TOWN OF FAIRFIELD
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
Minutes of September 18, 2019

A meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission of the Town of Fairfield was held on Wednesday, September 18 at 7:00 p.m. at the Penfield Pavilion, Fairfield, Connecticut.

PRESENT: Scott Walker, Chairman; Mary Von Conta, Chris McCoy, Alexa Mullady, Bridget McBride, Jessica Gerber, Jamie Benton, David Weber and Brian Nerreau
ABSENT: None
ALSO: Justin Cathcart, Marina Manager

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

I. ACT ON MINUTES OF: August 21, 2019, and September 4, 2019 (Special Meeting) – Hearing no objections, both sets of minutes were approved as written. (Ms. Von Conta not yet present)

II. COMMUNICATIONS: To hear and act upon:
A. Maureen Greco, Girl Scout Campout & Bonfire – Maureen Greco, 20 Glover St. was present to request a campout and bonfire on October 4/5 at Jennings Beach (see attached). The 20-30 scouts are Junior Girl Scouts and will be working on their camping badges.
Motion: B. Nerreau made a motion, seconded by D. Weber to approve the request.
Vote: Unanimous

Mr. Johnson, 114 Merton St. was present to make this request for third year event (see attached). Proceeds will be shared by both the Fairfield Police Union Scholarship Fund and the Friends of the Bigelow Center for Senior Activities. The entrants, who will have pre-paid, will wear a wrist band and will use the lots across the street for free parking and the wrist band will give access to the beer tent during the post-race activities. All will be monitored closely by the Fairfield Police as is the custom during Clam Jam. They will be renting the Jacky Durrell Pavilion. This year’s event netted $27,000, with 90% participants being Fairfield residents.
Motion: A. Mullady made a motion, seconded by B. Nerreau to approve the event as requested.
Vote: Unanimous

C. Madeline McCusker – Girl Scout Silver Award Project Request – Paige DeSantis and Madeline McCusker, both Junior scouts came to request permission to work 50 hours on cleanups and improvements to the Owen Fish Trail and to purchase a bench to install along the trail in order to earn their Silver Award (see attached).
Motion: J. Gerber made a motion, seconded by C. McCoy to approve the request.
Vote: Unanimous

D. Roger Goodledy – Lincoln Park Monument Request – Mr. Goodledy was unable to attend and asked that the request be tabled to the October 16 meeting. All agreed.

III. PUBLIC INPUT: None
IV. NEW BUSINESS: To hear and act upon any business that may properly come before the Commission:

A. Winter Storage Fee Proposal – Marina Manager, Justin Cathcart came before the Commission to request approval of a 10% increase to Winter storage fees, both in-water and on land for residents and non-residents (see attached). Mr. Cathcart informed the Commission that the last time these fees were increased was 2015/2016 for dry storage and 2004 for wet storage. Mr. Nerreau asked what other marinas offer these services and for the comparable costs for these locations was told that there are few municipal marinas that offer these amenities. Greenwich alone has dry storage at $25 per/foot (Fairfield is $20 per foot). Stamford alone has wet storage at approximately $20-22.50 per/foot while Fairfield’s is currently $13.88.

Motion: A. Mullady made a motion, seconded by J. Gerber to table this request until there is a clearer idea of what the Town will be doing to the Marina.

John David- 25 Brett Rd. - Spoke in favor of what he felt was a the slight increase over 5 years.

Doug Chevanello – 3 Brookfield Ave. – Asked why they continue to approve more money going into the General Fund.

Daniel Cammaro 1617 Jennings Rd. - Thought this was a small increase and should not be tabled.

Vote: 3-7 (Mullady, Walker, Benton in favor) Motion to table fails.

Motion: C. McCoy made a motion, seconded by D. Weber to increase winter storage costs as presented by the Marina Manager.

There was continued discussion and remarks by the public, with some questioning the comparisons to other municipal marinas.

Ken Cammaro -345 Carroll Rd. - Thought there should be a shopping list to determine where these fees are going.

Ms. Mullady questioned the reason behind this request for an increase with no justification and stated that she will not support this. Mr. Cathcart responded that he hoped that if there were additional revenue he would have more money to spend on the marina. Additionally, he mentioned that over time the labor, maintenance costs, and costs associated with general wear and tear have increased. When asked why the monies can’t go to the Marina instead of the General Fund, it was explained that the revenue stream is dictated by Town policy and the Commission has no ability to change that.

Vote: 3-6 (Weber, McCoy and Von Conta in favor) Motion for increase fails.

B. Perry’s Green Fee Proposal – Marina Manager Cathcart requested that the $80 assessment maintenance fee for each mooring be passed on to the user. Ms. Von Conta asked Mr. Cathcart if he had had a discussion with the Harbor Management Commission regarding this request. Mr. Cathcart had not spoken to that Commission and decided to bring this request back at another time.

V. To hear and act upon information in Reports:

A. Marine Sub-Committee Report

1. Joseph Regensberger Appeal – Due to Mr. Regensberger absence, the matter was not discussed.

2. Marina Sub-Committee Report –Public Hearing/ Vote for Proposed Marina Redesign - Mr. Walker gave a short summary of how the Marina Sub-Committee came to the decision of presenting Option 11 to the Full Commission. *All configurations and financial estimates are online.
Mission: To provide a safe and affordable marina in the South Benson Basin for the Fairfield boating community while providing an adequate financial return to all Fairfield residents.

The Parks and Recreation Commission has been instructed to prepare a long-term plan for South Benson Marina by the Board of Selectmen, The Board of Finance and the RTM. The Parks and Recreation Marina Subcommittee was assigned this task by the commission and established the following steps in development of this long-term plan:

1. Evaluate current condition of South Benson Marina.
2. Develop potential configuration options and costs to optimize utilization of marina.
3. Present configuration options to Fairfield’s boating community for feedback.
4. Refine configuration options and costs based on boater feedback.
5. Make final recommendation for long term plan to town for approval.

Evaluate current condition of marina
South Benson Marina (SBM) was originally constructed in the 1950s and 1960s and the current dock system was installed in the early 1980s per DPW records. SBM currently has 11 piers and floating docks that can berth 609 (+/-) vessels. The piers are timber framed. The gangways and docks are aluminum. RACE Coastal Engineering was contracted to perform a conditional assessment of the marina in the Fall of 2017 and began their assessment in February 2018. The RACE Marina Planning Report was completed in June 2018.

Report highlights:
At the time of site observation, all eleven piers, gangways and docks were in good condition, with no visible signs of deteriorations, damage or neglect. However, given the Marina’s age, long term replacement planning is recommended.

One note on the GANGWAYS
The gangways, although in good condition, are shorter and narrower than recommended. The shorter part relates to recommended pitch (which is currently steeper than recommended) and the narrower part relates to use of dock carts (which are currently limited to the docks) and safe pedestrian traffic walking up/down.

ADA
Elements of the existing marina are not compliant with current Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines. ADA guidelines state that a marina of SBM’s size shall have a minimum of nine (9) handicapped accessible boat slips. SBM currently does not have any slips that meet this ADA requirement.

CURRENT CONFIGURATION - FROG HOOKS and BOW PILINGS
SBM’s current configuration maximizes occupancy at the expense of accessibility and navigation. We have more boats than you would normally find in a marina of our size. This is accomplished primarily by having tighter than recommended fairways and using Frog Hooks instead of finger docks. These two factors allow for additional occupancy of boats, however, the additional occupancy “comes at a cost of safety and convenience”.

GENERAL CONDITION of FROG HOOKS and MODIFICATIONS
A significant number of frog hook connections are damaged as a result of strain or are otherwise modified. Modifications include extending the arms, adding platforms, or blocking out the hooks from the dock header (wale). Throughout the marina there are a significant number of physical modifications made by boaters over the years to make the existing docking systems work. In many cases, if these modifications were removed, boarding/offboarding vessels would be extremely difficult and dangerous. In other cases, the removal of these modifications would result in outboard motor lower units being at least partially submerged full time.

FAIRWAY WIDTHS
The SCH (The American Society of Civil Engineers Planning and Design Guidelines for Small Craft Harbors) recommends that a minimum fairway width in a “quite pool” marina shall be 1.5 times the length of the longest vessel. The existing fairways at SBM provide a fairway to boat length ratio of between 0.6 and 1.1. For example, given a 24’ boat, the recommended fairway should be 36’. In our case that dimension would range between 14’-5” and 26’-5”. As a comparison, multiple municipal and private marinas in the area have fairway width to boat length ratios of 1.5 to 2.0. Analyzing the existing boat lengths at SMB, it is recommended to either 1) increase fairways widths by approximately 30% to allow for adequate boat maneuverability, or 2) decrease the length of boats by 25%. For our largest boats, that would reduce our maximum allowed size from 36’ to 27’.
POTENTIAL CONFIGURATION OPTIONS AND SUB-COMMITTEE CONCLUSIONS

Given the information in the RACE Report, and taking into consideration boaters feedback, the sub-committee asked for additional layout and cost proposals from RACE and eventually settled on two options for final consideration.

One design we considered is Option 12 and I would like to start there. Option 12 is a rebuild of the existing marina in its current configuration while adding a new West Dock. The new West Dock would add 41 slips to current count of 609. The rational for adding a new West Dock was as a majority of boaters did not mind the tight fairways, we could add another dock where the fairway is large enough to add more slips and maintain a comparably tight fairway. The Opinion of Probable Cost for Option 12 is $7,208,000 ($7,208,040.00).

Option 12 will add all new standardized Frog Hook connections on Docks A-F and fingers on the new West Dock. Docks G – I will remain the same. Note: Existing Piers will remain. Option 12 will not change fairway widths so the existing navigation challenges will remain. It will also not significantly improve docking or on boarding / off boarding safety. In fact, safety and functionality might actually decrease. Here’s why: The current marina configuration, which Option 12 will be duplicating, relies on significant individual boater modifications to make many slips work. 212 of the 600 slips (35%) have some sort of modification made to them by the boat owners. The sub-committee struggled with the idea of recommending a $7.2m project in option 12 and then allowing boaters to then immediately have to modify the docks to make it work for their vessel. Alternatively, if we decided to prohibit any modifications after the rebuild the result would then be a very large percentage of slips would become immediately unusable or offer compromised usage in some way.

The other design we considered is Option 11. This is based largely on the recommendations found in the RACE Report. The Opinion of Probable Cost for Option 11 is $7,957,000 ($7,956,968.00).

Option 11 will allow for the recommended fairway widths throughout the marina and also proved the recommended finger docks for all vessels in the marina. The inclusion of finger docks will increase safety when docking and when boarding and offboarding. It will also eliminate any individual modifications needed to accommodate a vessel in a given slip. Option 11 will also make the Marina ADA compliant.

The obvious downsides of Option 11 are the reduction of slips from 600 to 471 (129) and the added cost; $749,000.00.

PRICING

As you know the other town bodies, as part of their request for a long term plan, indicated that they would like to see marina slip fees based on “Market Rates”. We have defined market rates as the average of the three other municipal marinas in Fairfield County: Westport, Stamford and Greenwich. Option 11 and Option 12 can both be fully funded by slip fees based on a given percentage of the average of these three municipal marinas.

Option 11 can be fully funded by charging 100% of the average slip price of the three marinas that make up our “Market”. We are forecasting an annual return to the town of $99,000. This is based on operating expenses provided to us by the town while adding the additional debt service for the renovation and miscellaneous adjustments.

Option 12 can be fully funded by charging 85% of the average slip price of the three marinas that make up our “Market”. We are forecasting an annual return to the town of $123,000. Again, this is based on operating expenses provided to us by the town while adding the additional debt service for the renovation and miscellaneous adjustments.

RECOMMENDATION

Taking into consideration the safety improvements, the navigation improvements, ADA compliance, eliminating the need for any modification to accommodate virtually any vessel in a given slip size, and the ability for this rebuild to be fully funded by “Market Rate” slip fees the sub-committee is recommending the Commission adopt Option 11 as the long term plan for South Benson Marina.

Finally, one component that the sub-committee has discussed, and will continue to discuss, is a temporary break/fix maintenance plan. Those direction of those discussions and planning are dependent on the decisions of this Commission.

Motion: M. Von Conta made a motion, seconded by D. Weber to adopt long-term Marina Plan Option 11 and present it to Town bodies for approval with options for revision.

Ms. Gerber asked if the Town bodies are aware of the $8 million price tag on this project. Mr. Walker explained that the Commission was asked for a plan but were given no parameters as far as details or cost. The only guidance was that “market rates” were expected. The “theoretical tax” included in the Profit and Loss projections was explained as putting a dollar amount on what
the Town would receive for three parcels of land that make up the Marina if those parcels were held privately. This amount was based upon the assessed value of the tree parcels and the Town’s current Mill Rate. Mr. Walker explained that this facility, like Golf, and beach stickers, etc. are expected to be revenue streams and will not be breakeven. The explanation of reducing slips will be done through attrition over several years. The timing to build will depend on the most cost effective plan, which could be over several years, or could theoretically be done over a single winter. All will depend on the bidding process and Request for Proposal (RFP). Ms. Gerber was told that there were an estimated 100 responders to the survey taken at the April Public Hearing. Only those who were present could take part in the survey. Most boaters understood, and expect that their slip fees will increase, but they strongly feel that they deserve to receive improvements to the marina in return. Mr. Walker explained that there is a 15% contingency built into the cost. Mr. Benton asked about ADA compliance and a sense of how much life is left in the marina. RACE explained that this is difficult to determine but in their experience a dock will last 30-40 years before structure failure could occur. The docks are approaching 40 years of service and RACE suggested that the Town develop a replacement plan as they feel that ongoing maintenance will become cost prohibitive. This timing is such that the sub-committee feels it is time to move forward with such plans in order to be responsible and protect the Town. They cannot wait until the last minute. Several RTM members did tour the facility and to the person, no one felt safe trying to use the frog hooks to step onto the boats.

Mr. Walker opened the floor to public comment.
G. Mike Herrington, 93 Rolling Ridge Rd. – Feels that the marina will last longer than five years. He feels rather than an $8 million project they should do a maintenance project for $50K a year. He also feels that all frog hooks could be replaced for $115K. The feedback was to maintain as long as you can, not rebuild it.
Noel Voroba, 441 Riverside Dr. – Rearrange the marina for larger fairways. Leave and maintain.
Doug Chevanello, 3 Brookfield Ave. – Asked to leave the marina “as is” until it’s necessary, adding that the comparable marinas that were used are not in fact the same as Fairfield which is not a “rich man’s marina.” Other than a place to park your boat, that is all the marina offers. Disappointed that the Town looks at their amenities as a way to tax their residents.
Rick Grauer, 268 Rowland Rd. - Feels that the Marina is supporting other Town programing and that the Sub-Committee ignored the suggestions and will of boaters and went to RACE. Mr. Grauer wanted to know why Mr. Herrington’s suggestions were not aired. Mr. Walker explained that they went to marine professionals for an expert opinion. It would be unmanageable to entertain all the suggestions of boaters. Mr. Grauer further felt that the Commission will look foolish and will not get the support of the Town bodies. He asked for just a maintenance program rather than a rebuild.
Tom Cammaro, 55 Reid St. – Saying that the new marina would be very nice and that he is a co-owner on two sized boats, he asked Mr. Walker go over the market rates and the five suggested pricing categories. Mr. Walker also explained that they tailored the slip sizes to the current marina population.
Chris Huckins, 95 Orchard Hill Dr. – Felt survey should have gone to all boaters. Need to explore a standard maintenance plan and what it would actually entail. Revisit a maintenance proposal from RACE. Likes replacing all frog hooks for longevity, flexibility and safety.
John Convertito, 62 Oyster Rd. – Asked about the bonding term estimate and it was explained that it was 30 years. He questioned asking the Town to forego $200K in income for 30 years and have the Town subsidize a brand new marina that would become more exclusive as it will have
20% less boaters and how fewer boaters might devalue a Concessionaire's interest in the marina.

Lou Kish, 147 Perry St. – At the April meeting he was told that the maintenance is “break and repair” so he suggests scheduled maintenance. He asked for a safety/injury report which Mr. Walker did not have but he did mention a serious accident in the spring. When asked if all the taxpayers are going to be informed about the plan, Mr. Walker explained that, if approved, Town bodies will receive this plan and residents will be made aware during the normal public meeting process.

Ken Cammaro, 345 Carroll Rd. – Asked for an exhibit of the revenue stream. Does the Town expect the marina to make up for the fewer 129 slips. Mr. Walker responded and understands that there is a decrease in revenue to the Town and there will be pushback from the elected bodies but feels it is a legitimate argument since the long-term fees will go directly to the marina, with boaters paying market rates as requested. Additionally, the maintenance and construction of the marina will be paid through these higher fees, even though there is a smaller financial return to the Town. Mr. Walker explained that vacancies could be filled season to season during the attrition plan of reducing the number of slip holders. When asked about a nice seafood restaurant on the location, Mr. Walker suggested this suggestion go to the Town Strategic Planning Commission.

Michael Dowling, 16 Mayflower Circle – There is expertise in the room and the Commission should listen to them. Could they not budget through Capital Improvements? As far as the market rate listen to the boaters, you can’t compare oranges to apples.

John Dowling, 82 Barlow Rd. – Asked about the waitlist numbers. It was noted that there are 629 in total with the majority in the larger category. Mr. Dowling took exception to reducing the marina when there are so many waiting to get in who may now need to wait 15 years to get in.

Ted Kuzma, 420 Wellington Dr – Asked why Stratford and Milford were not included as comparable marinas and was told that they are private commercial marinas. He asked about dredging plan since he can’t use the marina for 8 hours of tide a day. He was told by Mr. Cathcart that the contract to do the work this winter is set to be signed shortly to be completed this winter.

Ed Bateson - Town Selectman – Mr. Bateson reminded the members that The Town just lost the Director of Public Works, who is an integral piece of the marina and, who he felt did not concentrate on the marina. He suggested that the Commission might want to wait until a new Director is in place and hear his/her plan for the marina and possibly revisit this at a more appropriate time. Possibly see what can be done in-house and avoid a capital expense.

Eric Resko, 221 Windsor Rd – On the waitlist for approximately 15 year and fears this will add about 5-10 years to that wait. Mr. Walker remarked that the feedback has been that Option 11 could reduce the number of people who just “park” their boats there and don’t actually use their boats if the fees were higher and this may move the waitlist along faster.

Richard Dix, 68 Benson Pl. – Please don’t call them frog hooks as that is a trademark name. He is an employee of Captain’s Cove and has inspected the Marina docks. He feels that RACE may be biased in the idea that they are going to get the job to rebuild the marina. Mr. Walker refuted that statement explaining that any project would go through the normal bidding process. Mr. Dix felt the pilings are in good shape and the docks could be done in 5 years with restructuring and reorganizing for extra fairway footage. Mr. Dix encourages a maintenance plan. Mr. Walker stated that there will be a long-term maintenance plan put in place and that ultimately, if that is all that’s done, this will just get you back to where you are with on and off boarding issues, ADA deficiencies, fairway problems, while spending roughly the same amount of money. That, he felt, is a hard sell to Town bodies.
Pete Cusick, 640 Riverside Dr. – Need a clearer objective from the Town bodies other than more revenue generation. Need to maintain and optimize what is already there. Is your community that is being served raising objections? Pause this until you have a maintenance plan that may not cost you $8 million. Regarding the restaurant suggestion, he would also like to see something at the end of the jetty to service more of the community.

Dina Cummings, 600 Fairfield Beach Rd. – 27 years in the marina and wonders if the fees will increase if you don’t pass either plan? Also does not like comparing to higher socio-economic Towns. As far as market rates, that comes from other Town bodies and this boating community might get them to change that mindset.

Mr. Walker explained that no matter what happens, this will be a long process and there will be opportunities to modify and adjust. The question is what should the marina look like in 10-20 years.

John Delbello, 580 Flintlock Rd. – What will this do to me on the waitlist? With Option 12 could you just add Ad A portion of adding the new dock?

Bill Mulkerin, 460 Fairfield Woods Rd. – Asked about dredging the Open Space area. He stated that the Town can make the rules regarding Open Space.

Vote: 6-3 (Gerber, Mullady, McCoy opposed).

B. Board of Education Report: Ms. Gerber reported:
- The new school year started well with the exception of the playlots and fields that were closed. Most have reopened. More testing is expected with remediation for some.
- At their first meeting of the year, the members reviewed the draft of the Long Range Facilities plan. They learned that Osborn Hill School needs a new roof sooner than expected. It is a work in progress.
- They will be revising the Board of Education Handbook prepared by the Policy Committee.

VI. DIRECTOR & PROGRAM REPORTS: Mr. Calabrese presented a written report (see attached). Topics included:
- The Department is in the midst of our fall programming. Rec soccer is underway and registration is on par with past seasons. Our Adult softball leagues are winding down. Most will be completed by the end of the month. Since our last meeting, we held our SOLDOUT Woodstock concert. This was a wonderful night of music and fun!
- We have approved a fundraiser at Jacky Durrell in honor of Sandy Hook victim Jessica Rekos. This was a last second approval this week as we were unaware of the magnitude of this event. We have been in touch with the event organizer and the Fairfield Police Department to ensure they have adequate coverage on site.
- We have been approached by the Fire Department to chip in and help offset the cost of new dive equipment for their first responders. The cost of four sets of dive equipment is approximately $39,000, I am recommending that we pay for one set out of this year’s operating budget. If anyone has any questions, please follow up with me directly.
- Your request to recommend that the Board of Selectmen test the remaining parks, fields, and play lot locations will tentatively be on the October 2nd agenda. I will keep you posted of any action taken on that request at our next scheduled meeting. As we continue to follow the ongoing issues at our fields and parks with regards to the Julian fill pile issues. I want you to know that we are doing everything in our power to ensure the safety of all users. We are currently working with the Health Department, First Selectman’s Office, Public Works Department, and the
Town’s hired Licensed Environmental Professional to make sure we are doing everything necessary to keep the Town safe. You can follow all the up to date information on the Town’s webpage: [https://www.fairfieldct.org/filluseissues](https://www.fairfieldct.org/filluseissues). The Health and Public Works Departments are working with our Licensed Environmental Professional (LEP) to develop plans for the areas that need remediation.

VII. GOOD OF THE ORDER – None

**ADJOURNMENT**: There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 9:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Joan Ryan, Recording Secretary