

Darien Parks and Recreation Commission
Wednesday, May 20, 2015
Regular Meeting

ATTENDANCE: Mary Flynn, Chair; Marc Ioli: Loren Bora, Marianne Gutierrez, Amy Doering: Lorene Bora; Erika Morris

STAFF: James E. Flynn, Supervisor of Parks and Maintenance

OTHERS: Chip Stahl, Animal Control Officer: Pat Bumgardner, RTM; Anne Finn RTM; Chery Russell RTM, Co-Chair of Parks and Recreation; William Van Loan, RTM; Linda Santarella, Former Police Commissioner:

Ms. Flynn called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm. A quorum was present. She said Jim Coghlan was unable to attend the meeting due to training 17 life guards.

APPROVE MINUTES OF APRIL 8, 2015

Page 1: replace the word “committee” with “commission” in line 7 and line 11.

Page 2: replace “installing air conditioning at Weed Beach,” with “installing air conditioning at the Weed Beach Paddle Hut”; replace “advertised for a new director,” with “advertised for a new director of Parks and Recreation”

Page 3: replace “reduced price on court rentals,” with “reduced price on summer court rentals.”

**** MS. DALY MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF APRIL 8, 2015, AS AMENDED.**

**** MS. BORA SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

DISCUSSION OF DOG LEASH POLICY
GUEST: CHIP STAHL ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER

Ms. Flynn said the agenda was to discuss a pilot program for allowing dogs off leash at Weed Beach in the winter. She asked Mr. Stahl to talk about his experience with dogs at the beaches.

Mr. Stahl described his role in enforcing the town dog policies. He said in the winter he drove by both town beaches 2 to 3 times a day and had issued 3 tickets at Weed Beach and issued about 10-15 warnings. He said he did not ticket people who parked at the Pear Tree Beach parking lot in order to walk the loop with their dogs, and that this practice was acceptable to Police

Darien Parks and Recreation Commission

May 20, 2015

pg. 1

Department. He said in the summer he relied on the guards at the beaches to enforce the no dog policy and believed they did a good job. He said the most problems with dogs were first, at Woodland; second, at Cherry Lawn; and third, at the beaches. There was some discussion about the problem of dog feces at Cherry Lawn. Ms. Flynn said there would be a meeting in June to discuss the dog issues at Cherry Lawn.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Bumgardner said she thought the issue of dogs in the parks and beaches was a serious one but she had not found any information about the night's meeting on the Town website. Ms. Flynn said she would look into it.

Ms. Finn said 10 years ago her 2 year old daughter was severely injured by a dog at Cherry Lawn Park. She said there was still the serious problem of unleashed dogs at Cherry Lawn.

Ms. Flynn said the situation at Cherry Lawn would be discussed at a meeting in June.

Ms. Russell asked Mr. Stahl at what time of year he went by the beaches, and if it was both beaches? Mr. Stahl said it was 2 or 3 times a day in the winter for both beaches. Ms. Russell asked Mr. Stahl how many tickets he had given out at Pear Tree. Mr. Stahl said 3. Ms. Russell said he had reported 3 tickets issued at Weed beach, not Pear Tree. Mr. Stahl said he was not comfortable answering questions without a Captain present and left the meeting.

Ms. Flynn said she was disappointed the two police Captains, who had been invited, had not shown up at the night's meeting.

Ms. Russell said there were serious problems with the Police Department not enforcing the rules and regulations concerning dogs at the parks.

Mr. Van Loan said that Mr. Stahl was only one person and could only do so much. He also said as Mr. Stahl was not a police officer and needed to avoid confrontations. He suggested Mr. Stahl use a camera and take pictures of offenders to be posted in the Police Department.

There was general agreement that Mr. Stahl alone could not handle complete enforcement of the dog policies.

Ms. Santarella said she had observed the rules and regulations regarding no dogs at Pear Tree Beach were not being enforced. She said she had spoken to the Police Department about doing a better job at enforcing the rules. She said dog feces were a health hazard.

Ms. Russell asked if the "No Dogs Allowed," sign at Pear Tree Beach could be displayed more prominently. Ms. Flynn said this would be looked into.

Darien Parks and Recreation Commission

May 20, 2015

pg. 2

DISCUSSION OF DOG LEASH POLICY cont.

After the discussion of the dog leash policy, the Commission concluded:

- Enforcement of rules and regulations regarding dogs was a difficult issue.
- The Commission should find out the number of tickets issued for dog rules violations.
- A future meeting should discuss the issue of enforcement with official representatives from the Police Department, including the Chief of Police.
- Any consideration of a pilot “off leash” policy should be set aside until dog rules and regulations enforcement issues were addressed.

DISCUSSION ON GROUNDS & MAINTENANCE

GUEST: JAMES FLYNN SUPERVISOR OF PARKS AND MAINTENANCE

Mr. Flynn said his main focus was the safety of the athletic fields and growing grass and he had a good staff and excellent support from the city. There was discussion about the quality and quantity of the sand on the town beaches and tree and playground maintenance.

DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION ON PARKS AND RECREATION **SECTION OF TOWN PLAN**

The Commission reviewed the Parks and Recreation Section of the Town Plan. There was discussion about whether to add the word “dedicate” to the last recommendation, as it is a more legally binding term than “preserve.” As a result, the Commission decided to reword the last recommendation **from:**

Examine all opportunities to preserve land for public recreation and open space;

to:

Examine all opportunities to preserve and, **where appropriate dedicate**, land for public recreation and open space.

**** MS. MORRIS MOVED TO APPROVE THE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PARKS AND RECREATION SECTION OF THE TOWN PLAN AS AMENDED.**

**** MR. IOLI SECONDED THE MOTION**

Darien Parks and Recreation Commission

May 20, 2015

pg. 3

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

REPORTS

a) Interim Director.

As Mr. Coghlan was absent: copies of his written report were submitted to the Commission.

b) Chairman

Ms. Flynn said she was delighted, after an extensive interview process and many excellent candidates, Pamela Gery had been selected as the new Director of Parks and Recreation. Ms. Gery will start working in Darien either June 6th or June 8th . .

c) Sub-Committee/study Groups

Ms. Bora reported that the Short Lane Sub-Committee's proposal was awaiting action from the Town Administrator's office. There was discussion of how to expedite the process so a committee could be formed and projects could possibly start this year. The next meeting of the Sub-Committee is on June 2.

**** MS. GUTIERREZ MOVED TO ADJOURN.
** MS. DALY SECONDED THE MOTION.
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 9 pm.

NEXT MEETING: Regular Meeting June 17, 2015, Room 119, Darien Town Hall

Respectfully Submitted,

A. Lund
Telesco Secretarial Services