

**TOWN OF FAIRFIELD
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
Minutes of June 24, 2020**

A tele-conference meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission of the Town of Fairfield was held on Wednesday, June 24, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. at the Eunice Postal Recreation Center, Fairfield, Connecticut.

PRESENT: Scott Walker, Chairman; Brian Nerreau, Jamie Benton, Bridget McBride, David Weber, Chris McCoy, Caitlin Schmidt, and Jessica Gerber

ABSENT: Mary Von Conta

ALSO: Anthony Calabrese, Dir. Parks & Recreation and Justin Cathcart, Marina Manager

Chairman Scott Walker called the tele-conference meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. He asked the members to identify themselves when speaking and voting.

I. ACT ON MINUTES OF: May 20, 2020 – Hearing no objections, the minutes were approved as written.

II. PUBLIC INPUT: None

III. Ratification of Action Taken Between Meetings:

Mr. Walker explained and all agreed that the Department needed to make some decisions regarding Special Events and items that normally would have come before the Commission. The Department would like to make the Commission aware and to be sure that there were no objections to the items listed.

- A. Reschedule of Police 5K Event from July 22, 2020 to July 21, 2021
- B. Approved Memorial Bench at Highwood Park – Kelly Scinto for Casey Cilio
- C. Approved Memorial Bench at Veres Park - Debranne Cingari for Dee Herlihy
- D. Approved Memorial Bench at Penfield Beach – Juliann Hudson

Motion: B. Nerreau *moved*, and J. Gerber *seconded* to approve the slate of items presented, which were dealt with by the staff between meetings.

Vote: 6-0-2 (D. Weber and C. Schmidt were not present at the time)

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Mr. Ted Lelek - South Benson Marina Appeal

Mr. Walker asked Mr. Lelek to go through the reason for his appeal for the slip that he has had at the South Benson Marina for over 30 years. Mr. Lelek explained that a year and a half ago he had a house fire on Christmas Eve and has been living in five different places since that time. The mail had been held and forwarded, and then Covid-19 happened. Because of these many moves, Mr. Lelek claims that he never received the renewal notice and application. He thanked the Commission for listening and considering his appeal.

Mr. Walker asked if there were any questions.

C. McCoy thanked Mr. Lelek for being a member for the past 30 years and asked if there were any other times that he had missed the deadline.

Mr. Lelek stated no and he has had no other appeals.

J. Gerber thanked Mr. Lelek for being here, but stated that the Marina applications were not sent by regular mail and that they were emailed. Ms. Gerber asked if the email listed on the application was accurate.

Mr. Lelek stated that the email he had in previous years of Tedlelek@optonline.net was incorrect and that he has not had this email in about a year. He now has a gmail address, however, he did not update his email with Justin. J. Gerber stated that applications have not been sent by mail for the past two years and that the application and documents deadline was in February, before Covid-19. Mr. Lelek stated that they were in Florida for the first four months of the year and admitted he should have known the timeline.

B. Nerreau wanted to confirm the dates in Mr. Lelek's appeal letter which stated that the fire occurred on 12/24/2018. Mr. Nerreau stated that Mr. Lelek was able to submit his application for the 2019 season, just after the fire, on time however he was unable to the following year.

Mr. Lelek stated that the previous year he had an Optimum email address.

B. Nerreau clarified that it was not the fire or the pandemic, but the email address issue. Mr. Lelek agreed.

J. Benton questioned J. Cathcart as to whether we were now late in the process and slips have already been reassigned, and if so, was Mr. Lelek's slip still open.

J. Cathcart stated H19 (Mr. Lelek's former slip) is not occupied at this time, however, he has sent out offers to fill out all remaining slips. He stated that some offers were 2nd and final offers and the balance are 1st offers.

B. McBride asked J. Cathcart if there is a deadline on these offers. J. Cathcart stated that there was a three-week time period which was either next Monday or later in the week. He would get back with the exact date.

S. Walker confirmed Mr. Lelek's telephone number as on the application. S. Walker further asked if Mr. Lelek received a Code Red notification from J. Cathcart on January 22, 2020. Mr. Lelek responded that he did not remember. S. Walker asked J. Cathcart how long the waitlist was for a large slip. J. Cathcart responded that it was 11 years. S. Walker stated that now it was June, and then asked Mr. Lelek why he did not attempt to make an appeal prior to now. Mr. Lelek responded that "he returned from Florida and went to look for his "M" stickers from his mail and then called the office and spoke to Kyle, who informed me that the slip was no longer mine, and that this prompted him to file the appeal".

C. Schmidt asked Mr. Lelek that since the deadline is typically February 15th, how did he normally remit payment and get confirmation. Mr. Lelek stated that typically he would write a check and that he had looked to see if he could find the cancelled check. He stated that he could not find where he wrote a check or where the Town had cashed the check.

S. Walker asked if there were any other questions.

J. Cathcart advised that the deadline for large slip offers was July 3rd so there was a week and a half to go. He had received three payments and several others said yes, however that have not submitted the paperwork yet.

B. McBride asked J. Cathcart how many large slips were open. J. Cathcart responded that he believed there were 10.

S. Walker asked if there were any more questions, and if anyone cared to make a motion.

Motion: B. McBride made a motion to approve Mr. Lelek's appeal to be able to get his slip back in 2020. S. Walker asked if there was a second. D. Weber seconded the motion. J. Benton stated that while he feels bad about what happened, the process to uphold the waitlist makes it difficult to approve an appeal if offers have been made. He wished to amend the motion because of offers currently out there and if they are still open. S. Walker stated he did not know how to handle administratively what would the cutoff be on a 10-year waitlist. J. Benton stated that he was referring to offers currently made and if it was possible to put off past July 3rd so they don't extend anymore until after the deadline. C. Schmidt stated that it was a good point that they could stop in time to see where the current offers stood as of the deadline.

S. Walker asked J. Cathcart if he could go through the process of how he sends out offers. J. Cathcart stated that if he has X amount of spots available, he will send out offers for those spots and they have 3 weeks to either defer 1 year or provide the paperwork. Then he would assign the

spots accordingly. S. Walker questioned when J. Cathcart stops sending out invites. J. Cathcart stated that late in August early September because at that point everyone has a slip here or at another Marina and that there may be 1 or 2 left at that point.

S. Walker stated that the Commission has as much of a responsibility to the people on the waitlist as the slip holders and we already denied someone in May who did not receive the email or the code red and that he could not support this motion and asked that they have a vote.

Vote: 3-5 (B. Nerreau, J. Gerber, J. Benton, C. McCoy and S. Walker opposed). Motion failed.

B. Sammy Knorr- Eagle Scout Project Proposal

S. Walker asked S. Knorr to explain his proposal which all members had seen in advance.

S. Knorr stated that his project was similar to the Lending Library however it would be with beach toys at Jennings and Penfield where children can use the toys at the beach and return them when they leave.

S. Walker asked Parks and Recreation Director Anthony Calabrese what his opinion was regarding the project and A. Calabrese responded that he fully supported the project and will find an appropriate place at each beach.

B. McBride stated that she loved the idea and it would enhance the beaches in town, however her one concern is Covid-19 and if and when installed, what the cleaning procedure would be.

S. Knorr stated he is still awaiting BSA approval and depending how it grows, the simple solution would be to have sanitizing wipes to use before and after use, or to wait until things calm down. B. McBride stated that there should be a disclaimer that the liability was for people to clean to their own ability.

B. Nerreau stated that he did like the idea but did share B. McBride's concerns and questioned the size of the box of 4' x 2.5'. B. Nerreau asked how the toys would be accessed in the box because, if from the top, a 4' box would be very difficult for children. S. Knorr stated that the size was only a preliminary proposal and the final dimensions would be 48" x 45" to 56" tall. The original dimensions were a rough draft. S. Knorr clarified that the 4 ft. height would include posts that would be buried and cemented in the ground. The actual structure would be only 2 feet off the ground. The child would enter through a Plexiglas door in the front.

B. McBride suggested that if this has been done in other towns, maybe to reach out to see what their cleaning procedures are. S. Knorr stated that he would look into it. C. Schmidt questioned the maintenance. Would he be restocking toys and who would be taking care of the initial stocking? S. Knorr stated that the initial stocking would be by donation and he would monitor it when he comes home from college and also get in touch with fellow troop members to assist.

C. Schmidt asked if he had a plan for the future. S. Walker asked Director A. Calabrese whether at some point and time, the Parks and Recreation Department take over the project. A. Calabrese stated yes, usually with scout projects, even after the scout graduates and goes to college, the troop is very good about taking it over. If it stopped being maintained, yes, the Parks and Recreation Department would take it over. S. Knorr stated that they would be placed in the sand and made with composite wood roofing shingles to prevent weathering. D. Weber stated that in these times, you really need someone to maintain and wash down the toys. S. Knorr said not necessarily, because the toys would be in netting to allow the sand to fall and there would be no debris in the box. D. Weber said the virus spreads like wildfire and that the toys would need to be cleaned daily. C. Schmidt asked what the plan was to replenish in addition to cleaning. S. Knorr said initially they would stock them and then any extra from donations will be used to add more. They would have fundraisers in order to replace any additional toys in the future. Also have a Corona Virus disclosure on the box and available wipes for patrons to use. J. Benton expressed concerns for safety issues with kids climbing on the roof or climbing in and wants to make sure that everyone is clear on safety.

S. Knorr stated that the netting is just for the toys and the box will not fit a child in it. Regarding the roof, he did not think any large child would climb on it and since the 4 posts will be in the ground, did not think it would break.

J. Benton asked A. Calabrese if the lifeguards would be ok with this to which he responded yes.

S. Walker asked A. Calabrese if he would delay the plan due to Covid.

Mr. Calabrese stated that he was fine with the construction of the boxes providing the BSA gives the green light. CDC has said that surface transmission is low risk and that he would not have an issue.

Motion: J. Gerber made a motion, seconded by J. Benton to approve the proposal.

Vote: 7-1 (D. Weber opposed) Motion approved.

C. Relocating two (2) upcoming indoor special events from Penfield Pavilion to Penfield Beach - Changes in Latitude Concert (7/16/20) and Cover Girl Concert at (8/13/20).

This modification would require both fencing off a large section of Penfield Beach, in addition to allowing alcohol on the beach.

A. Calabrese stated that both events are schedule indoors at Penfield Pavilion with approximately 250 people. Doors open at 7:00 p.m. and the show starts at 8:00 p.m. and runs approximately 90 minutes in length. The Governor's rules are now 100 people outside. As of July 3rd, 500 people will be allowed outdoors. Currently the indoor limit is 25 people. The Governor says he will increase the 25 people to 250 people, but no time frame has been given. This is why we are looking for an alternate location to still have the event. Penfield outside is an easy solution with fencing off the area out to the high tide line and allow alcohol if Penfield remains an issue. Lake Mohegan would also be another option where we have done events in the past. Penfield would be the first choice but he is open to Lake Mohegan as well.

D. Weber asked how many people would there be. A. Calabrese responded that the original number was limited to 250. If the Governor revises the rules to allow 500 at outdoor events, but does not change the limit to 250 indoors, this contingency plan will allow the move to outdoors with up to 500 people. A. Calabrese does not anticipate 500 people would attend, however just trying to come up with alternate plans. D. Weber asked about wearing masks. A. Calabrese responded by stating that all of our parks and facilities will have signs up stating the guidelines. There are temporary ones there now, however that permanent ones will be up soon.

Motion: B. Nerreau moved and C. Schmidt seconded to approve. There was no further discussion.

Vote: 8-0 Motion was approved unanimously.

VI. To hear and act upon information in Reports:

Board of Education Report: Ms. Gerber reported that the Board of Education has met twice since the last Commission meeting and had discussions regarding summer school. Due to the restrictions they faced and transportation not able to be provided, this would not be able to be provided this summer. Hoping that in the fall there will be changes to reopen and they were awaiting the governor's guidance to come up with a plan, whether it be a hybrid with some in person and other distance learning. They did not have all the information at this time.

Regarding summer school, there is no district in the state that will be having it this year.

High School Graduations were held a week ago and they were "absolutely fantastic. There was a tremendous amount of work done by the Parks and Recreation Dept. to make this happen and as a parent, every single one said it was so fantastic to have this drive-in ceremony and it was a great community event. With the Headmasters, Parks and Rec, Board of Health and the Emergency Team it took a village and it was so special".

Monies were put into the non-lapsing account from savings in transportation to cover the reduction in the 2020-2021 school budget. Unforeseen costs for additional cleaning from custodians will be an added cost and there would also be a savings if "distance learning" continued. The adjustment to the budget through the non-lapsing account is good news.

They are awaiting recommendations regarding guidelines for the return to school and transportation. Currently, they only allow 10 students on a school bus during the regular school year that would add an additional 77 buses at a cost of 20 million dollars. They are looking at three different plans. One of which would be a hybrid of two days in school and another 2 days

distance learning. Also, Superintendent, Mike Cummings contract extension was unanimously approved with a 2% raise.

B. Director's Report:

Mr. Calabrese presented a written report summarized below:

- As of July 3rd, all Summer programs and special events based on the Governor's guidelines will then be happening. Peanut Butter Jam, Sand Jam, Summer Concerts can all start up the week of July 3rd. Jacky Durrell and Penfield Pavilion will remain closed. Currently, there are no Non-Resident beach stickers being sold. Daily passes were set to 100 per day at Jennings Beach only, but have been increased to 200 per day. Lake Mohegan is still not open to Non Residents. The beach is open and the bathrooms are open. The Fitness Center opened this past Monday. The Fitness Center members are using the back door and people needing access to the office will come through the front door. We are staffing the Fitness Center full time for cleaning and monitoring the amount of people allowed in at one time.
- Our Office Manager, Joan Ryan, has retired effective July 1, 2020. Kelly Brown has been offered the position internally.
- The budget process is completed. The Recreation Coordinator for Penfield/Waterfront has been posted and will close internally on Friday and expect to have the position filled by the end of July.
- The Marina Manager will be moving his office to the Parks and Rec building to have everyone in the same place.
- The trends for Covid-19 seem to be moving in a positive direction and we are trending low.
- Field permits for Little League and Youth and Organized Sports open on 6/27. The park bathrooms will be opened and cleaned daily.

J. Gerber asked whether the CIAC guidelines have sports getting back to "normal" by 8/30 (i.e., soccer for the fall). A. Calabrese responded that Recreation Soccer registration will open this week and they expect to run as is, based on the governor's guidelines as of 6/17/2020. High-risk sports such as Football/Rugby/Basketball are as of now a training version only. D. Weber asked about kids in contact sports wearing masks. A. Calabrese responded that none when playing but on the sidelines yes, as well as coaches. B. McBride asked what happens when sitting in the dugout and masks are a medical issue, will there be a medic on site? A. Calabrese responded that there will be no medic on-site and that if they cannot wear a mask then they should not. They are asking the leagues to self-certify and if they receive pictures of them not following the guidelines, they will revoke their permit. They are asking the safety coordinators for the leagues to take the lead on this. B. McBride said she saw practice at Owen Fish last week not safely spacing apart. A. Calabrese stated that there is nothing in the guidelines regarding playing. The dugouts need to be cleaned after every game and there needs to be 30 minutes between games because they cannot cross practices. The baseball/softball leagues will run 9 a.m. 12 p.m. and 3 p.m. He will be following up on anyone not complying. Bleachers will be closed/fenced off and are encouraging leagues to tell the parents.

ADJOURNMENT: S. Walker stated with no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 8:21 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kelly J. Brown, Recording Secretary

Tele-meeting location for audio: (Audio Meeting malfunctioned and did not occur).