

**COVENTRY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
THURSDAY, JANUARY 14<sup>TH</sup>, 2021**

The Coventry Parks & Recreation Commission held a regular meeting on Thursday, January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021 via virtual platform, ZOOM. Marie Gallo-Hall called the meeting to order at 6:32pm.

**Members Present:** Marie Gallo-Hall, Bob Martin, Jennifer Rodgers, Jillian Miner and Beverly Carlson.

**Members Absent:**

**Others Present:** Wendy Rubin, Director of Parks & Recreation and Caterina Merriam, Recreation Supervisor.

**Audience of Citizens:** None.

**Acceptance of Minutes:**

Jennifer Rodgers moved to accept the November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020 meeting minutes. Jillian Miner seconded. Motion voted in the affirmative by Marie Gallo-Hall, Jennifer Rodgers, Beverly Carlson, Jillian Miner and Bob Martin. Motion carried.

Jennifer Rodgers moved to accept the December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020 meeting minutes. Beverly Carlson seconded. Motion voted in the affirmative by Marie Gallo-Hall, Jennifer Rodgers, Beverly Carlson, Jillian Miner and Bob Martin. Motion carried.

**Correspondence:** None.

**Chair's Remarks:**

- Ms. Gallo-Hall hoped everyone had a nice holiday. She is hopeful that we will get to do all the things we hope to do, in 2021.

**Staff Report:**

Written Staff Report for the months of November & December was sent electronically to the membership for their review ahead of the meeting. Ms. Rubin & Ms. Merriam noted the following items:

- Budget Update:
  - The Recreation Budget is on the next Town Council agenda for Tuesday, January 19<sup>th</sup> and staff will be meeting with the Town Manager and Finance Director on February 5<sup>th</sup> to review our proposed budget.
  - Part-time office staff have been let go as of January 1, 2021, but we are hopeful that we can bring them back later in the spring to assist in summer planning.
- Winter/Spring Program Brochure:
  - Ms. Merriam noted that the latest 06238 Magazine went out to the homes the first week in January, and included many new virtual programs including family game nights, arts programs, fitness classes, and cooking classes for kids. She said that new sports programs were just added to the roster and shared on Facebook and through email blasts. She noted that the fitness classes are doing really well on the virtual platform:

our simply fit class has the highest registrations we've had since it started, so we may have found a niche in the virtual world. Ms. Gallo-Hall asked if these programs are generating any revenue; Ms. Merriam said yes, all programs only run if revenue exceeds expenses, however the profit margin is small due to the types of programs we are able to offer due to current circumstances.

#### **Old Business:**

- Softball Field Committee Updates:
  - Ms. Rodgers noted that the Committee met with the Town Council Finance Committee back in December, to update them on their current plans and the shift in their recommendation. The Committee just received updated numbers from Anchor Engineering as to their newly preferred location of the Gravel Pit, so they are updating their proposal to include those. Ms. Rodgers noted that while the Committee has been charged to research and make recommendations, it is ultimately up to the Town Council to make the final decision as to what location is chosen.
  - Ms. Rodgers noted that the Anchor Engineering report for the Gravel Pit actually came in at less cost than the proposal to install fields at the WPCA property. She went on to say that even at that lower amount, there are a few extra items that are not required at this point, that could be removed to bring costs down even further.
  - Ms. Rodgers noted that their next meeting is on 1/21, and Todd Penney, Town Engineer will be on hand to review plans. The Finance Committee may also have a representative present, to stay abreast of the Committee's plans.
  - Ms. Rubin noted that the Committee does still have to consider the Football Field property before making their final recommendation.
  
- Elections:

**Beverly Carlson moved to accept the slate of officers as nominated at the November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020 meeting: Marie Gallo-Hall for the position of Chair; Jennifer Rodgers for the position of Vice-Chair; and Bob Martin for the position of Secretary. Jillian Miner seconded. Motion voted in the affirmative by Marie Gallo-Hall, Beverly Carlson, Jennifer Rodgers, Jillian Miner and Bob Martin. Motion carried.**

- Follow-Up: Finance Committee Meeting
  - Ms. Gallo-Hall noted that Ms. Rubin and Ms. Merriam were on hand at the January 11<sup>th</sup> Finance Committee to address the current concerns regarding the Recreation Budget. Ms. Rubin said that there are two major issues to address: the Recreation Supervisor's salary and maintenance needs, both of which are currently paid for out of program & facility revenue.
  - Ms. Rubin said that the Committee did agree to allow us to run into a deficit, and that the Committee will address the shortfall before June 30, 2020. Ms. Gallo-Hall added that while she understands their willingness to allow us to run at a deficit, she is concerned that the amount is large (\$75,000) and is there a chance that we would have to make major cuts to our budget for the next fiscal year.
  - Ms. Rubin added that while the Committee seemed supportive of our proposal to reallocate the \$30,000 lifeguard subsidy to help cover the Recreation Supervisor's salary and that does help, we may be looking at a reduction of beach services.
  - Ms. Rubin did receive a follow-up email from the Finance Committee Chair, Matt O'Brien Sr. who did say that the Committee is hopeful that they can find the funds to

cover this year's deficit. She went on to say that our Finance Director seems positive that we can find a way to make this work.

- Ms. Rubin went on to say that the effects of COVID-19 will continue to be felt throughout at least this coming summer, as parents continue to feel unsure about participating in large group activities coupled with new regulations that are expected from the State of CT. So it is still too early to say how our summer season will shape up and to accurately estimate future revenues.
- Ms. Rubin said that Parks & Rec. Departments have been working under this "pay to play" model, in which revenues must be generated to function as a business, rather than a municipal agency. She noted that most departments across the country are needing to make up about 24-35% of their overall budget, whereas Coventry is at the opposite end of the spectrum, where we are raising 85% of our overall budget through revenue.
- Ms. Rubin said that staff are also working on a social media campaign to help educate the public as to how we function, and to engage residents in a positive way.

**New Business:**

- Board of Education: Open Choice Program Request:
  - With no update at this time, the issue was tabled until further notice.

**Adjourn:** With no other business to discuss the meeting was adjourned at 7:18pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Caterina Merriam,  
Recreation Supervisor

**Please note:** These minutes are not official until approved by the Parks & Recreation Commission at the next Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting. Please see the next Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes for approval or changes to these minutes.