

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING
Minutes of the May 21, 2008 Regular Meeting

A meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission was held on May 21, 2008, 10th Floor Conference Room, Stamford Government Center.

In attendance were:

Commissioners: Thomas Lombardo
 Beth Cooper
 Vincent Martino

Staff: Laurie Albano
 Mickey Docimo
 Joseph Barbarotta

Guests: David Rubin – Fort Stamford

 Donald Richner – Fort Stamford

 Brian O’Neill – Fort Stamford

 Carole Yudain – Cherry Trees

 Crystal Mitchell – Church Event (Revival)

 Peter Medoit – Youth Revival Service

 Bill Epp – National Lione Little League

 Bobby Walker, Jr. – King & Low Heywood Thomas School

 Loretta Gerus – Cove Neighborhood Avenue

 Luis Duarte – Wudang Tai Chi of Stamford

 Charles Pia – Stamford Babe Ruth Softball

 Richard Tannenbaum – Yerwood Center

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:40 p.m. by Thomas Lombardo.

Commissioner McGuinness and Commissioner Smith did not attend the meeting.

Review of April 24, 2008 Minutes.

Review of April 24, 2008 Minutes was tabled to the June 2008 Commission Meeting.

Staff Reports

Mickey Docimo – Parks and Recreation/Operations

- Mr. Docimo gave a copy of the Skate Park brochure to the Commissioners. The Skate Park Manager started working about two weeks ago, Mr. Docimo had to transfer some money around to pay for her salary. The Skate Park Manager will work for about 25 hours a week between now and November 1, 2008. She will be at the park to check late morning, come back late afternoon and also during middle of the day to the end of the day on Saturday and Sunday.
- There is currently a transfer pending of the Parks Police to the regular Police. Mr. Docimo is concerned that he will not be able to solve enforcement issues once the Parks Police transfer. Complaints will have to be passed on to whoever they are assigned to.
- Mr. Docimo stated that there was a letter from the State of Connecticut referring to an audit that was done that states that in order to have access to NCIC (system to do background checks) they need to be a part of a Police Department and report to a Police Department.
- The concessionaire from the parks was fired for not paying the rent. The new concessionaire is Pennfield Foods; we have references on them from Fairfield. Pennfield Foods will have a 90 day License Agreement. Mr. Docimo stated that he has been contacted by at least a half a dozen people who are interested in the beach concessions, Mr. Docimo asked them to send a resume; we will probably put it out to bid in September.
- The concessionaire at Terry Connors Rink left. It looks like going forward we will have bending machines. Mr. Docimo stated that there is only about 12 days a year where a concessionaire is needed at the rink, mostly at the High School Hockey games, play offs, etc., and these people want to run their own concession to benefit the league. Mr. Docimo will put in the bid for the contract for the new concessionaire that if we needed someone at the rink that person will have first right of refusal or exclusivity.
- Mr. Docimo stated that the Mayor did an inspection of the beaches today. Mr. Docimo congratulated Joe Barbarotta for doing a great job.
- We will start checking beach stickers on Monday, May 26th.

Joseph Barbarotta – Parks Maintenance

- This is our opening weekend; bathrooms will be open on Saturday.
- We are putting the new sidewalk at West Beach between the parking area and the beach.
- We have recycling in the parks this year, especially at Cove Island. We have 55 gallon barrels placed at the parks. Starting next week biodegradable garbage bags are going to be handed out as people go in the park and we will ask them to put the garbage in there.
- We are almost done with the two playgrounds at Carwin Park, by next month we have to finish our splash pad. There will be an opening ceremony next month.

Laurie Albano – Recreation

- Lifeguards start on Saturday and will be there until Labor Day. We have had two training courses and we might have another one. They will have an orientation tonight and tomorrow night.
- Almost all of our camp positions are hired.
- Scalzi concerts are all set; we will get a press release on those soon.
- The Recreation Center RFP is in Purchasing and that won't be awarded now, Director Barnes would like us to wait to actually begin the study in early July. His motivation is to see if at that point we know if a school is closed. The selection team chose a firm out of Saint Paul, Minnesota; they are using a local architect as well.
- Regarding the Software RFP we are trying to get a new company that will be able to interface with the City's Financial Software, HTE.
- We are working on an agreement with the Yerwood Center Pool this summer. We have been involved in managing the pool in the summer for many years. The pool has been rehabbed and they have subcontracted it out going forward after this summer to an aquatics vendor to manage all of their aquatics there. We have been told that we will probably still be able to use the pool for our camps and playgrounds, but we will not be providing the lifeguards and we will not be the master scheduler of the facility. We are putting together a temporary Agreement for this summer. Mr. Lombardo requested a copy of the Agreement for the Commissioners.

- The two GSTA Tennis Events that were at Scalzi got great coverage and they went very well.
- All the fields and leagues are active and on their way.
- We are in the process of planning some activities at Carwin Park.
- Some staff worked on Saturday at the Family Day event at the Yerwood Center.

Carole Yudain – Mill River Park – Cherry Trees

- Ms. Yudain stated that she was shocked to see on the front page of the Advocate 10 days ago that they were going to remove the cherry trees and put in something that is as pretty as Central Park in New York instead of the cherry trees. Ms. Yudain grew up in New York and she can't think of any thing in Central Park that is as pretty as the Stamford cherry trees.
- Ms. Yudain feels that removing the cherry trees is an insult to the man that gave them to the City.
- Mr. Lombardo asked Ms. Yudain to voice her concerns to the Co-Chairs of the Board of Representatives, Parks and Recreation Committee.
- Ms. Yudain stated that in 1971 a rose garden was planted on the side of the Old Town Hall in honor of her late husband. About two years ago Tim Curtin told her that the roses would be replanted but nothing happened. Mr. Lombardo stated that we will make it part of the record and follow up.

Discussion on Fort Stamford

- Mr. Lombardo stated Sharon Slocum will not be able to attend the meeting tonight but sent an e-mail with her statement. Ms. Slocum stated in her e-mail that she was at Fort Stamford on Saturday and saw a birthday party in progress, it was colorful but the youngsters were running over the redoubts with little appreciation for the historical significance, she is not sure if damage was done, but it was not appropriate to the site. Fort Stamford Coalition needs to get some informational signs up, as soon as possible, to help people understand what these mounds are.

Ms. Slocum believes that the Goodbody Garden, the Fort Stamford Preservation Coalition and Laurie Albano can work together and share the space. She would not like to see children running through the garden and feels appropriate that at the beginning of parties rules be lay down. We need to chain off the lawn area to prevent people from parking on the lawn.

- Mr. Brian O'Neill stated that the City paid for an extensive survey and we know that the parking lot at Fort Stamford is City property. Mr. O'Neill feels that it is

absurd to chain the parking lot so the people have to park in a historic ground. Mr. O'Neill feels that it is disrespectful to have a driveway installed without anybody's knowledge.

- Mr. O'Neill stated that he went inside the building last week and noticed that even though the City invested great time, energy and money fixing up the building, already there are stair treads broken up on the stairs creating a serious liability exposure for the City. Mr. O'Neill feels that is inappropriate for kids to run over the redoubts, it should be a passive park not an active recreation center. Mr. O'Neill wanted to enter into the record the following comment from Ella Grasso, Governor, April 23, 1977:

"The Fort Stamford Heritage Center will be a great historic and cultural addition to the area. Many people have worked hard to bring this plant of fruition, many more have given essential financial support, all deserve recognition and preview for assistance for the Fort Stamford restoration project."

Mr. O'Neill feels that it is time that the City of Stamford celebrated its cultural heritage and stop disrespecting it with these projects that are inappropriate, Mr. O'Neill is tired of being arbitrarily dismissed as we have no other choice, other cities have choices. He feels that we need to celebrate these sites in a way that is beneficial to our youth and future visitors of Stamford.

- Mrs. Cooper feels that cultural events should be held at Fort Stamford.
- Ms. Albano explained that the building had not been renovated in quite some time and when it got renovated all of a sudden everybody is interested in it, which is natural. Since Recreation is running out of space, when the building became available it was given to her.
- Ms. Albano stated that she spoke to Scott today and he said the kids were running on the hill but there were no children running in the garden.
- Ms. Albano stated that there are always people that go to the park on a drop in basis, for example last week Scott from the Recreation Department encountered a group of over 20 people picnicking at the park.
- Mr. Lombardo stated that the Commission has the authority to set policies and procedures and feels that the Commission needs to set one on this issue. He spoke to someone from the Parks and Recreation Committee of the Board of Representatives and was told that once the Commission gets something together there are amendables to an Ordinance that will prohibit birthday parties and things of that sort. Today the Risk Manager commented to Mr. Lombardo that the people that have birthday parties at Fort Stamford are going to need insurance.

- Mr. Lombardo feels that the parties should be confined to the first floor of the building, people cannot park on the grass and the display that Mr. O'Neill had in mind for the second floor has to be zoned with two alarms. Mr. O'Neill can put the display together for the time period of Memorial Day and gear toward July 4th.
- Mr. Docimo stated that it is not the Director of Operations or anybody's intention to disrespect Fort Stamford. The other side of this issue is that the Director of Operations is auditing, in a very positive way, the non-City agency occupation of City buildings. Mr. Docimo explained to Mr. O'Neill that he is not being dismissed; he is just not given exclusive access to a City building that is needed by a City agency, whether or not that use is appropriate it's up for discussion. Mr. Docimo is trying to interpret the direction of what the administration wants and accommodate everybody. If someone wants intermittent use of the building, nobody will prevent that. Under the direction he has been given, he is not going to be allowed to let Mr. O'Neill put a display for that type of period of time and move the Recreation activities.

Mr. Docimo stated that if we go into the legal issue, if the City puts someone there for any period of time, does that now constitute a lease or a contract? We have the same problem with people who want to occupy City buildings that are not historic buildings.

- Mr. Lombardo stated that the next step is to go to the Board of Representatives and have them deal with an Ordinance, which will take a long time, so to accommodate the instant matter we have to discuss what can be offered to Mr. O'Neill.
- Ms. Albano gave the Commissioners a written statement of the use of Fort Stamford by the Recreation Department. The Recreation Department will be offering an after school program for children grades K-5 beginning in September. The program will run Monday through Friday from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. following the public school calendar until the end of the year next June. There will be a maximum of 25 kids.

Birthday Parties for children on Saturdays throughout the year, offered at a 1:00 p.m. time slot and a 4:00 p.m. time slot. Parties last 1 ½ hours and is offered to a maximum of 20 children.

Recreation will offer Mommy and Me style programs with emphasis on movement, music and arts and crafts on two to three weekday mornings during the fall, winter and spring sessions. Classes will take place from 10:00 a.m. thru 12:00 p.m. A maximum of 10 kids per class will be allowed.

- Mr. Docimo stated that he has at least four other groups that wanted the same type of use that we are talking about and they were turned down. Mr. Docimo said that he has the same situation in at least three other buildings that have no

historic value, but the occupation, legal and safety ramifications are all the same.

- Mr. Barbarotta stated that as the facilities person he needs to know if the person that occupies a City building has a Lease and an Agreement, that way he knows what his responsibilities are and what the responsibilities of the lessee are. Mr. Barbarotta feels that it is important that whoever is at Fort Stamford has an Agreement so he can honor it and he can be clear what his responsibilities are with the building.
- Mr. Docimo stated that if the City decides not to use the building for any sort of recreational or parks bureau use at all, and we were going to dedicate it to a display, he guarantees there will be a group in front of this Commission next month to complain why we denied their programs and give away City space to this use no matter how justified it is.
- Mr. Martino feels that the building should be used for historical reasons, for teachers who want to take their classes to show the Fort.
- Mrs. Cooper stated that we need to work together and try to find a happy medium.
- Mr. Lombardo stated that if Recreations does the Mommy and Me Programs, the people who have the key to the building should also have a key to the parking lot. They should be required to go up and open the parking lot 20 minutes before anybody is scheduled to come in, and when they close the building they will have to close the gate on the way out.
- Mr. O'Neill stated that Fort Stamford is on the National Historic Register and it is also a State Archeological Preserve. These are very special, significant designations. Mr. O'Neill disagrees that this park and this building can be used by everybody and that there can't be any exclusive use. He doesn't believe there is another historic park that we have in the City of Stamford as significant as this one.
- Mr. Lombardo would like to have a meeting with Director Barnes to discuss use of Fort Stamford.
- Resident Donald Richner does not agree with having birthday parties at Fort Stamford. Mr. Richner stated that if the City is going to have these birthday parties they need to provide supervision. Mr. Richner also expressed his concern about the parking lot.

Mr. Lombardo stated again that the City staff person that will open the building will have a key for the parking lot, and will open the gate before he opens the building. When he locks the building, he will lock the gate for the parking.

- Mr. Richner feels that if this becomes an open park, it will be destroyed and littered. Mr. Lombardo suggested that Mr. Richner share his concern with his City Representatives.
- Resident David Rubin expressed his concern with the parking lot. Mr. Rubin feels that the building should be used for historical use not for birthday parties and Mommy and Me programs.

Donations

Dominick Colandro – Bench Donation in Memory of His Parents – Cove Island Park.

Tabled to the June 2008 Commission Meeting. No representative was present.

Special Events

Barbara Rose – Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation – Walkathon on Sunday, September 28, 2008 from 7:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. – Cove Island Park.

Tabled to the June 2008 Commission Meeting. No representative was present.

Crystal Mitchell – Church Event (Revival) – Jackie Robinson Park – June 14, 2008 from 3:00 to 8:00 p.m. – Rain Date June 21, 2008 – 50 to 100 Participants.

Mr. Martino made a motion to approve.

Seconded by Mrs. Cooper Unanimously Approved

Peter Medoit – Use of Mill River Park for Youth Revival Service – Saturday, June 28, 2008 from 11:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. – 200 People.

Mr. Medoit needs to discuss with Facilities if they will need port johns. He also needs to contact the Health Department if they are going to have food at the event.

Mrs. Cooper made a motion to approve.

Seconded by Mr. Martino Unanimously Approved

Bill Epp – National Lione Little League Annual Family Picnic – Scalzi Park/Main Field – Saturday, June 7, 2008 from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. – Rain Date June 8, 2008.

Mrs. Cooper made a motion to approve the event and waive the fee.

Seconded by Mr. Martino Unanimously Approved

Bobby Walker – King & Low Heywood Thomas School – Community Service Clean-up of Scalzi Park by 8th Grade Students and Cummings Park by 6th Grade Students – Tuesday, June 3, 2008 from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Mr. Martino made a motion to approve.

Seconded by Mrs. Cooper

Unanimously Approved

Our Lady of Grace Nursery School – Graduation and Family Picnic at Cove Island Park – Saturday, June 17, 2008 – Rain Date Sunday, June 18, 2008 – Request to Waive \$25.00 One Day Parking Pass.

Mr. Martino made a motion to approve.

Seconded by Mrs. Cooper

Unanimously Approved

Villa Divino Amore School – Graduation and Family Picnic at Cove Island Park – Saturday, June 24, 2008 – Rain Date Sunday, June 25, 2008 – Request to Waive \$25.00 One Day Parking Pass.

Mr. Martino made a motion to approve.

Seconded by Mrs. Cooper

Unanimously Approved

Old Business

Stamford Babe Ruth – Talent Evaluation at Cubeta Stadium – Monday, June 23, 2008 from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Tabled to the June 2008 Commission Meeting. Mr. Smith was not present to report.

New Business

Nicholas Braccia – Stamford Bocce.

Item withdrawn from Agenda by Mr. Braccia.

Loretta Gerus – Cove Neighborhood Association – Request for Approval for a Gazebo to be Added to Gurley Park Located at Weed Avenue and East Main Street.

Ms. Gerus is representing the Cove Neighborhood Association and they are looking at putting a gazebo in Gurley Park which was recently cleaned up.

Mr. Barbarotta is concerned that they gazebo will be used for weddings and that it will bring that kind of stuff into the park, and then there will be maintenance on it. Mr. Barbarotta also stated that it might invite the homeless.

Mr. Barbarotta reported that they are going to put some new guardrail there and plant a major tree and maybe some benches.

Mr. Lombardo requested a formal resolution from the Cove Neighborhood Association, signed by the President.

Item was tabled to June 2008 Meeting, Commissioners will go to take a look at the site.

Luis Duarte – Wudang Tai Chi of Stamford – Use of Cove Island Park for Free Tai Chi Classes for the Community – Every Sunday from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

Mrs. Cooper made a motion not to approve.

Seconded by Mr. Martino

No: Thomas Lombardo
Beth Cooper
Vincent Martino

Tournaments

ASHA for Education – Cricket Tournament – Lione Park – Saturday and Sunday August 16th and 17th, 2008 – Rain Date August 24, 2008.

There will be a \$200 Tournament Fee.

Mrs. Cooper made a motion to approve.

Seconded by Mr. Martino

Unanimously Approved

Charlie Pia – Stamford Babe Ruth Softball – Tournaments for 2008.

Mr. Pia stated that they will have two tournaments this year.

The States Tournament will be from July 4th to July 11th, 2008. The regular house games will be 5:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Weekend play will go from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.

The Regionals – 10 and under will be either July 19th or July 26th, 2008.

Mr. Martino made a motion to approve.

Seconded by Mrs. Cooper

Unanimously Approved

Mrs. Cooper made a motion to add Mr. Richard Tannebaum from the Yerwood Center to the Agenda.

Seconded by Mr. Martino

Unanimously Approved

Richard Tannebaum – 65th Anniversary of the Yerwood Center – Permission to Use of Jackie Robinson Park to Host an Arts Festival on June 28, 2008 and August 30, 2008 – 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Food vendors will be at their property, they will have to contact the Health Department.

Mrs. Cooper made a motion to approve.

Seconded by Mr. Martino

Unanimously Approved

Correspondence

Two Letters from Mary Deery Uva Regarding Turf Athletic Fields.

Letters were handed out to the Commissioners with their Agenda packages and they will each review them separately.

Mr. Lombardo stated that Attorney General Blumenthal is involved in taking money from a previous settlement in order to fund a State review of Turf Fields.

Ms. Albano reported that the Kids in Crisis Triathlon that was approved a couple of months ago changed its route. It was supposed to originate from West Beach and now they changed and switched to Cummings. The Police would not allow them to swim off of West Beach because it was too close to the channel.

The Commission agrees with the change, Ms. Albano will call them and let them know that if there is a change with the approved location they will have to notify us.

Mrs. Cooper made a motion to change the venue.

Seconded by Mr. Martino

Unanimously Approved

Date for June 2008 Commission Meeting to be determined.

Motion to adjourn the meeting by Mr. Martino.

Seconded by Mrs. Cooper.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted
Margarita Arenas
May 27, 2008