

**TOWN OF DARIEN
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2009**

ATTENDANCE: Charlie Goodyear, Acting Chairman; Susan Daly; Vin Burke;
Bob Marchesi; Marianne Gutierrez; Andy Hunter

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

OTHER: Lee Pratt, RTM

CALL TO ORDER

Acting Chairman Goodyear called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.

APPROVE MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF JULY 15, 2009 AND AUGUST 5, 2009

The corrections to the regular meeting of July 15, 2009 are as follows:

On page 1, 2nd paragraph, the 2nd sentence should read: "He said that they are trying to finish up Phase 1."

On page 1, 3rd paragraph, 2nd sentence, change "with" to "will".

On page 1, 3rd paragraph, the 3rd sentence should read: "He said he asked the Board of Selectmen if he could make a presentation to them at their July 27, 2009 meeting for full funding."

On page 2, under STATUS REPORT ON WEED BEACH, 1st paragraph, 4th sentence, change "Ms. Daly explained the boat launch location," to "Ms. Daly explained concerns about the boat launch location,".

On page 4, under DISCUSS THE REQUEST FROM MR. GUY WISINSKI REGARDING LIGHTS ON THE TOWN HALL FIELDS, 1st paragraph, the 2nd sentence should read: "He felt that the comment was not helpful, and he asked the representatives present to discuss this topic tonight and to bring that sentiment back to Mr. Wisinski".

On page 4, 2nd paragraph, 2nd sentence, add "organization" to the end of the sentence.

On page 4, 4th paragraph, the 1st sentence should read: "Mr. Albu said the proposal before the Commission tonight was to put lights on Holahan Field every weeknight from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. for practice for one month only."

On page 4, 6th paragraph, the 1st sentence should read: "Some discussion took place regarding this proposal."

On page 4, 6th paragraph, the 4th sentence, change "DJFL's concerns" to "Parks & Recreation's concerns".

**** MR. BURKE MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF JULY 15, 2009 AS AMENDED.**

**** MS. DALY SECONDED.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The corrections to the meeting of August 5, 2009 are as follows:

On page 1, under CALL TO ORDER, 1st paragraph, the 2nd and 3rd sentences should read: "She explained that they were having a courtesy meeting to discuss the lighting of Holahan Field." She said Mr. Wisinski, who is Chairman of the Lights Committee of the Darien Junior Football League, will make the presentation."

On page 1, under PUBLIC HEARING, 2nd paragraph, the 2nd and 3rd sentences should read: "He explained that he and Mr. Steeger investigated the possibility of electricity to run lights. However, power is not available."

On page 1, under PUBLIC HEARING, 2nd paragraph, the 3rd sentence starting with "That would allow them to "plug and play" should be eliminated.

On page 2, under the Summary of the Pilot Program is, 4th paragraph down, it should read: "Lights on at 5 p.m. and off by 7:30 p.m. on all evenings lights are used."

On page 7, 3rd paragraph, 1st sentence, change "HOLIHAN FIELD" to "HOLAHAN FIELD".

**** MR. BURKE MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC HEARING OF AUGUST 5, 2009 AS AMENDED.**

**** MR. MARCHESI SECONDED.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

STATUS REPORT ON WEED BEACH MASTER PLAN:
GUEST: DEB PARNON, CHAIRMAN WBBC

Acting Chairman Goodyear explained that Ms. Parnon was not able to attend the meeting, and that everything is on hold. Ms. Swiatek reported on the status, saying that the bricks have been delivered. The contractor will be on site tomorrow to begin the donor walkway construction. The fence contractor will be out sometime this week to discuss the layout plans. The swings will be fenced in on 3 sides, leaving the water side open. She said that she will be meeting with the architect, the engineer, and Deb Parnon to review what needs to be done in order to move into Phase II.

Mr. Marchesi asked if there was an update on new members joining the Committee. Ms. Swiatek said that Ms. Parnon is working on it. Ms. Lora Bora is the new replacement for the Board of Finance representative. Ms. Swiatek confirmed that the Committee elected Ms. Deb Parnon as the new Committee Chairman. There is still a need for a professional contractor and a financial person.

DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION ON THE PLANTING PLAN FOR THE SAILING AREA ON NEARWATER LANE SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF NOROTON BAY ASSOCIATION

Acting Chairman Goodyear said that they have a very extensive plan for an area on Nearwater Lane. The neighbors suggested the \$1,600 plan, which would be facing Nearwater Lane.

Ms. Swiatek explained that the area used to be a gate access to Nearwater Lane, and a back entrance to the park, and the original plantings go back possibly as far as 20 years. She said Mr. Lee Pratt and his wife had done most of the original planting. Some sewer and electrical work had been done by the Town, and some of the area had been disturbed, leaving it exposed to the sailing area. The beautiful and elaborate plan developed by the neighbors has been reviewed, and after some discussion, it was agreed upon that the Commission cannot afford to maintain it. The Commission was aware that the area had been disturbed, so they were willing to replace some of the plantings. It was further agreed upon that the Commission will plant arborvitae, topsoil, and sea grass, in addition to repairing the fence. Ms. Swiatek will send a letter to the neighbors stating the Commission's intentions.

DISCUSS THE USE AND STATUS OF THE LIGHT AND ULTRA LIGHT BOAT LAUNCH RAMP AT WEED BEACH

Acting Chairman Goodyear explained that when the swings were installed, they went in across from the boat ramp. He said that it is an unsatisfactory, long-term arrangement. The boats have to be launched between the swings and the playground. It was decided that this would be the light and ultra light boat launch ramp, where people could take their boat off their car or their trailer and carry it down to the beach. With the increased use of jet-skis and some heavier craft, people are backing their trailers down the boat ramp. The boat ramp can't be moved to the other side of the swings.

Ms. Swiatek offered some history on this, saying that it was never a ramp into the water. It was intended to be a launch area for light craft. The jet ski's became an issue in the '80's when they launched from the boat ramp, and the Harbor Master wanted them to launch from another area. In the early '90's, the Commission designated Weed Beach as the area to launch jet skis and light and ultra light craft.

When working on the Master Plan, it was decided to define the launch area, where it is located now, as the perfect location. When the swings came along as an add-on to the playground project, the only place to fit them was on the other side of the boat launch ramp. The area is very busy now with kids using the swings and the boaters using the launch ramp. It is a safety issue with parking and loading/unloading boats.

Ms. Swiatek said the Commission needs to define how the area should be used. She mentioned that they are putting a fence in around the playground. She noted the following options as possibilities to eliminate the safety problem:

- 1) Leave area as is.
- 2) Designate the ramp to allow no vehicular traffic, which would mean that kayaks would have to be hand-carried down to the water and jet-skis would be encouraged to go back to Pear Tree Point.
- 3) Move the swings to the picnic area, which would be easier than moving the boat ramp.
- 4) Relocate the ramp, which would be problematic at mid-tide, with rocks in the immediate area.

Ms. Swiatek said that she is not in favor of eliminating the ramp from Weed Beach.

Mr. Marchesi said he would be in favor of redefining the ramp.

Some discussion took place among the Commission as to moving the swings, putting a fence around the playground, designating the boat ramp area closed to vehicular traffic by putting two posts at the top of the parking lot, or eliminating the parking spaces near the swings and boat ramp.

Ms. Gutierrez said that by putting in the playground, they had redefined the area for children, and the number one priority is the children's safety. By moving the swings across the parking lot would not address the safety of the children.

Ms. Swiatek said that she had received an email from only one boat ramp user, and she asked the commission members to ask residents to email her with their thoughts about moving the boat ramp to the picnic area. She would provide the Commission members with those thoughts.

DISCUSS BUDGET 2011

Ms. Swiatek said she didn't have budget handouts, but she urged the Commission members to begin thinking about the budget process, which starts in September. They have to hand in the budget in December. There is a 5 year plan for the capital budget. She offered to email the Commission members a copy of the current budget if they needed one.

GUEST: SONIA SMITH, CHAIRMAN OF THE DARIEN COMMUNITY GARDENS AT CHERRY LAWN PARK

Ms. Smith was not present. Ms. Swiatek discussed the possibility of installing locks on the gates around the garden to eliminate produce being stolen. It was suggested that two of the three locks be combination locks and have the same combination, and be accessible from both inside and outside. The third lock would be an exit arrangement only, without a lock combination. Ms. Swiatek said she would bring the suggestion to Ms. Smith.

DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION ON THE MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 2010

The Commission agreed to have the February meeting on Wednesday, February 24, 2010. They also agreed to keep the Wednesday, December 15, 2009 meeting on the schedule.

REPORTS

a) Director

Ms. Swiatek read from her written report, highlighting the special projects that have been done. She said that the parks and fields look great. Painting continues to be done at the Senior Center. The Parks & Recreation Commission took over the maintenance of the Senior Center grounds. The new Senior Center Director is doing a great job. The beach permit sales increased over last year. Ms. Swiatek said she hoped to have the bleachers installed in the gymnasium before the start of the basketball season.

b) Assistant Director

Mr. Coghlan said the Fall/Winter brochure was mailed out in late August. Registration began August 26, 2009 and they have seen heavy on-line registration. They are at 37% now for the Fall registration, which is more than last year at this time. He attributed that to 350 kids registering for pee wee soccer. Mr. Coghlan said the paddleball season will start on October 12, 2009, and almost everyone who registered got their first choice.

Mr. Coghlan said the beach season was good, with few beach closings due to water bacteria levels being too high. The Health Department was vigilant about their testing. The money taken in at the gate was the most they had ever collected, and he complimented the guardbooth personnel.

Ms. Swiatek said that they set goals and performance measurements for Jim's programs, and they looked to him to increase program offerings and registration numbers. She complimented him on answering the call.

c) Chairman

There was no Chairman report.

d) Playground by the Sound

Ms. Daly said they are working on the Donor Wall, and the benches will be installed soon.

OTHER BUSINESS (TWO-THIRDS VOTE)

Acting Chairman Goodyear said he had received a request from Mr. Guy Wisinski, Chairman of the Lighting Committee for DJFL, asking members of the Commission to show up at the P&Z Meeting for the Holahan Field lighting proposal. After some discussion, Acting Chairman Goodyear said that he would let Mr. Wisinski know that on August 5, 2009, the Parks & Recreation Commission agreed that he could proceed with a P&Z application. Therefore, the Parks & Recreation Commission has not taken a position. The Commissioners are free to attend the P&Z meeting as private citizens, but not on behalf of the Parks & Recreation Commission.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

NEXT MEETING: Regular Meeting October 21, 7:30 p.m. Darien Town Hall, Room 119

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

**** MR. HUNTER SECONDED.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

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

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Marr
Telesco Secretarial Services