

## Minutes from the Darien Parks and Recreation Committee Meeting

October 10, 2018

The meeting was called to order at 7:33 p.m. with the following committee members present: Adele Conniff, Diane Conologue, Sue-Ellen Mitchell, Curtis Butler, Chris Ezbiansky, Susanne Handler, Cheryl Russell, Andy Millar, Emily McDermott and Bill Van Loan. Committee members not in attendance were: Patti Bumgardner, Phyllis Hawkins, Ken Fiveson, Jennifer Moller and Carlo Cantavero.

The minutes from the June 6, 2018 meeting were approved with Curtis Butler and Cheryl Russell abstaining.

There was discussion regarding information on the Pear Tree Beach improvement project. The Pear Tree Beach Building Committee has been formed with the following members: Martha Banks, Tom Bell, Cheryl Russell, Michael Sgroe, Randy Tankoos, Diana Maguire and Ex-Officios Jayme Stevenson, Pam Gery and Mary Flynn. The first Pear Tree Beach Building Committee meeting will be held on October 24, 2018 and will be open to the public. Improvements to Pear Tree Beach include improved parking lot with better drainage, boat ramp, replacement of bathhouse and concession stand and replacement of guard shack.

The next topic of discussion was the Tokeneke Paddle Court Proposal. A change made from the original proposal was regarding the original lease term, which could be ten years, with additional five year options to renew to extend it and that the Town will retain the right to terminate with 3-5 years notice, as opposed to the previous term of 18 months notice, and no liability for amortized costs. There was concern raised by committee members about using precious open park space for a permanent structure when the town is striving to preserve open space. Another committee member raised the question of the need for beach passes to access the beach by Tokeneke Club members. Another concern is that while paddle tennis had traditionally been a cold weather sport its season is becoming longer which could impact beach parking in warmer weather. One committee member wondered if the idea of building paddle tennis courts over the Tokeneke Clubs existing tennis courts, as the Country Club of Darien had done several years ago, had been considered as an option. Committee members were concerned that using town space for a private organization could set a precedent for other parks in town.

The discussion then moved to the Weed Beach Picnic area and Short Lane. There was concern over the possibility of a pool and boathouse being constructed, as that would be a big investment with a great amount of risk given the history of flooding. There was also concern about the cost of hiring another consultant to evaluate the same issue.

The discussion then moved to the Planning and Zoning Report concerning the Highland Farms Property. There was discussion regarding the concern that applications for scheduling events cannot coincide with Ox Ridge Hunt Club events. The Planning and Zoning report also outlined the improvements to be made to Highland Farm including refurbishing and expanding two existing parking areas with porous asphalt and gravel, a stone chip pedestrian walking/jogging path, a storage shed, a portable bathroom and wooden paddock fencing with black wire mesh installed along the shared property line with Ox Ridge Hunt Club.

The committee then moved to the discussion of dogs being allowed at Weed Beach in the winter. Committee members were concerned about health issues with dogs off leash. An informal vote was taken in response to the question "As a pilot program, should dogs be allowed at Weed Beach during the winter months"? The committee voted 2 in favor and 8 opposed.

The Chairman's Report included new parent/child swings at Weed Beach and Tilley Pond is going to host an old fashion Christmas event. The Darien High School would like to install a cross-country track on the Diller property so that they can host cross-country meets. Also mentioned was the new furniture in the paddle hut at Weed Beach.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Sue-Ellen Mitchell