

**MINUTES OF THE CHESHIRE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2017, AT 7:00 P.M. IN THE YOUTH CENTER,
SOUTH MAIN STREET, CHESHIRE CT 06410**

Present

James Nankin, Chairman; Members: Karen Bartone, Dr. Patrick Duffy, Paul Fracasse, Dan Nowak, Michael O'Donnell.

Staff: Sandra Petela, Acting Director; Mark Cunningham, Supt. PW and Grounds; David West, Public Grounds; Town Council Liaison Peter Talbot

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Nankin called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. The Chairman dispensed with the roll call and determined a quorum was present.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The group Pledged Allegiance to the Flag.

Chairman Nankin welcomed representatives of the Dog Park to the meeting.

Jeannette Salfeety, 301 Peck Lane; Barbara Howe, 718 Crescent Circle; Caros Ross, 975 Sperry Road; Kathy Quinn, 985 Sperry Road.

Dog Park – Ms. Salfeety informed the Commission there is a small park and big park for the dogs. The need for benches, which are safe for dogs, has been discussed for the small park. She showed photographs of safe wooden benches installed when the small park opened, and said a bench is needed in a shaded area. Before he left, Director Ceccolini left one standard bench, slats 3/8" wide which is too large for the legs of small dogs. Ms. Salfeety displayed a mesh screening which owners want on the underside of the bench, and which can be bracketed to the surface of the bench. It would be safe for the small dogs since it is not feasible to train these dogs to jump on the bench. Another bench is needed where the gazebo is installed and it should be similar to the one in the all park and seat several people. The group has money to fund the purchase of the bench.

Ms. Queen is one of the dog obedience instructors and said she was present at the request of the dog owners group and to offer useful advice on the bench issue.

It was noted by Chairman Nankin that this discussion is about standard items for a dog park which is different from changes along the Linear Trail. Also, the Commission cannot just go to the Public Works Dept. and ask them to install various benches in the dog park. The bench should be about 8 feet long, and have small slats. The Norf bench was 8 feet long at a cost of \$2,080. An 8 foot bench without a back is \$1,725 with 3/8" slat opening.

Ms. Salfeety said there is money for this black colored bench, which would go under the gazebo on a concrete pad. She commented on a plaque on the bench.

It was stated by Ms. Petela that when the gazebo is purchased and installed, the bench could also be installed. There is a 10 week time frame with order and delivery of the gazebo. She said, at this time, there is no plaque on the bench ordered by Mr. Ceccolini. A bench without a back is \$1,400; \$1,725 with a plaque. The bench from Mr. Ceccolini is not considered safe by the dog owners because of the slats, so there might be something needed underneath it held with zip ties.

Mr. Trifone referred to the use of "zip ties" and the fact they could rip off, and he wants this bench issue to be looked at by the PW Department staff.

Councilor Talbot said that weight and pressure will be on the screening with the zip ties and his concern is a paw going through it. There could also be a sag in the middle of the screening with potential for a dog to get caught in it.

A request was made by Chairman Nankin for Mr. Cunningham to look into this metal screening for underneath the bench in the dog park.

Mr. Trifone concurred with this recommendation noting that fingers of a child could also go through the screening. He said the PW crews can look into the project and come up with something durable.

The issue of safety concerns was cited by Mr. O'Donnell, particularly with kids sitting on the bench. He questioned the practice of allowing dogs up on these benches in the dog parks.

According to Mr. Nankin there is no way to stop it; this is a dog park; allowances must be made and things moved forward.

The Commission was told by Mr. Cunningham that a PW crew member will look at the benches for the dog park, and probably recommend stainless steel material.

Ms. Petela will be in touch with Ms. Salfeety regarding ordering of the bench.

Chairman Nankin informed the Commission about a memorial bench for Jeff Parker to be placed in the Farmington Canal Trail between the Cheshire and Hamden lines. He asked Ms. Petela to confirm the cost and when the bench will be placed. This request will be approved at the next meeting.

3. MINUTES OF AUGUST 30, 2017 AND SEPTEMBER , 2017 MEETINGS

MOTION by Dr. Duffy; seconded by Mr. Nowak

MOVED to accept the minutes of the August 30, 2017 meeting subject to corrections, additions, deletions.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

MOTION by Mr. Trifone; seconded by Mr. O'Donnell.

MOVED to accept the minutes of the September 6, 2017 meeting subject to corrections, additions, deletions.

Corrections: Ms. Mayne is "Elizabeth" and is "Program Coordinator"; Ms. Adams is "Aquatics Director"; the meeting started at 6:45 p.m.; page #5 – should read "for next year"; page #2, pool revenue is "down".

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

4. COUNCIL LIAISON – PETER TALBOT

Councilor Talbot reported there are budget issues from a Parks and Recreation standpoint, but there could be changes as they relate to dealing with the State budget issues. The Council held a special meeting on October 3rd to look at ways to mitigate revenue shortfalls from the State. Mr. Talbot pointed out a number of changes ongoing with Cheshire receiving an additional \$800,000 to \$1M to losing \$14M, and the town is looking at the doomsday scenario on what happens with a \$14M revenue shortfall. In discussions, he advised the Council is looking at use of reserve funds, supplemental tax bills, hiring and expenditure freezes. Mr. Talbot noted the Governor's executive order is not good for the towns.

Mr. Nankin asked about Cheshire joining a lawsuit with other towns regarding the effect on the school systems, the Governor being on equal footing to cut school budgets, and the CCM meeting of October 3rd.

On the education side, Mr. Talbot explained choices are made by the BOE, and Vincent Masciana was at the Council meeting. Mr. Masciana spoke in general terms about what the BOE is looking at with the budget. A meeting is planned for BOE and Town Council to discuss all the issues. Mr. Talbot stated there is something on the books that the State cannot fund school systems with less money than the prior year. There are 10 or 12 major cities in the State getting revenue increases.

5. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – JIM NANKIN

- **COMMUNICATIONS**

- **DISCUSSION RELATING TO CHARTER CHANGES**

Regarding the revisions to the Town Charter, Mr. Nankin said if they are approved the Parks and Recreation Commission ceases to exist, and it will be a Recreation Commission. Over his 26 years as Chairman many things were done by the Commission for town parks and open space, and this will go away as there will be no more input into the parks.

Stating he would not vote in favor of the Town Charter revisions, Mr. Nankin said he does not support an appointed Town Clerk as this takes away a vote on this position by the people. Also, with the proposed revisions, there would be a Recreation Commission. Without Charter revision approval everything stays the same...there are no changes to the Charter. Mr. Nankin asked Commissioners to disapprove the Charter revisions, and ask family and friends to do the same.

Ms. Petela said everything in the Charter revision has "Parks" eliminated.

According to Mr. Nankin the revisions do not affect the Public Works (PW) operation as it will continue to do its work. He commented on the need for communications being open for scheduling, knowing work that has to be done, and getting it done.

Mark Cunningham stated that he is pleased with the way things are going with Parks Division and Public Works. There is fresh air with a new department, the crew is doing well, and things are good.

With Charter revision changes, Mr. O'Donnell said the public would have no place to go if there are park issues, and they would have to go to the Town Council.

Mr. Nankin said there would be no Parks and Recreation Commission setting up procedures.

If the Charter is defeated, it remains the same, and Mr. Trifone asked if the position of "Director" is in the Charter.

Mr. Nankin said the position of Director is in the Charter, but Mr. Nankin said the Council could say there will be no Director. Mr. Nankin stated the Charter revision has nothing to do with the Town Manager; the Council opened up the Charter; appointed a Charter Revision Commission which had the authority to make revisions. The Council approved what was done, and now the public must approve the Charter revisions.

The Commission was informed by Councilor Talbot that the Parks and Recreation Commission is established by the Code of Ordinances, and nothing in the Charter eliminates the Commission. There is elimination of the name of "Parks"; there is reference to Director of Recreation rather than Director of Parks and Recreation; and this can all be worked into the Code of Ordinances. In the Charter, Mr. Talbot noted it

refers to the “department” not the “commission” and duties of the department head. The Charter talks about the town departments and department heads; it does not get into the commissions which are established by the Code of Ordinances. Councilor Talbot will follow up with more detailed information and send via e-mail to the Commissioners.

It was stated by Mr. Nankin that the “Town Clerk” has nothing to do with a person but the ability for people to vote without someone else making this decision. The voting option is taken away from the voters.

Councilor Talbot explained that an appointed Town Clerk is a department head position; it is not elected; the Town Manager with approval of the Town Council makes the appointment. The Town Clerk would be reporting to the Town Manager on a daily basis. At the present time, with an elected Town Clerk, there is no person or the office reporting to anyone. Mr. Talbot said he does not mind the voting aspect; he minds the management aspects; and will get accurate information to the Commissioners.,

6. BEAUTIFICATION REPORT – MICHAEL O’DONNELL

No report.

7. DIRECTOR’S REPORT – SANDY PETELA

• **PARKS UPDATE**

Ms. Petela reported fall program registrations have started; staff meets bi-weekly and they bring forth ideas for new programs. Some of the current programs do not have full enrollment. Ms. Petela noted that full day kindergarten, pre-school programs and Library programs have affected the registration for department programs.

Quinnipiac Park – Ms. Petela checked out the lights and all was okay; there are no sound issues; some houses had some glare; soccer lights are off at 8:00 p.m.; and no complaints have been received from neighbors.

An e-mail was received from the soccer teams asking about having food trucks at the park for Saturday games. Ms. Petela requested more specifics on this request, i.e. how many trucks, handling the extra trash, but has not had a response to date.

Ms. Petela reported this issue brought up the concession stand at this park, for which there is no formal agreement with the town. She said there should be something, in writing, for some control for things like the water on and off, pipes breaking, etc.

The Commission was told by Mr. Talbot that the Bartlem Park concession stand has a formal agreement between the facility and the town.

Mr. Nowak spoke with Mr. Ceccolini about the Bartlem concession stand and learned CYB operated the building. The CYB organization was having a hard time getting volunteers to work the stand. He said Mr. Ceccolini wanted to update the agreement, but it has not happened.

It was noted by Ms. Petela that once the soccer park is opened up for food trucks, other teams will want to have a truck. More information is needed before this can go forward.

It was pointed out by Mr. Trifone that no one wants to operate the concession stand at Quinnipiac Park. It is a building fully equipped. He asked about ice cream trucks in and out of the parks, and if this is different from a food truck.

According to Mr. Nankin, there is something in place about the ice cream trucks, and he believes the ice cream truck owner paid for the rights to sell ice cream in the parks. Now, there is a facility...the question is whether there should be also be a food truck...and how to deal with this as there are no procedures in place.

It was clarified by Mr. Talbot that the town's agreement for the Bartlem Park stand is with an individual leasing the building to sell food etc. at events. The lease agreement is between the town and an individual, and CYB turned the concession stand over to the town. He said the Quinnipiac Park building was built by the soccer team group and is not being run by a third party vendor.

Ms. Petela reported that food trucks must go through Chesprocott for approval.

For this issue, Chairman Nankin set up a sub-committee of the Parks and Recreation Commission, and asked Mr. O'Donnell to chair this committee.

Mr. Trifone stated that if the concession stand is open, nothing else can be sold...no ice cream trucks. If the stand is not open, then other things can be sold.

Dr. Duffy and Mr. Trifone volunteered to serve on the committee with Mr. O'Donnell.

The question is having a facility, bypass it, or have requirements to make it worthwhile, and Mr. Nankin said the committee can review and discuss the issues.

Mr. O'Donnell said the committee will look at the building lease, review and discuss and make recommendations to the full Commission. He also said other groups might want to come into the parks with a food truck. There are issues of concern, and the committee will be in contact with Ms. Petela for input and ideas.

The regulations are uniform for all parks, and Mr. Nankin noted there is no concession stand at Cheshire Park, MacNamara Park or Mixville Park.

Dr. Duffy pointed out that there are liability issues involved with food trucks and concession stands.

Outdoor Skating Rink – The rink will be installed at the Youth Center basketball site. The Commission was told by Ms. Petela there are no guidelines in place for the rink, i.e. hours of operation, whether it will be monitored...structure and guidelines on the rink operation are needed. To have monitors for the rink, there is a cost of \$10.10 per hour per employee. The Commission and staff need to start thinking about installation of this rink, how the rink operation will work, hours it can be used, restrictions on usage, no ice hockey played, skating at your own risk, Youth Center building open for restrooms.

The Commission discussed the most appropriate time to install the rink. Mr. West advised the rink is still in its original container, it was never opened, and could be installed in November. Mr. O'Donnell suggested installing the rink around Thanksgiving time.

Mr. Cunningham will have a look at the basketball court site and insure it is stable for the ice rink. There will be a report back to the Commission. With regard to plowing the area around the rink and the rink itself, it was noted by Mr. Nankin that this work would have a low priority.

During the week the policy is closing parks at 4:00 to 4:30 p.m., and with lights the rink could be open for use until the timer goes off, about 8:00 p.m.

Ms. Petela will be working on the rink project, and stated it would be “skating at your own risk”. If the Youth Center was open during skating time, people could use the bathrooms. She informed the Commissioners that the Lions Club and Scheena Family donated money for the rink, and a recognition plaque would be installed. She will check with other towns about their rink policies and procedures. She will report this information to the Commission.

- **RECREATION UPDATE**

- **BUDGET UPDATE**

Ms. Petela stated department heads will be looking to cut expenditures. She opened up a discussion about Parks and Rec fees, advising that since 2007 the sign-up fee has been \$10, and administrative fee has been \$15. She asked about increasing these fees to generate more revenue.

In that regard, Chairman Nankin asked Ms. Petela to send a revised fee schedule to the Commissioners for review and approval. It would then go to the Town Council for approval.

Ms. Bartone pointed out that these fees are low and should be increased.

8. COMMISSIONER'S FORUM

Dr. Duffy congratulated Jim and Karen Nankin on their 48th wedding anniversary.

Mr. Fracasse also wished the Nankins a happy anniversary.

Mr. O'Donnell extended his good wishes to the Nankins. He reported that more contamination was found at the Chapman Farm property; the town awaits test results; and then the information goes to the Council.

Mr. Trifone wished the Nankins a happy anniversary.

Mr. Nowak extended his anniversary wishes. For the skating rink, he said there should be a press release to the public when everything is in place.

9. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Dr. Duffy; seconded by Mr. Trifone

MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 8:33 p.m.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

Attest:

Marilyn W. Milton, Clerk