of the boating community that has the largest waitlist; the larger boats. While the marina presently can house 603 boats (573 usable slips), option 11 makes space for 471 boats. Mr. Taverna gave a cost estimate of $5.7 million for the work which doesn’t include electrical or plumbing that could range between 1 and 3 million dollars.

Mr. Walker thanked Mr. Taverna and stated that the next steps would be to bring this plan to a Public Hearing. While the sub-committee understands that there is a loss of 102 slips, they envision this loss through attrition and in proportion to the waitlist where small boats have only a one-year wait and larger boats which have increased space in this plan have an 11 year wait. They hope for a timeline of one year from Public Hearing to Town approval and then a period of attrition after the waitlist is frozen. Mr. Taverna believes that, in a perfect scenario, this plan can be implemented over a winter’s season with a year’s lead-time to order and deliver supplies.

Mr. Nerreau, sub-committee chair, questioned the price tag after being told less than a year ago that a “Cadillac” marina, which they did not design, would cost $5.2 million. Selectman, Ed Bateson was present for the presentation and was quite concerned that this plan and price tag would not be well-received. He suggested that the Commission be prepared with a business/cost plan (Pro-forma) for the public hearing. He understood that while the Town Boards will dictate how this project would be paid for, the Commission should provide rate plans that would include scenarios where the Town bonds this completely; where the Town and the boaters share the cost; and where the boaters pay for the cost solely through rate increases. Ms. Von Conta, who continues to voice the concerns of safety at the marina, asked what the alternative is to renovating the marina. Mr. Bateson replied that it would be a continuous maintenance issue as it is now.

Arthur Hersh – 1 Oak Bluff Road expressed concern that if you design for additional large boats you need to understand that two boats cannot currently pass each other in the channel and you may want to think about widening the area.

G. Mike Herrington, 93 Rolling Ridge Rd. was present to state that he had presented the sub-committee with a 10-year plan which he would be pleased to provide to the entire Commission. His recommendations and cost estimates were for the following:

- Older Frog Hooks be updated for all the smaller boats. Financial estimate for Installation cost of $110K amortized over 10 years.
- Frog Hooks be replaced by Finger Docks for most larger boats. An assessment, possibly during the summer when boats are docked would give an idea of how many are needed. Financial estimates of $142.5K amortized over 10 years.
- Future Dredging Plans
- Financial Analysis
- Competitive Analysis
Charlie Simonds, 80 Brett La. expressed concern that with such current narrow access to the marina he feels it is high risk to build for larger boats and that if you do so you may need to address the infrastructure.

David Pritchard, 128 Cobblers Hill Rd. addressed the survey that was the impetus for this work and stated that questions can be skewed in such a way that people want everything, but when questions are framed with associated costs, you may get other responses. The Commission will plan a public hearing in the near future.

VII. BOARD OF EDUCATION REPORT: Ms. Gerber reported:
- Dr. Jones has taken a position in Greenwich and her last day will be June 30. A search Committee has started work and hopefully Steve Tracy will serve as interim until a permanent Superintendent is hired.
- Parents are urged to pay attention to redistricting plans in the next few months. A Town Hall meeting will take place on 4/30 that may cover this topic.
- Budgets are going through the approval process. The Board of Finance is scheduled to vote on 4/3.
- The School Administrators’ contracts were approved.
- The 2019-20 calendar was amended to include another day off due to a Presidential primary.
- The last day of school is tentatively 6/17. Graduations will be announced next month.

VIII. DIRECTOR & PROGRAM REPORTS: Mr. Calabrese presented a written report (see attached). New topics included:
- Successful Bonfire online registration.
- Locker rentals still slow.
- New Easter “Eggstravaganza” being planned for April 13 geared to both kids and adults.
- Work is being done at both Tom Haydon Field and Dover Park.
- Budget season is progressing. Mr. Calabrese will present to the Board of Finance on Thursday, March 21.

IX. GOOD OF THE ORDER – No Discussion

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 9:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Joan Ryan, Recording Secretary