

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING
Minutes of the August 27, 2008 Regular Meeting

A meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission was held on August 27, 2008, 10th Floor Operations Conference Room, Stamford Government Center.

In attendance were:

Commissioners: Thomas Lombardo
 Beth Cooper
 Tim McGuinness
 Mark Smith

Staff: Mickey Docimo
 Joe Falzone

Guests: Representative John Zelinsky – Homer Wise Park

 Ben Marcus – Homer Wise Park

 Sgt. Paul Vaccaro – Parks Police

 Greg Arpino – Bench Donation

 Msgr. DiGiovanni – St. John's Church Family Picnic

 Linda Dunn – Diocese of Bridgeport

 Nona Snyder – Boys & Girls Club

 Fern Pessin – Stamford Hospital Foundation

 Philip Balestriere – Use of Cove Island Pavilion

 Teresa Rough – National Lione Little League

 Rona Katz – Temple Beth El

 Loretta Gerus – Cove Association

 Annette Bodetka – Cove Association

 Nikhil Mahajan – UBS Cricket Club

 Pete Sormuficed – GSTA

Zoraida Butler – SSUA – Tournament

Matthew Flood – Tournament

David Winston – Resident

Ginger Winston – Resident

Kevin Murray – Parks Department

Wynne Parry – The Advocate

Commissioner Martino did not attend the meeting.

Laurie Albano and Joe Barbarotta did not attend the meeting.

Commissioner Cooper arrived at 6:40 p.m.

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m. by Thomas Lombardo.

Review of the April 24, 2008 Minutes.

Mr. Smith made a motion to approve.

Seconded by Mr. McGuinness

Unanimously Approved

Review of the May 21, 2008 Minutes.

Mrs. Cooper made a motion to approve.

Second by Mr. Lombardo

YES: Mrs. Cooper
Mr. Lombardo

ABSTAINED: Mr. McGuinness
Mr. Smith

(Mr. McGuinness and Mr. Smith abstained because they were not present at the May 21, 2008 meeting).

Review of the June 10, 2008 Minutes.

Mr. Smith made a motion to approve.

Seconded by Mr. Lombardo

YES: Mr. Smith
Mr. Lombardo

ABSTAINED: Mr. McGuinness

(Mr. McGuinness abstained because he was not present at the June 10, 2008 meeting).

Review of the July 16, 2008 Minutes.

Mr. McGuinness made a motion to approve.

Seconded by Mr. Lombardo

YES: Mr. McGuinness
Mr. Lombardo

ABSTAINED: Mr. Smith

(Mr. Smith abstained because he was not present at the July 16, 2008 meeting).

Staff Reports

Representative John Zelinsky – Homer Wise Park – Proposal for Playground.

- Representative Zelinsky attended the meeting with his constituent Mr. Ben Marcus who is interested in putting a swing set for small children and possibly a small slide in the rear of Homer Wise Park, located at Bedford Street and Chester Street. Mr. Marcus mentioned to Mr. Zelinsky that there are many families with small children in their district who go and use Homer Wise Park on a daily basis.
- Mr. Lombardo stated that this small play area would enhance Homer Wise Park and allow families in their district with small children to better utilize this important park.
- Mr. Ben Marcus stated that their proposal is as follows:

Four Swing Standard Swing Set – 51' x 38'

- a. 2 bucket swings
- b. 1 handicap swing
- c. 1 standard belt swing

One slide – 19' x 30'

Aluminum fencing surrounding play area.

Surface Cover for play area.

- Mr. Marcus stated that he will find the financing for the playground privately; the budget is about \$15,000. There are a lot of potential donors in the neighborhood.
 - Mr. Marcus would like to have a plaque thanking donors.
 - Mr. Lombardo stated that when the Commission approved this park for a Memorial Park for a Medal of Honor recipient, the park takes on a different kind of use. The Commission has not approved slides and swings at Fort Stamford because of the historical nature of the park. The Commission will review the proposal and get back to Mr. Marcus or Representative Zelinsky.
 - Mr. Lombardo stated that maybe more of the neighbors may have strong feelings for or against this playground.
 - Mr. Lombardo stated that they need insurance, determination as to safety, determination as to the quality of the product, wear and tear, what has to be replaced or repaired.
 - Mr. Docimo stated there are a couple of issues, one of them is liability, the other is ongoing maintenance.
 - Mr. Lombardo stated that the neighbors' opinion is important and he also feels that it would be good to talk to the entire Homer Wise Committee.
 - Mr. Smith is concerned that by fencing the area it would become more secluded. Mr. Docimo feels that the immediate neighbors are going to object. Mr. Docimo also feels that the playground will be drawing traffic through an already heavy vehicle traffic area.
 - Mr. Smith is also concerned that the park will be located next to a very busy road. That is why Mr. Marcus is proposing the playground to be in the back of the park and for it to be fenced in.
 - Mr. Falzone stated that when playground apparatus is installed it needs to be inspected by a Certified Playground Safety Inspector. There are guidelines to go by, there has to be a safety surface and a certain amount of distance away from each pole and post. There is also an additional safety area for each type of playground apparatus whether it would be swings or slides.
- Mr. Falzone agreed to put together the guidelines for playground safety and send them to Mr. Lombardo.
- Mr. Lombardo stated that we will need to have a Public Hearing.

- Representative Zelinsky stated that liability will be as any City park is, so no more policies need to be written, no more expense to the City, about maintenance, since this is a City park, it is maintained by the City, so there will be no extra additional cost there. As far as he understands the only people that are using the park now and will be in the future are the neighbors who walk there.

Sgt. Paul Vaccaro – In-house Supervisor for the Parks Police.

- Sgt. Vaccaro stated that he was recently assigned to supervise the Parks Police and monitor side jobs.
- Sgt. Vaccaro has been here for about 5 weeks and he is really impressed with the Parks Police, they do a very good job and wished they have more of them.
- Sgt. Vaccaro asked the Parks Police to document their work in the last month. He stated that there are quite a few incidents that they have handled, everything ranging from car accidents to the homeless that live at Cummings Park. They were also involved in a life saving situation, a person had a heart attack on a boat, the only problem was that none of the Parks Police had a defibrillator and he would like to get one for them. Sgt. Vaccaro stated the Parks Police can use more equipment.
- Sgt. Vaccaro stated that Mr. Docimo has Frank Green doing Quality of Life Tours on the weekends, and he has been giving out a large amount of tickets.
- Mr. Docimo stated that most of the issues that come across his desk are enforcement issues, we need more Parks Police or at least more funds for the guys we now have. Sgt. Vaccaro agrees that more enforcement is needed, especially in the summer time.
- Sgt. Vaccaro informed that Barrett Field is becoming a problem. Carwin Park is also a problem, we need to get a combination lock so it can be closed. Mr. Docimo stated that Representative Gloria DePina called him requesting a Parks Police Officer to be stationed at Carwin Park.

Mickey Docimo – Parks and Recreation/Operations

- Mr. Docimo gave out the Fall Brochure.
- Summer Camps are over.
- There still continues to be enforcement issues going forward.

- We are tight on the budget this year so we are going to have to be careful on how we use out seasonal personnel and how long we keep them on.
- It was a good summer; the parks guys have done a great job. Mr. Docimo is happy that we had a Skate Park Manager this summer; she has done a great job. Going forward those are functions that definitely need to be increased. The way the funding is the Rangers and the Skate Park Staff will pretty much be gone in early fall, and when that happens he will not have a way to do field permit enforcement.
- Cubeta will be closed for the fall, because is in desperate need of maintenance. He has been in touch with most of the Little Leagues and they are trying to encourage them to either limit their fall ball season or move it to their auxiliary fields.
- Mrs. Cooper stated that there is a City Ordinance that states that you cannot charge to come into a park. Mrs. Cooper would like this to be communicated when Permits are issued.

Joe Falzone – Parks Maintenance

- The park system has grown tremendously.
- Mill River initiative is being extended all the way up to Scalzi Park. Mr. Docimo stated there has been money put aside in the Collaborative budget to reimburse the City for anything that we do for them.
- We had a successful year.
- We finished building two new basketball courts, one at Northrop Park and one at Scalzi Park.
- We replaced some playground apparatus at Chestnut Hill Park.
- We are working on irrigation at Cummings Park.
- Our next project will be the new lights at Cummings Field and irrigation for Cummings Softball 1 and 2.

Donations

Greg Arpino – Bench Donation in Memory of Nathaniel “Nate” Lesser at One of Stamford Public Parks, Preferably Cove Island Park.

Mrs. Cooper made a motion to approve.

Seconded by Mr. McGuinness

Unanimously Approved

Special Events

Scott Taylor – Grace Evangelical Free Church – Use of Beach Area or Any Part of Cove Island for Church Service/Baptism.

Scott Taylor requested that item be taken off the Agenda.

Msgr. DiGiovanni – St. John the Evangelist Church – Family Picnic at Cove Island Pavilion – September, 14, 2008 from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. – 75 to 100 Adults and 150 Children.

Msgr. DiGiovanni will need to contact the Health Department.

Mr. McGuinness made a motion to approve.

Seconded by Mr. Smith

Unanimously Approved

Diocese of Bridgeport – Walkathon at Cove Island Park – October 19, 2008 from 12:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Mr. Smith made a motion to approve.

Seconded by Mr. McGuinness

Unanimously Approved

Boys & Girls Club of Stamford – Use of Lione Park for Day for Kids Going Green Family Fun Festival – September 20, 2008 from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. – 200 Adults and 300 Children.

Mr. Docimo stated that with major construction going on at Lione Park they will not be able to accommodate 300 people.

Commission suggested the use of Kosciuszko Park. Ms. Nona Snyder will discuss with the Executive Director and contact Mr. Docimo with an answer.

Mr. McGuinness made a motion to approve the use of Kosciuszko Park instead of Lione Park contingent that the Pavilion is available.

Seconded by Mr. Smith

Unanimously Approved

Fern Pessin – Stamford Hospital Foundation/Bennett Cancer Center – Use of Columbus Park for Walk, Run, Ride Hope in Motion – Sunday, June 7, 2009 from 6:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. – 4,000 Adults.

Sound system should start at 9:00 a.m. in order not to bother close by residents.

Stamford Hospital Foundation/Bennett Cancer Center will notify residents and business owners of the event.

Mr. McGuinness made a motion to approve.

Seconded by Mr. Smith

Unanimously Approved

Philip Balestriere – Cove Island Pavilion – Dunk Tank, Air Castle and DJ – October 12, 2008 from 12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. – 30 Adults and 20 Children.

No DJ or amplified music is allowed in the park.

Mr. McGuinness made a motion to approve with the omission of the Dunk Tank, Air Castle and DJ.

Seconded by Mr. Smith

YES: Mr. McGuinness
Mr. Smith
Mr. Lombardo

ABSTAINED: Mrs. Cooper

Rona Katz – Sundown Service at Cove Island – Small Pavilion at Horseshoe Beach – Saturday, September 20, 2008 from 5:00 p.m. Until Park Closes.

If bathrooms are closed they will need to rent port-a-johns.

Mr. Docimo stated that they will open the bathrooms for this event.

Mr. Smith made a motion to approve.

Seconded by McGuinness

Unanimously Approved

Old Business

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

- Mr. Lombardo stated that the Commission has discussed the matter and there is no change from last month. The additional insurance needs to be obtained with the City Insurance Policy at \$100,000 deductible. Any thing that happens to the Gazebo when it's placed becomes a responsibility of the City unless the Cove Neighborhood Association obtains the insurance. The approval of the gazebo was on the basis of the Cove Neighborhood Association getting the insurance. The insurance needs to be obtained because otherwise the City is responsible for everything that could happen

there. The oversight of the gazebo will be by the Superintendent of Parks and Recreation.

- Mr. Lombardo explained that the other Gazebo was donated to the City several decades ago, long before the members of this Commission were in place, and long before liability became an issue.
- Mr. Lombardo suggested that another option is to allow the Cove Neighborhood Association to post a bond in lieu of the insurance or place money in escrow.
- The Cove Neighborhood Association only needs to get insurance for the Gazebo, they don't have to get Liability Insurance.
- Once insurance is obtained and presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Commission will then approach Corporation Counsel, which they already had some preliminary discussions with. When the Cove Neighborhood Association signs off, it recognizes that they will keep it enforced and we can move forward.
- Mr. Lombardo stated that the next time the Cove Neighborhood Association hears from us it will be through our attorneys.
- Mr. Lombardo told the Cove Neighborhood Association not to order anything until everything is signed off.

New Business

John Ruotolo – D.S.S.D. – Discussion.

Mr. Ruotolo asked to be taken off the Agenda.

Teresa Rough – National Lione Little League – Request Permission to Place a 10' x 10' Storage Container at Scalzi Park.

Mrs. Cooper suggested that they expand the existing Press Box instead of getting a storage container. Mr. Lombardo explained that we already had issues in one of the parks with a container like the one being requested. Ms. Rough will discuss the suggestion with the National Lione Little League.

Item tabled to the September 2008 Commission Meeting.

Nikhil Mahajan – Request for Having a Cricket Field in Stamford for 2009.

- Mr. Lombardo stated that the City of Stamford Parks and Recreation presently has a moratorium in place which prohibits the start of any new

athletic league, team or extension of any existing league. He thinks it might be a few years before the City can expand any of the leagues.

- Mr. Mahajan stated that Laurie Albano suggested a Board of Education field. Mr. Lombardo stated that the Parks and Recreation Commission would not permit a cricket league in the City of Stamford Parks, but if the Board of Education allows them to play in one of their fields, the Commission will not be involved.

Tournaments

The Greater Stamford Tennis Association – 6th Annual Greater Stamford Tennis Championships at Scalzi Park Tennis Courts – Thursday, October 2 to Sunday, October 5, 2008. Thursday to Friday 6:00 to 10:00 p.m. – Saturday to Sunday 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Mr. Smith made a motion to approve.

Seconded by Mr. McGuinness

Unanimously Approved

Commissioner McGuinness expressed his concern that there are people that come in front of the Parks and Recreation Commission requesting approval of permits and before they are approved they already have the advertising ready.

Mr. Docimo suggested that at a later Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting a letter could be generated by the Commission to everybody involved saying that it has come to our attention that by the time a lot of the events come in front of the Commission the people have already made the conclusion that it will be approved. This undermines the Commission's authority and if the Commission sees this in the future, the Commission will not approve the event.

Stamford Softball Umpires Association Tournament – Use of Cummings 1 & 2 – September 20, 2008 – Rain Date September 27, 2008.

Mr. Lombardo stated that there was a complaint made about alcohol and drinking after the Umpire Association Tournament last year. Commission asked that they police themselves in order to not jeopardize the future of this tournament.

Mr. Smith made a motion to approve.

Seconded by Mrs. Cooper

Unanimously Approved

Matthew Flood – Use of Cummings Park Field 1 and 2 for Softball Tournament – Saturday, September 6, 2008 from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

No alcoholic beverages in glass bottles and no amplification are allowed.

There will be a \$1,000 Maintenance Reimbursement Fee.

Mr. McGuinness made a motion to approve.

Seconded by Mrs. Cooper

Unanimously Approved

Correspondence

Information from Mike Toma from the Legal Department Regarding Religious Meetings and Parades.

Information from the Legal Department was reviewed.

Motion to adjourn the meeting by Mrs. Cooper

Seconded by Mr. McGuinness

The meeting adjourned at 9:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted
Margarita Arenas
September 1, 2008