

**COVENTRY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, JANUARY 20, 2022**

The Coventry Parks & Recreation Commission held a regular meeting on Thursday, January 20, 2022 via ZOOM virtual platform. Marie Gallo-Hall called the meeting to order at 6:32pm.

Member Present: Marie Gallo-Hall, Jennifer Rodgers, Bob Martin, Beverly Carlson, Jillian Miner and Pam Miller

Members Absent: Ashlee Pascarelli

Audience of Citizens: None

Acceptance of Minutes:

Jennifer Rodgers moved to accept the meeting minutes from November 18th, 2021. Beverly Carlson seconded. Motion voted in the affirmative by Marie Gallo-Hall, Bob Martin, Jennifer Rodgers, Jillian Miner and Beverly Carlson. Motion carried.

Beverly Carlson moved to accept the meeting minutes from December 21st, 2021. Jennifer Rodgers seconded. Motion voted in the affirmative by Marie Gallo-Hall, Bob Martin, Jennifer Rodgers, Jillian Miner and Beverly Carlson. Motion carried.

Correspondence:

- Thank you from Ruth O'Neil, re: COVID-19 test kit and mask distribution

Chair's Remarks:

- Thank you to Parks & Rec. Staff for COVID-19 test kit and mask distribution, allowing for online registration;
- Welcome to Pam Miller, our newest Alternate Member on the Rec. Commission;
- Ms. Gallo-Hall also noted the newest addition of the 06238 publication;
- Ms. Gallo-Hall also read a statement thanking longtime Coventry resident, Ellen Mickel who assisted in naming Patriots Park. Statement is attached.

Staff Report:

A written staff report was distributed to the Commission for their review. Ms. Munshower & Ms. Merriam reviewed certain important items:

- Laidlaw Pavilion:
 - Concrete footings and slab have been poured, and the underdrains have been completed. The walkway from the parking lot to the playscape is also complete, so the site is ready for the pavilion package to arrive and be installed. It is scheduled to arrive by the end of January/early February, with install to follow (weather permitting), and electric and landscaping to be completed in early spring. Ms. Munshower noted that the project is on track for completion and open for use in conjunction with the start of the spring soccer season, in April.
- Miller Richardson Update:

- Ms. Munshower noted that the new Transfer Station design project is in the final stages, and is on track to go out to bid in February. The softball practice field that would go by the football field, along with the football field venting project are also both on track to go out to bid in February.
- Ms. Rodgers asked that when final design plans are available, that they be shared with the Softball Field Planning Committee. Ms. Munshower noted they are still in the design phase, but that once plans are ready for viewing that she would share them.
- Ms. Munshower added that Baseball just recently reported damage to the field, in that someone drove a vehicle onto the field. Department of Public Works is working to install some additional barriers/fencing to prevent it from happening again. She added that we won't know the extent of the damage until spring. The Police Department has also been informed, and they will be doing some extra patrol in the area, especially following snow storms.
- Creaser Park:
 - The Community Garden is now open for returning gardeners; new gardener's registration opens February 1st.
 - Ms. Munshower said that we have received reports from our Disc Golf Course Designer, Karl Molitoris that there has been some undoing of trail work, concerning a trail that was rerouted to allow for the disc golf course (around hole 7). Eric Thomas, of the Conservation Commission has some thoughts on how to more permanently reroute that trail so it no longer goes through hole 7, with work being planned for the spring.
- Patriots Park:
 - Ms. Munshower reported that DPW coordinated the removal of approximately 12 trees that were deemed potentially dangerous. Several were by the Band shell and boathouses, and others were up on the hill adjacent to the main parking lot. This will also allow for more space by the boathouses, so UCONN Sailing can move their boats back to that area.
 - Ms. Munshower reported that Ms. Merriam is working on fire alarm/smoke detector inspections and repairs at the Community Center, and that the Lodge is scheduled for interior painting later this month.
 - Ms. Munshower is also working with DPW on bathroom repairs, for UCONN Women's Rowing.
- Rentals:
 - Ms. Munshower noted that Mill Brook Place was rented for 10 out of 31 days in December; 15 paid rentals in the Lodge. The Winter Farmers Market continues their rental of the Lodge on Sunday mornings, and they are averaging 300-400 guests per day. Staff took in 37 inquiries last month.
- Basketball:
 - Ms. Munshower noted that a gym supervisor has been hired to assist with gym openings/supervision on Saturdays.
 - Rec. Basketball games began on January 8th.
 - Ms. Munshower also reported that by the end of December, we saw 8 confirmed COVID-19 cases leading to 22 contact tracing calls. She also noted that CIAC changed their mask guidance, and are no longer permitting vaccinated players to remove their masks during games, which was scheduled to go into effect over Christmas break.
- COVID-19 Test Kit Distribution:
 - Ms. Munshower also detailed the COVID-19 test kit & mask distribution that the Department oversaw just last week. Staff took calls on Monday to set up folks' accounts

with our registration system, and registration opened on Tuesday morning. The time slots filled within approximately 5 minutes of going live, with waitlists. A total of 356 transactions were conducted by office staff, while 859 transactions were conducted online. Ms. Munshower added that having online registration has been helpful, as now we have a waitlist of over 250 people that we can contact should additional test kits become available in the future.

- Summer Kick-Off Open House:
 - Ms. Munshower noted that we are planning a new special event, a “Summer Kick-Off Open House,” scheduled for a Saturday in May where we will sell beach stickers, offer Camp tours & registration, address rental inquires and more. It will be a chance for us to showcase all the great things that happen in the park that the department oversees.
- 06238 Catalog:
 - Ms. Merriam noted that the winter/spring edition of the 06238 catalog was released to homes this month with a lot of new programs included, some virtual but mostly in person. We have had only a few of our regular fitness registrations drop off due to COVID concerns.
- Recreation Daze, Before & After School Program:
 - Ms. Merriam noted that two staff members resigned in December, including our program Director, as they accepted full-time positions elsewhere. We quickly shifted gears and promoted two of our long-time employees to Site Supervisors to fill the Director role in the meantime. We are also currently working to hire additional staff to cover the shifts left open by these two vacancies.
 - Ms. Merriam reported that the program saw 3 positive COVID cases in December, leading to 30 kids overall being contact traced and subsequently quarantined. In the midst of this, we elected to co-hort the kids based on school, to limit the potential exposure in the event that a child or staff member tests positive in the future.
- Special Events:
 - Tour of Holiday Lights was a huge success with 17 homes listed in our Community.
 - Ms. Merriam reported that we also participated in Christmas in the Village this year. We were stationed in the Patriots Park Lodge with hot chocolate, temporary tattoos and a santa letter-writing station.
 - Father Daughter Dance: Ms. Merriam noted that we have decided to shift gears this year, due to COVID concerns, and not offer a dance but rather a ‘Valentines Night Out’ with a magic show held at the High School Auditorium.
 - Ms. Gallo-Hall and Ms. Rodgers asked for clarification on previous discussions surrounding opening the event up to all, rather than just fathers and daughters. Ms. Merriam noted that the event has been renamed from Father Daughter Dance to Valentines Night Out, and while it is still primarily a father-daughter event, all are welcome to attend. Ms. Rodgers and Ms. Gallo-Hall asked how it is being advertised, and expressed concern over excluding those who aren’t fathers and daughters. Ms. Rodgers asked if the description online could be updated to say “all are welcome.” Ms. Miller asked whether if someone called with a special circumstance, if they would be turned away. Ms. Munshower said no, they would be encouraged to attend. Ms. Miller said that adding the language of “all are welcome” to the social media promotion may help. Ms. Munshower added that it has not been advertised on social media yet, so we can definitely update it.

- Ms. Merriam went on to detail other programs, including Kids Night Out, December Vacation Days and adult fitness that continue to thrive.
- Financial Report:
 - Ms. Munshower noted that we submitted our Budget proposal for FY 22-23 on December 30th. We did request an increase in contributions from the General Fund, primarily for salaries, printing and professional development. We also requested an increase in parks support as well.
 - Ms. Munshower also reviewed the financial report that was sent electronically to the Commission ahead of the meeting, noting the year-to-date actuals of -\$16,308. Ms. Munshower noted that the December credit card deposits had not yet been processed, so we are actually -\$6,727. She also noted that the budget that was submitted for this year projected that we would end the year with a \$44,000 deficit, so by comparison, at halfway through the year being negative \$6,000 is an improvement. Ms. Munshower added that the budget we have submitted for FY23 does not result in a negative number.

Old Business:

- Softball Field Committee:
 - Ms. Rodgers met with Lisa Thomas, Town Council Chair, at Miller Richardson field to review plans. She noted that plans are still in place to construct a practice field by the football field. At this time, it will not have a backstop, or a mound.
 - Ms. Rodgers also noted that the Softball board is working on determining location for play in the spring. She went on to say that transportation may be an issue this Spring, with games starting much later than normal.
 - Ms. Rodgers said that the Town Council is considering a subcommittee, to discuss the planning of field placement, which would likely have volunteers from softball and baseball to offer their input, in addition to the architects who are doing the design work. Ms. Munshower said she would reach out to Ms. Thomas to get some specifics and see how Parks & Rec. can assist.

New Business:

- Veteran's Day Patriot Race Request: Horse & Dogs in the Park
 - Ms. Munshower noted that we have reviewed the ordinances that pertain to animals in the park, and that service dogs are permitted without special permission. However, horses do require special permission from the Commission. She added that the Veterans Day Patriot Race Committee is requesting special permission to allow a group that provides equine therapy to have a set up on race day, with a horse.

Jennifer Rodgers moved to grant special permission to the Veterans Day Patriot Race Committee to allow the New England Human Animal Bond Foundation to bring a horse to Patriots Park on the day of the Veterans Day Patriot Race. Beverly Carlson seconded. Motion voted in the affirmative by Marie Gallo-Hall, Jennifer Rodgers, Jillian Miner, Bob Martin and Beverly Carlson. Motion carried.

- Member Introductions:
 - Done under Chair's remarks.

Adjourn: With no other business to discuss, Marie Gallo-Hall adjourned the meeting at 7:32pm.

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.