

## Minutes from the Darien Parks and Recreation Committee Meeting

February 13, 2019

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m. with the following committee members present: Adele Conniff, Diane Conologue, Sue-Ellen Mitchell, Chris Ezbiensky, Sandy Savage, Mark Adiletta, Emily McDermott, Bill Van Loan, Jennifer Moller and Susanne Handler. Those not in attendance were: Patti Bumgardner, Cheryl Russell, Andy Millar, Ken Fiveson and Susan Lauritzen.

The first item on the agenda was discussion regarding the 2019-2020 Parks and Recreation Budget. It was noted the Board of Selectmen are supportive of the operating budget, which will include the re-instatement of a maintenance position. On the capital side, the Board of Selectmen support the Short Lane improvements which has been allocated \$500,000. Also supported is the tree replacement program \$5,000, playground equipment upgrade \$15,000, irrigation \$8,000, sunshade at Weed Beach \$15,000 before (which was offset partially by \$6,000 left as gift for Weed Beach) now \$9,000 and equipment replacement program \$45,000. The basketball court and backstop have been pushed back to next year. It was also noted that there will be a public hearing (by the Parks and Recreation Commission) on February 27, 2019 regarding the improvements of the Short Lane property. The final vote is yet to come.

The next topic was the support by the Board of Selectmen for \$600,000 for the parking lots, walking path, comfort station and landscaping at the Highland Farm property.

The committee then discussed the Pear Tree Beach improvement project. The Building Committee interviewed three firms (Landtech, Schmidt, and Neil Hauck and chose Landtech. It was noted that Landtech was within budget and the committee vote was unanimous.

The committee then discussed the town employee contract. It was noted that the average cost increase over the duration of the contract is 3.5 percent and if there are retirements during the period of this three year contract the overall cost of the contract would be reduced.

The Parks and Recreation Committee then voted on the acceptance of a gift in the amount of \$27,753.81 from the Fireworks Committee for future fireworks. The vote to accept the gift was unanimous by the ten members present. The annual fireworks display had been organized by an independent group in the past and will now fall under the Parks and Recreation Department.

The Chairman's report included mention of Highland Farm programs that may begin before the parking lots are paved. This had been approved by Planning and Zoning. It was also mentioned that there will be 30 minutes between programs that have more than 30 participants and that there will be a cap of 92 cars that are allowed to park at Highland Farm. There was then discussion regarding the number of special events allowed to take place annually at Highland Farm. In the original document it was stated that ten special events and five non-profit events could be held annually. Later the Chair noted that the number had been amended by Planning and Zoning and that eight annual Town sponsored and/or non-profit sponsored special events could be held each year. There were concerns by some committee members about special events such as amusement park rides being held at Highland Farms. It was noted that if such an event was to be held there would be no more than five rides allowed.

The last topic of discussion was regarding plastic bags. Feedback on the plastic bag ordinance is in the works but so far there has been 80% positive and 20% negative response so far. There will probably be another public hearing once the ordinance is a little more defined.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Sue-Ellen Mitchell