

**TOWN OF FAIRFIELD
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
Minutes of December 16, 2020**

A tele-conference/webex meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission of the Town of Fairfield was held on Wednesday, December 16, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Brian Nerreau, Jamie Benton, Bridget McBride, Jessica Gerber, David Weber, Chris McCoy, Dylan O'Connor and MacKay Jameson.

ABSENT: None

ALSO: Anthony Calabrese, Dir. Parks & Recreation

Brian Nerreau called meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

I. Act on Minutes – October 21, 2020 - Hearing no corrections, the October 21, 2020 minutes were approved.

II. Public Input: To discuss any emails previously sent that are not on the agenda already.

III. New Business: To hear and act upon:

B. Nerreau turned the meeting over to A. Calabrese for the Election of Officers:

A. Election of Officers

Mr. Calabrese opened the floor to nominations for Chairman.

Motion: C. McCoy *moved* to nominate Brian Nerreau for Chairman.

B. Nerreau accepted the nomination.

Motion: Brian Nerreau *moved* to nominate C. McCoy for Vice Chairman for 2021.

C. McCoy accepted the nomination.

Motion: C. McCoy *moved* to nominated B. McBride for Secretary for 2021.

B. McBride accepted the nomination.

B. Approval of 2021 Meeting Calendar

D. Weber moved to accept the calendar and M. Jameson seconded. The 2021 meeting calendar was approved as presented.

Vote: Unanimous

C. Katie Romeo, McKinley School Carnival – Jennings Beach – April 18-28, 2021.

Alison Foito, 136 Nichols Avenue – Co President of the McKinley PTA requested that the McKinley School Annual Carnival be held the last weekend in April from the 23rd through the 25th along with the required setup time/break down dates. B. Nerreau asked that without a general Covid vaccine, how and when would a decision to cancel if we were still in a Covid world. A. Foito stated that they would follow the Vendor's guidelines. A. Calabrese said that if we were still in Covid, they would have to rely on the Emergency Planning Team's decision. He stated that they could approve conditionally and if they had to cancel, they will. M. Jameson asked if there were any changes to previous years, to which A. Foito stated that they were using the same vendor as always and not changing anything.

Motion: J. Gerber made a motion, seconded by B. McBride to approve the event as requested.

Vote: Unanimous

D. Jackie Caceres – request for a Memorial Bench – location between H & I dock @ SBM.

J. Caceres asked that a Memorial Bench be placed in honor of her father, who was a longtime resident. She stated that she spoke to the Marina Manager with regards to the placement. A. Calabrese stated that both benches that were on the agenda this evening were reviewed ahead of time and determined to be good locations.

Motion: J. Gerber made a motion to approve, D. O'Connor seconded.

Vote: Unanimous

E. Tom Giordano – request for a Memorial Bench – location South Benson Marina.

T. Giordano asked that a Memorial Bench be placed at E Dock as his family has been residents for 45 years and spend a lot of time there. He stated that he had spoken to J. Cathcart and he said that there was a bench there that was in need of replacing and that Mr. Giordano's bench would be able to be placed there. B. Nerreau asked A. Calabrese if this location would be ok, and Mr. Calabrese stated yes.

Motion: J. Gerber made a motion to approve, M. Jameson seconded.

Vote: Unanimous

F. Request of Knights of Columbus to have their Creche displayed on the Sherman Green from December 23 at 5 p.m. until December 25th at 8 a.m. with someone on site at all times. (site change versus previous years of the Town Hall Green).

J. Sargent of the Knights of Columbus gave the background of their organization and their annual display of the crèche. He stated that this year they wanted to move from the Town Hall Green to the Sherman Green as this is a prominent place in town and wanted to have the opportunity to be included in having their display there. P. Mantilia, 4 Rolling Ridge Road stated that he was the Grand Knight and asked to be included as a holiday display on the Sherman Green along with the other religious groups. K. Elwood – 186 Soundview Avenue said that he was the past Grand Knight of the Holy Family council and wanted to have their display here as it is the most visible site in town and that site should be available to all in town. B. Nerreau thanked them for joining and stated that the issue he had with this request is limiting what is taking place at Sherman Green and views the crèche as more of a display than a ceremony. B. Nerreau said he did not believe that he would support this request. C. McCoy asked if this has ever come before the Commission before. A. Calabrese explained that this has been a hot topic in the past. This display has been allowed on the Town Hall Green since 1989 with a requirement that it is attended 24 hours a day. The Knights have always complied with this requirement. In 2016, the Knights unsuccessfully petitioned the Commission to eliminate the 24 hour manning requirement. C. McCoy wanted to know why Town Hall Green vs. Sherman Green. J. Gerber stated that she looked up the minutes from the 2016 meetings and cited the ordinance dated back to 1989 regarding the use of the area on the Town Hall Green reserved for use by the public. B. Nerreau said that the Commission spent a lot of time and energy reviewing this in 2016, and even formed a subcommittee to consider the 24 hour manning requirement of the crèche. It was decided that the requirement for the display to be manned would remain. J. Sargent asked if the ordinance was Town Hall Green specific and did not see any reason why Sherman Green could not be used. B. Nerreau stated that there was a ceremonial menorah lighting on the first eve of Hanukah on December 8th and one planned for the final night. There was an inflatable Santa and a Menorah that were put up without permission and have since been removed. A. Calabrese stated that it was important to realize that the Town is not saying it cannot take place on the Town Hall Green as it has for the past 30 years and that the switch to Sherman Green is not the optimal place for this to be. He did not believe that the location of the Town Hall Green was ever an issue and the location fell under the purview of the Commission. J. Sargent said that they wanted to be included with other displays during the

holidays and felt that they had the right to equal protection to decide where they wanted to be. M. Jameson made a motion to approve the location of the Sherman Green. B. McBride asked if the organizations that held the Menorah Lighting had come before the Commission. A. Calabrese advised that any organization that has held the same event for three straight years, excluding carnivals, did not need to come before the commission unless there was a change in location, and questioned the applicant whether they would desire to remain at the Town Hall Green if they did not secure an approval for the Sherman Green. C. McCoy asked if the Menorah was lit overnight and it was explained that the difference is that it was taken down after the ceremony the same night. B. Nerreau stated that there was a motion made by M. Jameson to approve and asked if there was a second. Without hearing a second, he advised Mr. Sargent that the Commission would not be approving the move to the Sherman Green. He did say that they were approved to remain at the Town Hall Green as they have in the past.

G. Request of Wakeman's Boys and Girls Club to sponsor the Tree of Hope for the month of February. J. Gerber stated that Wakeman asked if they could be considered for February since that month was open. The sub-committee approved and has brought this to the Commission for approval. She stated that they would light the tree in blue. This would fill the calendar until August of 2021.

Motion: C. McCoy made a motion, seconded by B. McBride to approve the event as requested.
Vote: Unanimous

H. 2021-2022 Budget Approval A. Calabrese presented the 2021-22 Budget to the Commission and explained the individual line items.

Motion: J. Gerber made a motion to approve all budgets together, seconded by D. O'Connor. Budgets were approved as presented.

Vote: 7-0-1 (Jameson Abstained)

V. To hear and act upon information in Reports:

A. Skate Park Sub-Committee Report: D. O'Connor advised that he and A. Calabrese, B. McBride, D. Weber, C. Seres met for the purpose to nominate a chairman and to determine whether scooters were to be permitted and if it could be run as an open concept. D. O'Connor was nominated Chairman. It was advised that Risk Management and insurance dictates the rules of what would be allowed. There would be a cost savings if an attendant was not needed. P. Egan of Risk Management would need to contact the Town's insurance carrier to look into whether they could go with an open concept. No action was taken and they would wait until Risk Management gets information. For now, the season has ended and they will not take any action until they hear back. C. McCoy asked if the skate park could be open year round if it was not manned. A. Calabrese said that as of now due to liability, it is only open when it is staffed, otherwise the gates are locked. He said he would follow up with Mr. Egan.

B. Board of Education Report: J. Gerber advised the Commission that the elementary students will start going in person every day for a longer period of time until 1 p.m. and go home and have lunch from 1-2 and be remote from 2 p.m. for the remainder of the day. Parents need to advise the BOE by Friday whether their child will be going full remote or the new modified schedule starting January 4, 2021. The middle school and high schools will be fully remote on Wednesdays, alternating Wednesdays starting January 4th subject to the Health Dept. The Giant Steps property purchase by the town was approved by the BOS, and BOF. The RTM will discuss on Monday with one building to be used for the Walter Fitzgerald Alternative High School and the other buildings perhaps to be used for other Town use. B. Nerreau asked if there

was any pushback from the neighborhood and J. Gerber stated that they had not had any pushback and neither had the TPZ.

C. Director's Report: Mr. Calabrese presented a written report:

As we look back at 2020, it was a very different year than most and in many ways, much more challenging. I believe it is important to recognize all the positive things our Department has done in a very difficult year.

- Upgrades to the Jacky Durrell Pavilion
- Rebuilt the TMS Tennis Courts
- Weekly Bell Ringing
- Provided Summer Childcare
- Launched eSports and cornhole league:
- Inaugural "Hole-in-One Fore Hunger"
- Responded to over 1,500 Santa Letters
- Maint. all facilities with increased use
- Completed SBM Channel Dredging
- Implemented "REC the Curve"
- Offered Summer Concerts
- Hosted both high school graduations
- Utilized facilities for fall sports leagues
- Awarded "Best of Knot.com 2020"
- Created a Virtual Tree Lighting
- Completed the H. Smith Richardson Clubhouse

Our staff has been very busy this past month planning for our spring and summer programs and events. As you could imagine, it is extremely difficult to plan for the unknown of COVID and the mandated restrictions. Many times our staff is creating a plan and two or three backup plans to anticipate the unknown.

As you've heard tonight, we are now in our annual budget season. The next stop for the budgets are with the First Selectwoman, she will meet with me to discuss any changes. From there she will present her budget to the Board of Selectman for their discussion and approval. Once the BOS approves, they will pass the budget onto the Board of Finance for their discussion and approval. After the BOF approves, the budget will be considered by the Representative Town Meeting for their approval. The final approval from the RTM normally happens in May. I will keep you apprised of the budgets process throughout the process.

One final note, I'd like thank both Scott Walker and Jessica Gerber for their service and dedication to the Parks and Recreation Commission over their terms. I wish them both well in whatever they plan on doing with their free time.

As always, I have to publicly thank my staff for the amazing job they have been doing! Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

ADJOURNMENT: B. Nerreau stated with no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 8:47 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kelly J. Brown, Recording Secretary
Tele-meeting location for audio:
[youtube.com/watch?v=diKdU87rj6E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=diKdU87rj6E)