

**MINUTES OF THE CHESHIRE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
MEETING HELD ON
WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 2020 AT 7:00 P.M. AT
THE YOUTH CENTER, 559 SOUTH MAIN STREET, CHESHIRE, CT 06410
VIA VIDEO TELECONFERENCE
(PER EXECUTIVE ORDER OF THE GOVERNOR OF CONNECTICUT)**

Public access made available through live streaming on YouTube at

http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCL_K7b38cCJpv-606Vk7vpA/live

Public comments accepted at recreation@cheshirect.org and by voice mail message at 203 272-2743. Video will be available on Channel 14 and on demand at www.cheshirect.org as soon as possible.

Present: Chairman Patrick Duffy, Paul Fracasse, Dan Nowak, Michael O'Donnell,
Steve Trifone

Absent: Karen Bertoni, Robert Parr
Council Liaison, Peter Talbot

Staff: John Gawlak, Director; Elizabeth Mayne, Program Supervisor;
Tim Weed, Program Coordinator; Mark Cunningham, Highway Superintendent

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chairman Duffy called the meeting to order at 7:11 p.m.

Mr. Gawlak called the roll and determined a quorum was present.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The group pledged Allegiance to the Flag.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

John Bate sent an email, stating the Town did a fabulous job of arranging the benches at the Youth Center Tennis Courts that were relocated on an extension pad of the handicapped access concrete but unfortunately there were insufficient funds to place the access doors when the fence was redone. He asked about the possibility of correcting that at the Cheshire Park Tennis Courts that are currently under construction. They could use access doors on both the southern and northern fences. The northern fence is currently without any chain link material, it would increase the access if a door was placed in one of the open sections.

Mr. Gawlak told the commission that he has already spoken to the consultant doing the courts. They will do a site visit and look into it. He will also respond to the resident.

4. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES, MARCH 4, 2020

MOTION by Mr. Trifone, seconded by Mr. Nowak

MOVED to approve and accept the minutes of March 4, 2020.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously.

5. PARKS UPDATE

Mr Gawlak stated parks and trails are open, the dog park is closed, as are the playgrounds and tennis courts. The basketball courts are being redone so can't be used.

The basketball courts are in the final stages of being completed and should be done Friday, May 8. The tennis courts and pickleball courts will be worked on next week and should be done in a couple of weeks.

Mr. Gawlak advised he has a meeting with Public Works on Friday, May 8. The companies are coming in in the next two weeks to complete improvements to Bartlem Park playground.

Mark Cunningham stated seeding has been done at Lock 12 and the Public Works crews are back to full staff.

Mr Nowak asked if there was a target date for items to be completed. Mr Gawlak replied the basketball courts should be done this Friday, May 8, the tennis courts in a week or two and the renovations at Bartlem Park should be completed by approximately May 22.

Mr Duffy asked if the rims and backboards were on or off basketball courts. Mr Gawlak stated that they are on, but wrapped up well, and aren't able to be used.

Mr Nowak asked if the virus expedited any of this work and Mr. Gawlak replied that the work had been planned, however it was good timing as no one has been inconvenienced.

Mr O'Donnell questioned how long it would take to get the new liner for the pool and get the pool ready? Mr. Gawlak replied that Sheila Adams is putting together a request to get on council agenda for the May 12 meeting, showing a comparison of two companies. There are two options, there is range of fees and differences in timeline, demo, and installation, however actually opening is up to CDC guidelines as to when to open. Mr O'Donnell asked if we would be able to open the pool in June if guidelines

allowed. Mr. Gawlak replied that Mrs. Adams thinks it would be a 4-5 week turnaround, depending when they start.

Chairman Duffy asked how long it would take to fill pool after the liner is in? Mr. Gawlak said it would take 2-3 days. Mrs Mayne added that it may take a little more time than that to balance chemicals and bring the pool to temperature, but wouldn't be more than a week.

Chairman Duffy asked about a plan to open – Mr. Gawlak said Mrs. Adams is working on a plan, but it will be based on CDC guidelines

Mr. Nowak asked if Mrs. Adams is working alone at the pool. Mr. Gawlak said staff is furloughed, and that Mrs. Adams is working from home.

Mr. O'Donnell asked if a facility technician had been hired. Mr. Gawlak stated that there is someone to be hired but the person was selected at the time staff began working from home due to Covid-19.

Mr Gawlak announced that Kathy Forenza, Secretary at the Parks & Recreation Department filed her papers today and will retire on May 22.

6. COUNCIL LIAISON REPORT

Mr. Talbot was not in attendance. There was no report.

7. COMMUNICATIONS

There were no communications

8. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman Duffy asked Mr. Gawlak to use this time to discuss what's been going on with the department and what is he hearing regarding sports, concerts, etc.

Mr. Gawlak stated that staff has been on calls with CRPA and NRPA and the whole country is in the same situation. We received good news yesterday during the Governor's press conference as far as summer camps being able to occur, but in smaller numbers and there will be safety precautions that will need to be taken. There is some thought as to if it's worth it to run camps or will all the safety measures make running camp cost prohibitive. Mr. Gawlak has heard that Rhode Island has cancelled everything outdoors for groups of up to 50 people until August 31. States in the midwest are already shutting down pools, camp programs, and giving refunds to those who have paid.

Mrs. Mayne stated it's challenging, we would have to reduce the number of children and increase staffing, but due to budget constraints, we're being encouraged to spend less. The department will need to find additional funds to run camp and there is a question of can we even find enough PPE, hand sanitizer, face masks, etc. She continued that the Town of Branford has canceled their June festival, and the Town of Mansfield has canceled camps because of funding. It comes down to we want to provide care for kids when people go back to work, but will it be possible to?

Mr. Gawlak added that the Town of Darien is hiring park monitors to be sure people are not going on playgrounds, skateparks, and to ensure people are practicing social distancing. They have removed picnic tables and benches, and will not be doing rentals this summer. They have also instituted a carry in, carry out trash policy.

Mr. Gawlak said it's hard to know what is the right thing to do when some towns are closing everything, but other towns have everything open.

Mrs. Mayne continued that if we have camps, we also have to look at bathroom sanitization and the requirement to sanitize bathrooms every two hours.

Mr. O'Donnell asked when the deadline would be that we'd need to advise residents if there will be no camp this year. Mrs. Mayne stated that we need to wait for guidelines, scheduled to come from the Governor's office on May 15.

A discussion followed regarding if people will want to go to camp or see concerts given social distancing requirements and will they feel safe doing so.

Mr. Gawlak mentioned that all of the youth leagues have cancelled their spring seasons – including tournaments.

9. OLD BUSINESS

a. Chapman Property Master Plan

This project has been put on hold indefinitely– it's important to get plans out to the public and it doesn't feel right to do it right now.

b. FY19-20 Budget

Mr. Gawlak and Mrs. Mayne attended the budget meeting on April 21. Mr. Gawlak commended Mrs. Mayne for the 72-page powerpoint presentation that she put together in a short amount of time. Mr. Gawlak stated it's illustrative of what the department does and asked the commissioner's to review it for a possible discussion at the next meeting.

10. NEW BUSINESS

Memorial Bench Request – Cathy Ragone

Chairman Duffy read the request – he asked Mr. Cunningham if there is room in the requested area. Mr Cunningham stated yes, he believes there is room and will visit the area and confirm.

Motion to approve contingent upon room to place it in the requested location. Mr Cunningham asked if the department was going to standardize colors? Chairman Duffy replied that the form lets people choose from only 3 colors.

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

MOVED to approve the memorial bench in honor of Cathy Ragone, contingent upon the requested location being available

VOTE The motion passed unanimously.

Summer Concert Series

Mr Trifone asked Mr. Gawlak and Mrs. Mayne about possibly having to cancel the summer concert series. Mr Gawlak replied that the department is waiting for information and guidelines from the Reopen Connecticut Advisory Group.

Begin developing the program to utilize the High School students community hours to help Parks & Rec

What tasks can they be allowed to do?

Who would/can supervise these tasks, if anyone is needed

Identify a school liaison

Who will keep track of scheduling and paperwork

Mr Gawlak suggested tabling this item, since it was asked by Mrs. Bertoni to be placed on the agenda and she is not in attendance.

Chairman Duffy asked Mr Trifone why student would need community service hours. Mr Trifone replied that it helps to build a resume for college and thinks that it's helpful when students get involved in the community. Chairman Duffy stated we need to make distinction between those who want to do community service vs those who have to. Mr Trifone stated that if it were anything punitive, community service would happen at the high school.

11. DIRECTOR'S DEPARTMENT REPORT

Mr Gawlak asked the commission to look at the powerpoint presentation/budget that he sent out via email and to get back to him with any questions. He stated that the staff is working at home on items and projects that there has not been time for, but everyone really wants to get back to work.

Mr. Gawlak continued that Town Hall is gearing up to be back to work In the next 3 weeks, provided everything is trending towards a safe place.

12. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Mr. O'Donnell, seconded by Mr. Fracasse

MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 8:10pm.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephanie Dunn