

MINUTES OF THE CHESHIRE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING  
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 7, 2014, AT 7:00 P.M. IN COUNCIL CHAMBERS,  
TOWN HALL, 84 SOUTH MAIN STREET, CHESHIRE CT 06410.

Present

Chairman James Nankin; Karen Bertoni, Patrick Duffy, Paul Fracasse, Dan Nowak,  
Mike O'Donnell, Dave Veleber.

Staff: Robert Ceccolini, Parks and Rec Director; Sheila Adams, Pool Coordinator;  
Cheryl Corey, Exec. Asst. to Director; Kevin Simmons, Parks Supervisor

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Nankin called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

The clerk called the roll and a quorum was determined to be present.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The group Pledged Allegiance to the Flag.

3. MINUTES OF APRIL 2, 2014 MEETING

MOTION by Mr. Fracasse; seconded by Mr. Nowak

MOVED that the minutes of April 2, 2014 be approved subject to corrections, additions,  
deletions.

VOTE The motion passed 5-0-2; Duffy and Veleber abstained.

4. COUNCIL LIAISON – PETER TALBOT (absent; no report)

5. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – JIM NANKIN

COMMUNICATIONS – Mr. Nankin reported that the Cheshire Animal Shelter donated  
funding for a bench at the Dog Park, which will have a plaque stating "Donated by the  
Cheshire Animal Shelter". Coordination of the purchase of the bench will be handled  
by Mr. Ceccolini.

The Commission was told by Mr. Ceccolini that the Animal Shelter has a place in its  
heart for the Dog Park, donated \$1550 for the bench, which will be a nice amenity for  
the park. In response to a question about room for more benches at this park, Mr.  
Ceccolini advised this is the 2<sup>nd</sup> metal bench, and more could be used through  
donations. People interested in donating a bench should contact the Parks and Rec  
Department office along with a letter to the Commission.

MOTION by Ms. Bertoni; seconded by Mr. Nowak.

MOVED that the Parks and Recreation Commission accept the donation of a metal bench for the Dog Park from the Cheshire Animal Shelter.

VOTE           The motion passed unanimously by those present.

#### POOL DISCUSSION – SHEILA ADAMS

Ms. Adams reported that the pool opened on Sunday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, 9 a.m. with a line of people waiting at the door. 30 seasonal passes have been sold; people are excited about the pool being open for the summer through Labor Day; people can purchase a day pass and if satisfied with the facility the cost of this pass is credited towards a season pass.

\$1.00 days will be held June 26-27, 12 Noon to 3 p.m. Swim lessons start on June 30<sup>th</sup> with three 2-week sessions throughout the summer; there are fun classes planned along with fitness swim programs, aqua zumba, scuba classes, and some free demo classes. Swim teams are using the pool; temperature in the pool is 82 degrees; and all is going well. Information about the dollar days will be in the brochure, on the web site, on the sign at the Youth Center, and in local newspapers.

Regarding the roof, Ms. Adams advised a contract has been negotiated, and she will know in the next week when the work will start. She reported that Arcadis has the preliminary pool cover design, and the height of the structure is unknown at this time.

MIXVILLE DREDGING – Mr. Nankin advised that he visited Mixville Pond with Director Ceccolini to see where the dredging will be done on the upper pond. The equipment to be used is a raft tread into the hose and pipes going to the far side (Mixville Road); material will be placed into drainage bags, dried, and removed from the park. 18,500 cu.yds of material could be removed.

Mr. Ceccolini expects the dredging work to start next week. Regarding the fishing derby he reported that only one fish was caught.

#### RECREATION PROGRAMS – BOB CECCOLINI

Mr. Ceccolini explained that staff is focusing on the summer programs and camps for young children and middle school teens. Some of the camps include use of the pool and have early drop off and late pickup for working parents. The summer programs include sports camps (baseball, basketball, lacrosse, volleyball, weight lifting, soccer) with some programs coached by high school coaches. Information on the summer camps and sports camps is on the department web site.

Four summer concerts are planned at Bartlem Park. Mr. Ceccolini advised there would be a meeting on May 20<sup>th</sup> with Power Station regarding bands, sound, staging, etc. for the concerts. The concerts will be held on two Friday nights in July and two in August. There will be press releases and publicity about the concerts in newspapers and on the web site. Last year the concerts included Cheshire Palooza which was a big success.

By way of explanation, Mr. Ceccolini stated that the department goes through Power Station and their contacts for bands to perform, and some bands are already locked in. There is a need for concert sponsors. Commissioners can recommend a band for consideration, and it will be checked out.

#### ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE – CHERYL COREY

Ms. Corey informed the Commission that after 26 years as a Town employee, 16 with the Parks and Rec Department, she will be retiring on June 30<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Corey commented on the wonderful experience of working with her 2<sup>nd</sup> family, the Parks & Rec Dept. staff, and the Commission. She highlighted some of the department accomplishments over the last few years – on line registration, credit card payment for programs, creation of the department web site, along with reports and meeting minutes. The office is very busy; there is much public contact; staff works well together; there have been many administrative aspects of her position that she enjoys. Ms. Corey stated she will miss the great people with whom she works.

Mr. Nankin stated that Ms. Corey will be missed by the Commission and he thanked her for the many years of work with the Commissioners.

#### PARKS REPORT – KEVIN SIMMONS

Mr. Simmons informed the Commission that he has worked for the department for 33 years and has seen the parks develop to where they are now. The crews work in conjunction with the Public Works Dept. crews on snow removal, interior painting and upgrading of Town buildings, open space projects (kiosks). Two long time employees have retired and the crew will be back to full strength later this month. The dog park is a successful facility, and maintenance work is lined up at the park for the summer months.

The Commission was told by Mr. Ceccolini that 12 college kids have been hired for summer work in the parks, bringing the crew to a total of 17 members. This is a popular summer job; kids work 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and sometimes on the weekend shifts.

#### 6. DOG PARK – KAREN BERTONI and BOB CECCOLINI

Ms. Bertoni reported that the park is a busy place; the committee is still working hard; new play equipment for dogs has been ordered; and the grand opening is June 1<sup>st</sup>. The committee will hold a 2<sup>nd</sup> Canine Carnival on June 1<sup>st</sup>.

According to Mr. Ceccolini, vendors can go to the web site for the Dog Park and information on the carnival. In September the committee will host a dog photo contest.

Mr. Veleber asked if the dog park is the size it will always be or could it be expanded. He also questioned whether there have been any incidents at the park.

In response, Mr. Ceccolini stated that the park is the current size, as approved by Planning and Zoning, but it could be expanded in the future, going through another PZC process. With the current layout, the park is not against the woods on all sides, and to the east there is more landfill for possible future expansion.

With regard to incidents, Ms. Bertoni said there have been none reported which required outside assistance. Smaller incidents/dog issues have been dealt with by owners.

This park is a self-policing facility, and Mr. Ceccolini said that dog owners monitor the park and any situations which arise. Dog owners are responsible for their dogs. This week a maintainer mowed the park, and very little dog matter was found at the park. He also noted that almost every town in the state has a dog park.

Ms. Bertoni said the dog owners take the facility very seriously and are good about monitoring the site.

Regarding dog traffic on the Linear Trail, Dr. Duffy asked if this has decreased with the new dog park available.

Mr. Ceccolini is not sure about how much dog traffic has decreased on the Trail, and noted that he sees people with dogs in every Town park. He hopes the dog traffic on the Trail is lessened now that people have the opportunity to bring an unleashed dog to a nice facility.

7. BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE – MIKE O'DONNELL

The committee met on Wednesday morning and Mr. O'Donnell advised that the parks look very good; some roses need to be trimmed; and the barrels are fully planted.

8. BUDGET REPORT – BOB CECCOLINI  
(Operating and Capital Budgets)

Operating Budget – Mr. Ceccolini reported that this budget becomes a final document in a few days as there have been no petitions filed against the budget. Everything that the Parks and Rec Department requested in its budget was approved; there was a minor increase requested; but it is a tight budget. With two long term employees retiring and leaving, there will be some impact on this fiscal year's budget with payout of time and benefits. The department is on track with expenses, and July 1<sup>st</sup> is a new fiscal year budget.

Capital Budget – this is a five year plan; the department is focusing on the next two years with playground improvements/new and safer equipment (Cheshire Park, MacNamara and Quinnipiac Park) that is handicapped accessible. There is a question on where to place the Cheshire Park playground, with suggestions and ideas submitted to the Commission for review and discussion.

Field improvements – rebuilding infields, composting fields, rebuilding fences...which are costly. Mr. Ceccolini stated that the Town Council has been generous with parks improvement funding.

Youth Center Tennis Courts – these courts are heavily used; have been repaired many times; and now need full reconstruction. They are in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the capital budget plan for funding.

Rolling Stock – the capital budget will have a request for rolling stock (mowers, tractors, trucks) and the Town is progressive with these types of requests with Council funding.

Chairman Nankin commented on Cheshire being the leader in the State of Connecticut with use of organic pesticides. He asked Mr. Ceccolini about this program being more labor intensive and what the benefits are to the parks.

Use of organic materials has not changed or affected the labor costs, and Mr. Ceccolini advised that the organic versus synthetic materials has a little more cost. The program started in Cheshire about 7 years ago with use of synthetic and organic materials on the fields, with expanded use of organic pesticides and fertilizer over the years in the parks and on the fields. The Town is undertaking organic composting and is looking for an area to house the composting. Cheshire schools use only organic pesticides. The artificial turf has been a bonus to many of the sports programs. Mr. Ceccolini stated that the organic program is a big success, and the program was looked into when the Cancer Crusade started a few years ago. It was found that there is no difference between the use of synthetic and organic materials; awareness was increased; and the decision was made to go with only organic materials for the Town fields. The department has received no complaints about the fields, and there is support for the organic materials.

#### 9. COMMISSIONER'S FORUM

Commissioner Duffy congratulated Ms. Corey on her upcoming retirement, and thanked her for the many years of service to the Parks and Rec Department and Commission.

Commissioner O'Donnell thanked Ms. Corey for her years of service, and complimented the Parks and Rec crews for the excellent condition of the parks and ball fields.

Director Ceccolini commented on the Cheshire Youth Baseball (CYB) and other youth sport programs that support and work on the ball fields, noting that department crews welcome their assistance.

The department has a good relationship with all the leagues and Chairman Nankin expressed thanks and appreciation to them for their work and funding of the parks and fields.

Commissioner Fracasse stated that the Town should be proud of what is being done with the pool, ball fields, and parks. He also commended the Beautification Committee for their work in beautifying the Town.

Commissioner Bertoni thanked Ms. Corey for her many years of service, and thanked Ms. Adams and the pool staff for their work and dedication to the operation of the pool.

She said the Town is lucky to have such great employees. Ms. Bertoni invited everyone to visit the Dog Park.

Commissioner Nowak expressed appreciation to Ms. Corey for her many years of work in the Parks and Rec Department. He questioned the future costs of the turf field, maintenance costs of this field, and whether these costs were anticipated along with future replacement costs.

This was all taken into consideration when the turf field was planned, and Mr. Ceccolini advised there is funding set aside for future needs of this field. This is all coordinated through the Dept. of Education.

Chairman Nankin stated that the turf field belongs to the Board of Education; it is not a Parks and Rec facility; and everything for this field goes through the BOE, with the Parks and Rec Department willing to help, if needed.

Commissioner Veleber extended congratulations to Ms. Corey on her retirement, wishing her the very best going forward. He also thanked Mr. Simmons for his many years of service, and thanked other staff for their good work in keeping park facilities in great condition. Mr. Veleber commended Director Ceccolini for his outstanding management of the department, parks, fields, and staff.

Chairman Nankin stated that Ms. Corey will be greatly missed and he wished her happiness in her retirement. Mr. Nankin commented on Mr. Simmons being a department staple, who does a good job, and some day he will be hard to replace. He also commended Ms. Adams for the good job she performs in the operation of the community pool. Mr. Nankin noted that the staff and their outstanding work is a reflection of the way the department is run by Mr. Ceccolini, who treats each person fairly, helps them when needed, and a positive attitude is reflected throughout the department.

## 10. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Dr. Duffy; seconded by Mr. Veleber.

MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

Attest:

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Marilyn W. Milton, Clerk