

**TOWN OF FAIRFIELD
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
Minutes of October 21, 2020**

A tele-conference meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission of the Town of Fairfield was held on Wednesday, October 21, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. via teleconference.

PRESENT: Scott Walker, Chairman; Brian Nerreau, Jamie Benton, Bridget McBride, Mary Von Conta, Jessica Gerber, David Weber, Chris McCoy and Dylan O'Connor.

ABSENT: None

ALSO: Anthony Calabrese, Dir. Parks & Recreation

Chairman Scott Walker called meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. He asked the members to identify themselves when speaking and voting.

I. ACT ON MINUTES OF: September 16, 2020 – Hearing no objections, the minutes were approved as written.

II. PUBLIC INPUT: Will address at the time of the issue.

III. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Joanne Shonfeld – Request to Conduct a Food Drive at Owen Fish Park and place Purple Boxes for a Food Pantry at various safe locations in Fairfield.

J. Shonfeld explained the history of the Purple Box Food Pantry Program and how the program works. She stated that she would like to see these boxes placed at various locations around town. B. Nerreau asked what she was asking from the Commission at this time. J. Shonfeld said she would like to run a food drive at either Owen Fish or Veterans Park, once a month or maybe every six weeks. She would also like to have public facilities to place these purple boxes. B. Nerreau asked if these boxes would be permanent. J. Shonfeld said the boxes would be permanent and if she saw that one was being vandalized, she would have it removed. Her thought was that if the Commission approved the food drive event then she would be in charge of placing the food in the purple boxes around town, as the boxes would need to be filled on a daily basis. She would also find volunteers to help with the program as it grows. The purple boxes would also be filled from the public. M. Von Conta asked where the food drives were going to take place and suggested that she may want to make a plan to start off with one food drive. The permission for the food drives needs to be relatively clear. S. Walker stated that the Commission does not deal with open requests. They would need to have specific times/dates/places. If she wanted to put a purple box at Owen Fish that would be taken under consideration with the food drive. J. Shonfeld asked if she would need to get approval every time. S. Walker stated that it would be over a period of time. S. Walker asked the Commission if they had any questions. J. Gerber asked if they were voting to approve a food drive at Owen Fish? J. Shonfeld stated that she was planning on having a food drive there but not to have a purple box placed there sometime in mid-November. S. Walker stated that placing boxes was not going before the Commission tonight. The approval would be for a food drive with a window of the next two weeks. B. Nerreau said he would support that but was the request for Owen Fish or Veterans Park. J. Shonfeld said since she lives in the Stratfield area that Owen Fish would be preferred and then possibly Veterans Park for future drives. D. Weber asked if they could come up with a specific date tonight and then in the future for other parks he would have no problem with that. J. Shonfeld stated November 14th at Owen Fish Park. S. Walker asked what the times would be to which she said 11-2. A. Calabrese stated that he had no issues with that date. B. Nerreau moved to have the food drive approved on November 14th from 11-2.

J. Gerber seconded. M. Von Conta asked if that time included set up and tear down as well, which J. Shonfeld stated yes.

Vote: 8-0. (B. Nerreau, M. Von Conta, J. Gerber, D. Weber, B. McBride, J. Benton and D. O'Connor and S. Walker in favor. C. McCoy was not in attendance at this time. Motion passed and approved.

S. Walker stated that the purple boxes would need to have more specifics before it could be approved. D. Weber asked if she would need approval every time, and S. Walker stated yes, for right now it is one event and she can bring another proposal in the future.

B. Patti Dyer – Request to have a Free Little Library installed at the Sandcastle

P. Dyer presented drawings for the Free Little Library that she would like to have installed in honor of librarian, Kristen Robinson, who had worked in Dwight Elementary school for over 20 years. Kristen is retiring to take care of her elderly family members and since she lives down in the beach area, would like to see it placed at either the Sandcastle or in her neighborhood. A. Calabrese stated that they could only approve the Sandcastle location – not in the neighborhood. The police department would need to approve that. P. Dyer stated that the Sandcastle would be a perfect location. A. Calabrese said he would have no issue near the Sandcastle. S. Walker asked if there were any questions. D. O'Connor asked who would be responsible for the maintenance. P. Dyer said that she has a sign-up sheet at school and they will collect books and check up on the box once a month. S. Walker asked if it would be installed by Public Works. A. Calabrese said yes. J. Gerber made a motion to approve and M. Von Conta seconded.

Vote: 8-0. (B. Nerreau, M. Von Conta, J. Gerber, D. Weber, B. McBride, J. Benton, D. O'Connor and S. Walker in favor. C. McCoy was not in attendance at this time. Motion was passed and approved.

C. Justin Cathcart – Summer storage at Jennings Beach or Marina

J. Cathcart stated that he has had quite a few requests for summer trailer storage in the Marina and felt it could be a nice revenue generator for the town. He would like to propose space for 27 trailers in the second guest parking lot to the north and if it fills, use 10 spaces of the ramp trailer parking over the summer. B. Nerreau asked if he could explain the impact on the parking as J. Cathcart had mentioned in a previous conversation that this area is only fully used one day a year for the town's fireworks. J. Cathcart stated that there were 345 spots, give or take, in the Marina including open space, the two guest parking lots, the large and small slip parking lot, and the skate park parking lot. The small and large slip parking lots along with the first guest parking lot typically get used on a normal busy weekend, although the spots in that second parking lot generally are not used except on a very busy holiday weekends and they normally wouldn't be completely full. The only time it would be completely full would be on the evening of the Town fireworks. S. Walker asked if there were any other questions. D. Weber asked if J. Cathcart had talked to the police and Risk Management. J. Cathcart stated that he did not run this by Risk Management as they already offer winter storage but would follow up with them. He said the Police were alright with it. D. Weber asked if J. Cathcart should come back after reaching out to Risk Management or give a conditional approval. D. O'Connor asked if there were any issues regarding liability. J. Cathcart stated that the contract contain similar wording to all the other contracts saying that the town is not liable for any damage to the trailers that would be stored there. B. Nerreau asked if that language was in the winter storage contract. J. Cathcart said that at the bottom of the contract it says **“The privilege of using the Town’s Mooring/Storage facilities is in the nature of a license and is not to be construed as creating a bailment relationship. The Owner of the vessel holds the Town of Fairfield harmless from any claim, suit, damages or liability caused by the owner, anyone working on the vessel, or the vessel itself while in storage at the Marina. The Town assumes no responsibility**

for supervision and security. Once we get the approval, he would work with Risk Management to make sure that the Town is fully covered.

C. McCoy joined the meeting. M. Von Conta asked if the residents would have access to their trailers while in storage should the owner want to take the boat out on the trailer and if the spots were marked. J. Cathcart said yes they would have access and the spots will be marked and he was planning to add additional signage stating that it was permitted trailer parking only. S. Walker asked if it was a sizeable space to allow trailers for the boaters and stated that we already allocate a number of reserved parking spots for the boaters with "M" Stickers. His concern was that we are creating a private parking lot now for the boating community as parking is sometimes limited on the weekend if you just had a regular beach pass/dump sticker. He believed that with this we would be allocating a significant number of spaces for exclusive use for boaters. J. Cathcart stated that there would still be about 155 parking spots near the skate park parking lot and there are about 49 spots in the guest parking area and approximately 30 more spots in the open space area. In total, there are approximately 235 open to any town resident with a beach pass. D. O'Connor asked where he came up with the \$300.00 fee. J. Cathcart said he was surveyed boaters asking what they would be willing to pay as well as checking with a couple of the clubs and private boatyards to see what they would charge. The rate varied between \$150.00 (but that was stacked with no access) all the way to \$1,000 for a 28 foot trailer. Most boaters believed that a fee in the \$300.00 range would be fair. People with room on their property who can store their trailers in their yards would probably not pay that, however if they have smaller properties, they would be willing to pay that. B. McBride agreed with D. O'Connor that the fee was rather low and felt that it could be increased. J. Cathcart said he did not want to go too high and have no one sign up, but said if the Commission wanted \$350-\$400, he could agree. When he had mentioned higher fees, some boaters seemed resistant. M. Von Conta asked where they park their trailers now and how many nonresidents. J. Cathcart said they are by the boat ramp, there are 37 spots and it varies upon the weather and the season and he had never seen it completely full. It could be half to two thirds full. There are 50 nonresidents boat ramp passes allowed at \$200.00 and 200 residents at \$50 each and free for senior residents. C. McCoy read that trailers stored after October 1st 2021 would be considered abandoned and would be removed at the owner's expense which seems to be a misnomer. If they are abandoned there is no owner. What repercussion is there beyond that? Does it become the property of the town after a certain timeframe? J. Cathcart stated that as of October 1, if there are any trailers in that area he would contact the police and they would red tag them and contact the owners to notify them of the impoundment. He estimates that 99% percent of the time the owner would respond and come for their trailer. If it was not removed at that time, the owner would then have to pay the impoundment fees for the time that it was in the lot. C. McCoy asked if at that point it would be in the hands of the Police Department instead of the Marina. J. Cathcart stated that he would start the process but then they would be doing the actual impounding. S. Walker stated that the 10/1 dated does not dovetail with the end of the season which is the third Sunday in November. J. Cathcart said that the 10/1 and 5/17 corresponds with the timing of winter storage, beginning October 1 and ending on the second Sunday in May. S. Walker asked if he could envision a case where someone pays for a slip for the marina and pays for a space for their trailer and now for six weeks, need to take their trailer out of the lot and find somewhere else to store it and then bring it back. J. Cathcart said he could see there would be a pushback in that situation, however he believes that a large majority of the new summer renters would also arrange for winter storage and move the trailer into winter storage and then back again in May to their summer spots. He said he is looking at this as a test to see if it works and potentially look in the future for it to be off site. M. Von Conta made a motion to approve. B. Nerreau seconded. B. McBride added that she would have no problem approving if J. Cathcart can revisit again next year and give us a report with any changes to price/location. M. Von Conta and B. Nerreau stated that they would have no problem with that. D. Weber wanted approval from Risk Management as well.

Vote: 9-0. (B. Nerreau, M. Von Conta, J. Gerber, D. Weber, C. McCoy, B. McBride, J. Benton, D. O'Connor and S. Walker in favor. Motion was passed and approved.

D. Skate Park Rules Discussion

A. Calabrese stated that the Commission should have received a few emails from members of the public. In total there were six or seven similar emails stating that they would like to have scooters allowed in the skate park. In 2009, when the skate park first opened, there were a couple of caveats that came along with it. The first one was with the designer, a skate park construction company who said the town should not allow anything other than skateboards or inline skates/roller blades in the park. Scooters and bikes have different flow patterns than that of skaters. The second reason was maintenance because the pegs on the back of bikes chip the concrete and the same with the metal body of a scooter which would typically need to be repaired annually. Also the rules require helmets. Everything else on the list came from an insurance company saying that we had to follow these rules and that the park could only be opened when it was fully staffed. Over the years there have been issues with enforcing these rules. Most recently, the park had to close due to trespassing and skaters, and adults, arguing with police. The park was shut down for two weeks and an eight foot fence was installed to enforce the rules. Due to Covid, access was limited to residents which needed to be verified at the Parks and Rec Dept. Participants signed a waiver and received a sticker that needed to be displayed on their helmet. Attendants only allowed access to skaters with the sticker. A lot of the scooter parents did not like when the attendant said there were no scooters allowed and the rules were being enforced. A. Calabrese stated that he was not looking to take action tonight and that the park closes at Thanksgiving and will reopen April 1st. He recommended looking at this in the off season, whether by subcommittee or full commission and looking to risk management for an opinion regarding no attendant. D. O'Connor asked how other towns handle their skate parks with respect to scooters and whether they are staffed. A. Calabrese stated that some are staffed and will do separate days and times where just scooters are allowed, different days and times for skaters and most do not allow bikes. Others are a free for all but they typically don't allow scooters or bikes. B. McBride said she researched other towns and Newtown allowed skateboards/bikes/rollerblades all other uses are banned, Westport allows skateboards and rollerblades but does not allow bikes or scooters, Milford allows skateboards/rollerblades/BMX but had no mention of scooters being banned or allowed and Greenwich allowed skateboards/scooters/BMX and I am assuming that they will allow the ones with pegs. Scooters are a different type of vehicle as opposed to a skateboard. B. McBride asked if it was the point that park is too crowded and there would be a risk of increased collisions for the children. She was not sure why the town would not allow scooters if they are designed to be at a skate park and felt that any place for a child to be outside and enjoy recreation should be celebrated and would be happy to be part of a subcommittee. B. Nerreau stated he had also done some research and Scalzi in Stamford allows everything. He read there were several comments warning against allowing scooters because they are often ridden by younger children who may not be aware of the rules. The articles also mentioned an added danger associated with a particular wax that is used on scooters which could be dangerous to the skateboarders. C. McCoy mentioned when constructed 30 years ago and relay back to other towns have scooters gotten to a point where they would not do damage. A. Calabrese said that we need to look at what type of skate parks for example, Westport is not like ours, it is not concrete. It is like how our skate park used to be. Scalzi is a good comparison but it is not staffed. Since 2009, there has been no maintenance and our park is in really good shape. If we legally allowed scooters and bikes, he did not know how much maintenance or damage there would be. A. Calabrese went on to say that maybe if there were separate times/days, he will be open to allowing scooters, but it is a safety hazard having them all in at the same time. C. McCoy asked about dedicated times depending on what mode of transportation you were using and if there was any reason why the park is closed Thanksgiving to April 1. A. Calabrese stated the dates were arbitrary but that in the winter months it was difficult

to find someone to work regularly. C. McCoy asked if it could be open all year for when weather is still good. A. Calabrese stated that right now riders or their parent would sign the waiver and get a resident sticker but that was not the way prior to Covid. D. Weber suggested that they should probably be reviewed by Risk Management and that he would be willing to serve on a subcommittee. D. O'Connor stated he would also be willing to serve on the subcommittee.

S. Walker stated that there were a couple of members of the public and asked that they state their name and address prior to speaking.

Yasmine Osman – 77 Cambridge St. – appreciate them forming a subcommittee. She wanted to point out all children go to the skate park to learn and that there is no advanced level to learn. Her child has been taking his scooter for the past three years and feels it is a great part of Fairfield and would like to see it open all year round. She would be happy to join the subcommittee. Also wax is actually for skateboards also.

Faye Mylen – 115 Eunice Avenue – She has never seen boys with scooters snaking and that this is definitely done by skateboarders. Younger children are using scooters and the park is designed for learning. She feels that scooters should be allowed to use the facility – middle school to elementary school age.

S. Walker asked if there was any objection to forming a subcommittee. The subcommittee is formed by general consent and will be D. O'Connor, B. McBride and D. Weber.

B. McBride asked if the subcommittee decides to extend the closing date can they come back to the Committee with a motion to extend it. A. Calabrese stated that they could come back at that time.

V. To hear and act upon information in Reports:

A. Board of Education Report:

No report.

C. Director's Report:

Fall programs are up and running. Our staff has been hard at work doing their best to meet the ever-changing needs of the community. This fall the team has unveiled several new programs including youth football clinics, two adult corn hole leagues, three eSports leagues, and a sold out “Hole in One *fore* Hunger” food drive and a chance to win \$5,000.

We are currently working with our Emergency Management Team to discuss winter special events. Our team is currently working on a holiday video that will lead up to our annual Christmas Tree Lighting on the Town Hall Green. While we won't be able to have hundreds of people gather together, it is our hope that through social media and our local media outlets that we will be able to have hundreds, if not thousands, watching our virtual Christmas Tree Lighting.

With the Governor moving the State into phase three we are finally able to open our Penfield Pavilion to events of no more than 90 people. While this is still very limiting, we are optimistic that we will be able to book a handful of events for the winter months. Our staff is also looking into some Town sponsored events following all the State guidance.

Budget season is right around the corner. I will begin meeting with our respective program coordinators, golf pro, golf superintendent, marina manager, and DPW Director to begin the initial stages of budget planning.

As always, I'd like to publicly thank my staff for the tremendous job they have done adjusting to the unknowns of Covid in these trying times.

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Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

ADJOURNMENT: S. Walker stated with no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 8:28 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kelly J. Brown, Recording Secretary
Tele-meeting location for audio:
[youtube.com/watch?v=LDPX7Dp1uC0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LDPX7Dp1uC0)