

**PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING
Minutes of the September 25, 2008 Regular Meeting**

A meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission was held on September 25, 2008, 10th Floor Conference Room, Stamford Government Center.

In attendance were:

Commissioners: Thomas Lombardo
Beth Cooper
Tim McGuinness
Vincent Martino

Staff: Laurie Albano
Joseph Barbarotta

Guests: Erin McKenna – Land Use

Rep. John Zelinsky – Playground at Homer Wise Park

Ben Marcus – Playground at Homer Wise Park

James Vlasto – Playground at Homer Wise Park

Shelley Paight – Pictures at Fort Stamford

John Ivezaj – Wedding Pictures at Cove Island Park

Pat Battinelli – Use of Columbus Park

Chris Berlingo – Stamford Youth Hockey Association

Bob Pepi – West Beach Project

Jim Grunberger – East Side Partnership

Andy Caruso – East Side Partnership

Lynn Blank – Stroller Strides

David Winston – Resident

Wynne Parry – Stamford Advocate

Commissioner Smith did not attend the meeting.

Mickey Docimo and Joe Falzone did not attend the meeting.

Call to Order

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

Review of the August 27, 2008 Minutes.

Mr. McGuinness made a motion to approve.

Second by Mrs. Cooper

YES: Mrs. Cooper
Mr. Lombardo
Mr. McGuinness

ABSTAINED: Mr. Martino

(Mr. Martino abstained because he was not present at the August 27, 2008 meeting).

Staff Reports

Erin McKenna – Mianus River Park Signage Update.

- Ms. McKenna came in front of the Commission to get permission to proceed with the Signage Program in September 2005.
- Ms. McKenna distributed a copy of the list of rules that they would like to put on the kiosks for the Commissioners to revise.
- The size of the Rule Sign will be 11" x 21".
- Along with the sign there will be trail map at the kiosks.
- The signs will be made of vinyl.
- Mrs. Cooper stated that she would like to see consistency in park signage. Mr. Barbarotta stated that we don't have sign standards in the parks, he thinks that we should focus on this and come up with some standards like the sign Ms. McKenna proposed to use in all the parks. Mr. Lombardo suggested that Mr. Barbarotta check with the City's Signs Department to see if these type of signs can be reproduced to be used at other parks. Mrs. Cooper asked that Mr. Barbarotta gets this information by the October Commission Meeting.

Mrs. Cooper suggested that a list of items that are discussed at the Commission meetings that need follow up should be kept, once the items are reviewed by the Commission the paperwork should be kept in a book or file.

Mr. Lombardo asked to suspend the rules and add Representative John Zelinsky to the Agenda.

Mrs. Cooper motion to add Representative John Zelinsky to the Agenda.

Seconded by Mr. Martino

Unanimously Approved

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

- Representative John Zelinsky stated that his constituent Mr. Ben Marcus has some additional information pertaining to specifications for the proposed playground. Representative Zelinsky stated that Mr. James Vlasto, President of the Homer Wise Memorial Committee is attendance as well.
- Mr. Ben Marcus stated one of the issues with the proposed playground was its proximity to Bedford Street. Mr. Marcus stated that the City has a similar swing set in Scalzi Park (length is 40 feet). Another concern was the fencing around the playground; the City has similar playgrounds with fencing around on High Ridge Road and Morgan Street. Mr. Marcus stated that the playground at Rippowam Middle School is very close to a dangerous parking lot.
- Mr. Marcus presented a letter to the Commission from Mr. James Vlasto, President of the Homer Wise Park Committee showing their support for the playground.
- Mr. Vlasto stated the Homer Wise Memorial Committee's support for the playground. Mr. Vlasto feels that by having the playground at Home Wise Park people can admire the statue of Homer Wise and learn some history.
- Mr. Martino stated that overpopulation of the park will happen by having this new playground.
- Representative Zelinsky stated that the playground will be for the neighborhood residents. The playground will be located near the back of the park away from Bedford Street and it will also be fenced in.
- Mr. Lombardo stated that the actual discussion on how to proceed with this request will take place in the October Commission Meeting.
- Mr. Barbarotta stated the regulations to install a swing set, the height of the swing is 8 feet high, you will need a 16 foot pole space in front of the swing

and 16 foot pole space in back of the swing, footprint of the swing is probably 12 feet. About 44 or 45 feet will be needed to install the swing.

Joseph Barbarotta – Parks Maintenance

- The Monk Parakeet move will start this month.
- The Hatch Field Park renovation started yesterday.
- There will be a \$168,000 project starting at Kosciuszko Park, we will be doing native species plantings that will go around the park. Some of this work will be done as late as November of this year and finished in the spring. The meadow and the perimeter of the park will be planted; we will eliminate the invasive species and put the natives instead.
- We have a \$100,000 Grant to replace the playground at Springdale.
- We just renovated all of our Little League Fields.
- Just finished our weed and seed program.
- We are trying to get irrigation into Cummings two softball fields.
- Most of the bathrooms have been closed down except for the red building at Cove Island. There are port johns out at the beaches.
- There is going to be a multi use facility at Lione Field, there will be a synthetic field for cricket, soccer and Little League baseball.

Laurie Albano – Recreation

- Classes starting this week and next. Adult Volleyball has begun. Softball season ends weather permitting on 9/28.
- Rec Center Study first meeting Oct 8 or 9 with vendor.
- New Rec Management software vendor selected, waiting on the execution of the contract via the Purchasing and Legal Dept's. Then a 60 to 90 day transition period for training and implementation. All other view only Dept's need to be brought on board (Parks, Parks Police, SPD, Solid Waste), and Cashiering needs to have input capability. I have also recommended that the BOE does as well for school permitting. I have requested a meeting with IT for all of these Dept's to be briefed and initiate installation and training whether for view only or input.
- Summer custodian bills for day camps at 5 schools for the month of July came to \$22,892 with one week in August still to be invoiced. We anticipate another \$4 to 5 K for that week in August. Meeting with AFB/Custodian union

to set custodian overtime hours for all fall, winter and spring school programs.

- Met with the Davenport Principal on summer camp concerns. Her biggest was that with camp ending on Aug 8th, her school was not cleaned in time for opening day. We compromised for next year vacating classrooms in the last week and using just the gym and café (she wanted two weeks), but beyond that the cleaning was a Facility management issue.
- Will start to investigate other strategies to distribute our brochure. Present method of sending to the schools is proving more and more ineffective for various reasons. Will look into bulk mailing to all student households with and without a combination of newspaper ads, etc. Will keep you posted as ideas take shape with more data.
- Heroy Pool is a Capital priority for Recreation. All including Ben are in support to make at least major repair for next summer's operations. The pool loses water rapidly and is literally falling apart. Good size chunks of concrete have fallen into the water.
- Adjusting our budget to reflect the 2% give back which includes the reduction of some summer staff and the increase in adult league fees.
- Working with the Health Department on both the Great American Smoke Out campaign with the annual kid's poster contest and the new Stamford Walks initiative walking program for residents.
- I will be attending the National Recreation and Parks Assoc convention in Baltimore from Oct 14 – 18 (all the out of town travel forms have been filled out).
- Fall Registration has been pretty slow. We have brought in about \$82,000 since the Fall Registration started September 8th. We have brought in about \$169,000 since July 1st.

Mr. Martino congratulated Mr. Barbarotta for doing a tremendous job with the fountain at Columbus Park.

Donations

Lisa Pinto – Bench Donation in Memory of Jennifer Tomasello at Cove Island Park.

Mrs. Cooper made a motion to approve.

Seconded by Mr. McGuinness

Unanimously Approved

Special Events

Shelley Paight – Use of Fort Stamford (the Garden) for Wedding Pictures – May 30, 2009 from 4:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. – 20 People.

Mr. McGuinness made a motion to approve.

Seconded by Mr. Martino

Unanimously Approved

John Ivezaj – Use of Cove Island Park for Wedding Pictures and Access of One Vehicle in Park to Provide Transportation of Elderly to Various Locations in Park – November 9, 2008 from 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Mr. McGuinness made a motion to approve.

Vehicle has to remain on paved roadways, there will be no driving on grass or sand areas.

Seconded by Mr. Martino

Unanimously Approved

Pat Battinelli – Use of Columbus Park for Columbus Day Events – October 12, 2008 from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Mr. McGuinness made a motion to approve the use of the Show Mobile and the use of Columbus Park. The fee for the Show Mobile will be waived.

Seconded by Mr. Martino

Unanimously Approved

Chris Berlingo – Stamford Youth Hockey Association – Bike/Run/Walk-a-thon for SYHA & The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society Fundraiser – Cove Island Park Walkway – September 28, 2008 from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

There will be a 50/50 split of the proceedings of the fundraiser.

They will pick up the trash after they are done.

Mrs. Cooper made a motion to approve.

Seconded by Mr. Martino

YES: Mrs. Cooper
Mr. Martino
Mr. Lombardo

ABSTAINED: Mr. McGuinness

Old Business

Bob Pepi – Update on West Beach Project.

- The Stamford Youth Soccer League has spent a lot of effort and time on behalf of supporting the City on the West Beach Project.
- Mr. Pepi expressed his appreciation for the City for providing new fields and the support of the Parks and Recreation Commission.
- Mr. Pepi stated that he sat on the Design Committee that Lou Casolo/City Engineer had put together to work out concerns with neighbors from Shippan. In that process their bottom line was to have the field protected with some kind of barrier. The other part of their interest was to beautify the park; the Stamford Youth Soccer League stated that if it was necessary they will be willing to put up the money and labor to beautify the park (plantings, etc.). The neighbors decided that from their point of view less was better.
- There is going to be low fencing on two sides, guardrails on one side and on the side near the condos there will be a series of large boulders which will reach from the end of the field where the fences were on the sides and reach out to where the Hurricane Barrier is.
- Mr. Pepi stated that he suggested at the meeting that the Stamford Youth Soccer League can replace the port johns, make an attractive building but they were not in favor.
- Mr. Pepi stated that he made a point that there are a lot of other people that are neighbors to that park who are not Shippan residents. Mr. Pepi feels that their positions, attitudes and their needs should be represented also. They have an organization that developed called West Beach Neighbors Association made of people from those neighborhoods that were in favor of the fields.
- Mr. Pepi made recommendations to make changes to the Field Usage Policy of the Board of Education and it was accepted by the Board of Education. It had to do with the fees that are charged and the priorities given to user groups. Mr. Pepi feels that the Policy that was accepted was fair to everybody and set up a second category of non-profit use sports organizations.
- At a recent Board of Education meeting there was an ongoing attempt made by the Stamford Youth Foundation to be granted a special status, which sets them above all the other youth sports organizations. It gives them priority usage above all of the sports organizations like themselves and then the fees will be waived. Naturally the other youth groups were not in favor, there is going to be an issue coming out in the paper on this subject.
- Mr. Pepi stated that the Stamford Youth Soccer League has been around for 35 years, it registers about 3,500 kids during the course of the year. They give out scholarships in the range of \$85,000 a year. They don't do it with any City grants which Stamford Youth Foundation has gotten in the past.

Stamford Youth Soccer League runs a Referee Program which takes a couple of dozen kids in any given year and they get State Certification, they are put in charge of recreation games and some travel games.

- Mr. Pepi runs a Summer Intercity Program for five weeks in the summer from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. every day. He had about 60 kids that paid about \$100 for the whole five weeks. The kids he uses to staff the program act as counselors and get paid. Mr. Pepi stated that they are puzzled by the idea that any other youth group should get special status over an organization that does what they do for the community.
- Mr. Martino suggested that Mr. Pepi put in writing what Stamford Youth Soccer League does for the community.

New Business

East Side Partnership – Hunt Park Entranceway at the Corner of East Main Street and Courtland Avenue.

- Mr. Jim Grunberger stated that State Representative Carlo Leone got a Grant for the East Side Partnership for beautification from the Office of Policy and Management for \$11,000 with no cost to the City.
- Mr. Jim Grunberger and Mr. Andy Caruso proposed an archway to open up Hunt Park and attract more people.
- Mr. Lombardo stated that this is the only plot of green left in Hunt Park, and is concerned that by bringing people in that way we will probably lose the grass. Mr. Grunberger stated that they could re-seed the grass every year.
- Mrs. Cooper's major concern is the location of the archway and the fact that kids can run into the busy street. Mrs. Cooper is also concerned that people going to the Dog Park will use the new entrance and might disturb kids playing. Mr. McGuinness shared Mrs. Cooper's concern with the busy intersection.
- Mr. Caruso suggested that a gate that does not open be installed instead of leaving the archway open.
- Item was tabled to the October Commission Meeting. Commissioners will walk the area.

Lynn Blank – Stroller Strides – Request to Bring Walking/Exercise Group to the Park.

- Mrs. Blank runs a stroller exercise program for pregnant moms, new moms and their babies.

- Mr. Lombardo stated that the City does not permit commercial use of our parks.
- Mrs. Cooper suggested that Mrs. Blank can partner with the Recreation Department.
- Ms. Albano stated that the only way the City would allow commercial groups to use the park is by them partnering with the City. There is a split, City keeps a percentage and the vendor keeps a percentage. The City does the registration, helps with the advertising and provides the venue.

Mr. McGuinness made a motion to reject the request.

Mr. McGuinness suggested the possibility of a partnership with the Recreation Department.

Seconded by Mr. Martino

Unanimously Approved

Tournaments

No Tournaments.

Correspondence

Mr. Lombardo asked that a copy of a memo from Mr. Joe Falzone regarding Playground Specs be mailed out to the Commissioners.

The October Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting will take place on Either Wednesday, October 15, 2008 or Thursday, October 16, 2008.

Motion to adjourn the meeting by Mr. McGuinness

Seconded by Mr. Martino

The meeting adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted
Margarita Arenas
September 26, 2008