

Minutes from the Darien Parks and Recreation Committee

October 16, 2019

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. with the following members present: Patti Bumgardner, Diane Conologue, Susanne Handler, Cheryl Russell, Adele Conniff, Sue-Ellen Mitchell, Sandy Savage, Jennifer Moller, Emily McDermott and Bill Van Loan. Members of the public in attendance were Nancy Stein, Peter Van Winckle, Susie Fahey, Joan Gioielle, P. Finnegan, Kari Murray, Daniel Biggs, Anne Lynn, Perry Boyle, Mardi Durkin, Sarah Neumann, Marianne Laver, Joan McCollins, Woody Spurgeon, Trish Spurgeon, Brigitte Whitney and Jeffrey Urban.

Daniel Biggs of Weston and Sampson gave an overview of the suggested plan for the Weed Beach Meadow and Trail improvements to be funded by the gift of up to \$1,500,000 by the Darien Athletic Foundation and the Darien Foundation. A handout of schematics and maps of the project were distributed at the meeting. The presentation included moving the existing fitness equipment. A committee member raised the question regarding what surface the equipment would be placed on. Under consideration are surfaces such as a rubberized mat type surface (often used on playgrounds), stone dust or concrete.

Also discussed was the relocation of wetlands to make the wetlands one system as opposed to the current series of systems. This process would involve the removal of various invasive species of plants. Invasive vines by the back tennis courts would also be included in this process.

The presentation then turned to the installation of a boardwalk which would run the distance from the bath house to the end of the beach that provides the sailing program. This boardwalk would extend to a width of 10 feet and could be used for walking, jogging or biking. The current materiel being considered for the boardwalk is IPE. The trail system that is intended for walking, jogging or biking will be 8 to 10 feet wide with the primary trail surface being asphalt and the secondary trail a softer surface such as stone dust.

Also included in the plan is a raised crosswalk. It was mentioned that there will be no lost parking spaces with this plan.

After the presentation there was much discussion from the committee. Many members were concerned that they did not have enough time to thoroughly review all of the suggested improvements. The area of most concern was the boardwalk. It was mentioned that the boardwalk would encroach on a narrow strip of sand. Also mentioned was that there is a sidewalk that runs parallel to the projected

boardwalk which seems redundant. Also of concern are the boardwalk overlooks that would be installed in the dunes.

After much discussion the Chairman called for a vote to accept the Darien Athletic Foundation's gift of up to \$1,500,000 for the Weed Beach Meadow and Trail improvements. Given the committees questions, the vote was unanimous (with 10 members voting) to postpone the vote until 10/21/19 in order to have more time to review the plan.

A motion was then called to approve the minutes of the 9/16/19 meeting, which was approved with 9 members voting to approve and one abstention.

Cheryl Russell then gave an update on the PTPB Improvement Project. The Architectural Review Board had a preliminary meeting with the architect and the following are some of the comments or concerns. One of the concerns is that the ramps and seating areas around and leading up to the gazebo will obstruct this iconic town landmark. The pavers suggested for the parking lot were reddish in color and not in keeping with the natural setting. The suggested flooring for the picnic grove is concrete, also not in keeping with the natural setting. The suggested rooftop decking material is IPE, which was noted to be very costly to maintain. Many thought the colors of the building should be more unified. Also discussed was how big would the community room on the second floor be and what it would be used for (max capacity 34 people) and only for Darien residents.

At the PTB Building Committee meeting the architect and Weston and Sampson provided the project costs which are \$898,500 for the site work, \$ 137,500 for the boat ramp (which does not include dredging), the structures preliminary budget is \$1,306,500 with a 15% contingency of \$330,750 with the total estimated construction budget of \$2,535,750.

Cheryl also mentioned the proposed timeline presented at the Design Presentation Meeting of 10/9/19 to be as follows: 10/15/19 Present project to the Architectural Review Board (ARB); 10/16/19 Present project to Parks and Recreation Commission,; 10/23/19 Submit application to Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA); 11/20/19 Present application at ZBA Hearing; 11/26/19 Submit application to ARB; 12/13/19 Submit application to P&Z; 1/21/20 Present application at P&Z Public Hearing; TBD Weston and Sampson to submit COP application to CT DEEP.

Many members of the community agreed that some improvements were necessary to the bathhouse, concession stand and bathrooms but the scale of the project was too much. Community members questioned at what step could the project pause to consider scaling back. It was mentioned that the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting was being held at the same time and the room emptied out with the community heading to that meeting.

The Chairman then gave her report mentioning that the Park and Rec Commission has invited us to tour the town parks on 10/26/19. The Nature Center was also mentioned as they are in violation of their permit but that was currently being corrected. The Nature Center rents their space from the town for a dollar a year.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Sue-ellen Mitchell