

**TOWN OF DARIEN
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
JUNE 16, 2010**

ATTENDANCE: Jane Branigan, Chairman; Charles Goodyear; Susan Graham;
Susan Daly; Bob Marchesi; Marianne Gutierrez;

STAFF: Susan Swiatek, Director; Jim Coghlan, Assistant Director

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Branigan called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

APPROVE MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING MAY 19, 2010

- ** MS. DALY MOTIONED TO TABLE THE MINUTES OF MAY 19, 2010
PENDING FURTHER REVIEW.**
- ** MR. MARCHESI SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

STATUS OF WEED BEACH PROJECT

Ms. Branigan, stated that at the Board of Finance meeting the Town stated that it has approved the project but has not yet released the funds, that the Commission was led to believe were previously approved. She added that the BOS feels the project is approved pending bid review and timing approval by the Board of Finance. Ms. Swiatek stated that her assessment is that “political punting” from the BOS back to the BOF with conditional approval based on the other board requirements is what is happening.

Mr. Goodyear stated that there needs to be a clarification made to the Board of Selectmen and Ms. Branigan replied that she would contact them after the meeting with the update on the construction and engineering.

Ms. Swiatek stated that she needs to finalize the engineering plans that need to be modified and drawings need to be sent out for bid and the RFP is now a difficult process because of the delays.

Mr. Goodyear stated that the strategic plan that was developed last month remains what is needed along with a timeline for the project to present to the BOS by the end of July. Ms. Daly added that it was key and should be emphasized that the funds need to be released so that work can begin after this summer's beach season. She added that they have already received 800 signatures on the petition, and stated that the petition is to be submitted to the BOS.

Mr. Goodyear thanked Ms. Swiatek for the overview and stated that it was a very good summary to get everyone focused on what needs to be done to get the project moving. He stated that the down side is that the Board of Finance has made decisions on this and other projects, but the following points should be noted:

1. The Police Department priorities seem to be taken precedent over Weed Beach.
2. If the project is approved, what is the Parks & Recreation's capability to manage the project.
3. If a phase-in plan is preferred, they may decide to do the paddle facility for the winter then finish the other elements of the project by the fall of 2011.

Ms. Swiatek stated that with the change to the delivery system from CM to GC as the town would do the bidding and hire a Clerk of the Works to overview and manage the tasks of the project. Ms. Swiatek stated that with a valued engineering process, the bids need to be as detailed as possible, and as mentioned last month, that there was speculation that the project will be a phase in and this presents issues with added costs and complications with things like power installation where digging, covering, re-surfacing would be done then have to be re-done to complete other areas.

She stated that the big issue is the question of the Town's commitment to the project versus other priorities, and they need to be "shovel ready" to start once the town gives the go ahead.

After a lengthy discussion on what was necessary to develop a strategic plan or push for the politicians, it was agreed that the following next steps would be taken:

- Ms. Graham suggested the Playground by the Sound Committee should take First Selectman Campbell to tour the beach and the elements of the project.
- Ms. Swiatek will request an update the engineering plan outline and prepare a more formal proposal and e-mail the revised document to the Commissioners for comments or additions. She added that it is difficult to obtain a true updated bid if the project is actually not officially approved.

- Ms. Swiatek will get the item put on the Board of Selectmen meeting agenda for the July meeting.

REPORTS

a) Director's Report.

Ms. Swiatek stated that the report provides a project status summary on the projects in place, that routine maintenance on fields and beaches continues, and the department has been hampered by workers compensation injuries, which has left the crew short staffed. She added that she has hired seasonal groups, mostly young workers on college break, and they have been great with getting jobs done.

She reviewed her written report and highlighted that the Tilley lights under the STEAP grant were to have started this week, but another delay has pushed it back yet another week. She added a note of thanks to the volunteers who worked hard digging next to Noroton Bay, and on the planting at the Sailing Team site. She stated that it was a great deal of work as the ground was really hard, but they used pick axes and amazingly enough the job got done and the area looks great.

Regarding the Light Boat Launch Area at Weed Beach, Ms. Daly stated that the new signage for the boat launch ramp is working well, the signs are more directionally clear and parents are pleased with this as a resolution to the location problem.

b) Assistant Director

Mr. Coghlan presented his report, as included in the handout, and said registration for the Spring/Summer programs so far are down compared to last year. He provided a bar chart comparison showing a steady increase over the last ten years. He stated, as mentioned that last month that positions are in place for the season, and training sessions have take place with 100% attendance.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Ms. Branigan stated that there was no formal report, other than the tasks necessary regarding the beach project approvals.

OTHER BUSINESS (TWO-THIRDS VOTE)

Ms. Swiatek stated that there was an item to be added and requested a motion to add to the agenda the lights on Holohan Field .

- ** **MR. MARCHESI MOTIONED TO SUSPEND THE RULES AND ADD LIGHTS ON HOLOHAN FIELD TO THE AGENDA.**
- ** **MS. GRAHAM SECONDED.**
- ** **THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Ms. Swiatek referred to an e-mail and stated that it was very thorough with the details of the lighting for Holahan Field, and there was some urgency to start in August. Ms. Daly asked if there was a need for a public hearing, and Ms. Swiatek replied that a public hearing was not necessary, and the authority had gone to Planning & Zoning for use of the field for lights. She added that there was only one neighbor that complained, and other than that there were no problems last year. The dates would be in October through daylight saving time, weekdays including Fridays and the time was minimal only from 5:15 to 7:15. She added that the group is responsive to any concerns and is very willing to work with the department.

- ** **MR. GOODYEAR MOTIONED TO ALLOW THE DJFL (DARIEN JUNIOR FOOTBALL LEAGUE) TO MAKE APPLICATION TO PLANNING & ZONING FOR THE PURPOSE OF UTILIZING THREE TEMPORARY GENERATOR OPERATED PORTABLE LIGHTS ON HOLOHAN FIELD FROM OCTOBER 11 – NOVEMBER 19 FROM 5:15 TO 7:15 MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY. SUSPEND THE RULES AND ADD LIGHTS ON HOLOHAN FIELD TO THE AGENDA.**
- ** **MS. DALY SECONDED.**
- ** **THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Other Business

Ms. Daly stated that she wanted to give the Commission a heads up on the issue of dog parks and to preserve off-leash spaces or an ordinance, that there was a petition circulating on the issue. Ms. Swiatek stated that she was aware of it, and that the item will most likely return to the Commission for action, as it was back on the RTM agenda for the fall.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

Ms. Branigan stated that the next meeting was a regular meeting scheduled for July 21, at 7:30 p.m. at the Darien Town Hall, room 119.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Knox
Telesco Secretarial Services