

**TOWN OF DARIEN
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2009**

ATTENDANCE: Jane Branigan, Chairman; Susan Daly; Vin Burke;
Bob Marchesi; Susan Graham; Marianne Gutierrez (8:35 p.m.)

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

OTHER: Andrew Boe

CALL TO ORDER

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

DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION ON GIFT DONATIONS:

A. GIFT: EAGLE SCOUT PROJECT – MCGUANE PARK. ANDREW BOE

Ms. Swiatek explained that this agenda item will be discussed later on in the evening.

Chairman Branigan then introduced Mr. Jim Flynn, whom she said is responsible for the fields, parks, buildings, etc., in the Town. For the past two years, he has improved production and the appearance of the fields, parks and buildings. Mr. Flynn said he enjoys his job, and thanked the Commissioners for their kind words.

APPROVE MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF NOVEMBER 18, 2009

**** MS. DALY MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF NOVEMBER 18, 2009.**

**** MR. BURKE SECONDED.**

**** MOTION PASSED WITH FOUR (4) VOTES IN FAVOR (MARCHESI, DALY, GRAHAM, BURKE) AND ONE (1) VOTE ABSTAINED (BRANIGAN).**

DISCUSS THE LIGHT AND ULTRA-LIGHT BOAT LAUNCH RAMP AT WEED BEACH

Ms. Swiatek said she met with the engineer at the site, and there may be a relocation opportunity at the end of the beach by the picnic area. She said the reconfiguration of the parking lot should be part of the major renovation project. Ballards would be put in at the turnaround area, and a sitting area would be added to the playground. Stearns & Wheeler is the Engineering firm. There is no need to do any ramping. Once the plan becomes more definite, they will ask Mr. Price, the Harbor Master, to come in and review it. At the last meeting, he thought it would be better for the jet ski's to launch from Pear Tree Point.

Mr. Marchesi asked if the site change is agreed to, can they do this in the spring, assuming the Weed Beach project doesn't go through. Ms. Swiatek said that they do not have permission to spend any more money. There hasn't been a release of funds. She said she asked the engineer to have the document bidding and scope of services ready in case the project does move forward. A question for the engineer is can the area be utilized without any change to the asphalt. It's possible this could be resolved by the Spring. It's also possible that the boat ramp may have to stay where it is.

STATUS REPORT ON WEED BEACH MASTER PLAN:

Ms. Swiatek said she has received one proposal for the scope of services from the engineer. She is waiting for the architect. She said they have the as-built. The meeting scheduled for today was postponed until next week.

Ms. Daly said there are three memorial benches that have been installed, along with a large amount of fencing. The memory walk is a great addition to the beach. The fencing work is not yet complete, but the gate has been installed. The contractor has not been paid yet. They are dissolving the 501(C)(3) and giving the balance of the account, which is less than \$5,000, to the Town for maintenance purposes.

Chairman Branigan thanked Ms. Daly and the Playground Committee for all that they did, and hopefully this is the beginning of the rest of the Weed Beach Project.

Mr. Burke suggested that the balance of the account be forward to Ms. Swiatek to use toward the cost of the \$3,500 sand replacement. Some discussion took place about the budget. It was agreed upon that the use of the money from the dissolved 501(C)(3) will be up to Ms. Swiatek's discretion to cover any additional costs for the playground, including items such as bricks.

DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION ON BUDGET PROPOSAL FY 2011

Ms. Swiatek said there is nothing new, and there are no programmatic changes. She distributed copies of the proposed FY 2011 budget and discussed it with the Commissioners.

Ms. Swiatek discussed the beach sand issue, saying that \$48,000 is budgeted for the FY 2011-2012. The last time the sand was replaced was in 2007, before the Weed Beach project got started. She said that the beach sand is the #1 concern of the public.

She said that the use of parks and beach permits goes up in a bad economy. If budget cuts take place, then there will be a significant loss of service, potentially to the lifeguard staffing, and the Saturday/Sunday beach cleanup.

Ms. Swiatek asked the Commissioners to review the budget proposal and get back to her with their thoughts. She said they can't vote on the operating side of the budget because there is no bottom line yet. She said she wants a vote on the capital budget, which is small (\$98,500).

**** MR. MARCHESI MOVED TO PROPOSE THE DIRECTOR OF PARKS AND RECREATION, MS. SWIATEK, SPEND \$98,500 FROM THE CAPITAL BUDGET.**

**** MS. GRAHAM SECONDED.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

DISCUSS FEE SCHEDULE FOR 2010/2011

Ms. Swiatek distributed copies of the fee schedule. She said that if the Commission wants to change the fees, she can schedule a public hearing for the next meeting. In the year 2006-2007, the beach stickers were raised from \$30.00 to \$35.00. They were \$20.00 in 2004; \$30.00 in 2005; and \$35.00 in 2006. The 2009 revenue from beach stickers was \$197,160; the 2010 projected revenue is \$198,630. In 2009, boat sticker revenue was \$8,350. In 2009, the gate access revenue was close to \$5,000. The out of town fee is already higher than it should be; it shouldn't be anymore than twice the regular resident fee.

Chairman Branigan and the Commissioners were all in favor of keeping the fee schedule as is for the year 2010-2011.

Ms. Gutierrez arrived at 8:35 p.m.

**** MR. BURKE MOVED TO APPROVE KEEPING THE FEE SCHEDULE THE SAME FOR THE 2010-2011 YEAR.**

**** MS. DALY SECONDED.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION ON GIFT DONATIONS:
GIFT: EAGLE SCOUT PROJECT – MCGUANE PARK. ANDREW BOE**

Andrew Boe, A Life Scout, trying to reach Eagle Scout, presented his Eagle Scout project to the Board. He had played at McGuane Field since he was a little boy, and he wanted to give something back to the community. He felt this project was a good way to do this, as the safety issue at the lower McGuane Field involves potential for the children using the playground to get hit by a ball.

The information on his project is as follows:

Hello, thank you for meeting with me. I have played in Darien Little League since t-ball and am currently a life scout in Boy Scouts. I am here tonight to tell you about what I would like to do for my Eagle Scout service project and hopefully get your formal approval to complete it.

I would like to create a natural barrier hedge in front of the playground on McGuane Field.

I have met with Mr. Farren, Mr. Flynn and Mrs. Swiatek from Parks and Rec and Mrs. Leinroth who is a landscape architect, to figure out the best way to do this.

After meeting with all of them, we have decided to plant Burning Bush plants staggered about 4 feet apart on center and 4 feet high in front of the playground. This is a sketch of what it would look like.

This would mean buying around 27 plants at a cost of around \$25 dollars apiece. I would do this in the beginning of April over a couple of weekends and would work with other volunteers to get the plants here and to plant them with Mr. Flynn's supervision.

I would take care of the plants in the beginning to make sure they are watered.

So hopefully by opening day you will see a hedge in front of the playground and the risk of a kid getting hit by a ball is gone.

Thank you for meeting with me.

The Commissioners commended Andrew for his project, saying it was great way to increase safety at the lower field and protect the children and parents. Mr. Boe said that the Little League has agreed to buy the 27 plants.

**** MR. BURKE MOVED TO APPROVE THE GIFT DONATION OF ANDREW BOE'S EAGLE SCOUT PROJECT, A NATURAL BARRIER 4 FT HEDGE, FOR MCGUANE PARK.**

**** MS. GUTIERREZ SECONDED.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

REPORTS

a) Director

Ms. Swiatek read from her submitted report, saying that she has been working on the budget formulation. She said Mr. Flynn has been out doing the field work and the sod work, and the fields have never looked better. She said the fields are in great shape going into the Spring. She said there has been painting work and small repairs done to the Senior Center. The gym bleachers have been delivered and will be installed on Monday, in time for the basketball season. She has received two quotes for the light project at Tilley Pond. She expects a third one shortly.

b) Assistant Director

Mr. Coghlan said the paddle court season is off to a good start. He discussed the programs graph that was part of his report. He said they will be hiring another office person shortly, as one part-time employee who worked in the office previously has moved.

c) Chairman

There was no Chairman report.

d) Playground by the Sound

Ms. Daly reported on this in the Weed Beach update.

OTHER BUSINESS (TWO-THIRDS VOTE)

Ms. Swiatek said that Chris Filmer, President of the Friends of Selleck's Woods, is also active in the Land Trust and has received approval for a grant program for an environmental study. It would give a total assessment of the park. Ms. Swiatek said a great job was done on the report, and it is at no cost to the Town.

Ms. Swiatek reported that the recent deer cull has ended, and they did reach their quota of 8 deer.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

NEXT MEETING: Regular Meeting January 20, 2010, 7:30 p.m. Darien Town Hall, Room 119

**** MS. DALY MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** MR. BURKE SECONDED.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Marr
Telesco Secretarial Services