COVENTRY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13TH, 2020

The Coventry Parks & Recreation Commission held a regular meeting on Thursday, February 13th, 2020 at Town Hall Conference Room B. Marie Gallo-Hall called the meeting to order at 7:02pm.

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

Members Absent: Beverly Carlson.

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 January 9th meeting minutes. Jillian Miner seconded. Motion voted in the affirmative by Marie Gallo-Hall, Beverly Carlson and Bob Martin. Motion carried.

Correspondence:
- Letter from Barbara Pare re: RTC Suspension:
  - Ms. Pare is seeking a waiver of the Republican Town Committee’s one-year suspension from use of any Town Facilities (see attached). She notes that as the new chair of the fundraising committee, that not being able to use Town Facilities has presented a hardship.
  
  Marie Gallo-Hall moved to add “Consideration of the request from Barbara Pare, Republican Town Committee for waiver of one-year suspension” to this agenda, under “New Business” for further discussion. Jennifer Bynes seconded. Motion voted in the affirmative by Marie Gallo-Hall, Jillian Miner, Jennifer Rodgers, Bob Martin and Jennifer Bynes. Motion carried.

- Letter from Daniel Paquette, CSI Soccer re:
  - The Commission reviewed CSI Soccer’s proposal to build a new rebounder wall at Laidlaw. The wall will be built according to the following dimensions: 24’x8’ wall; 4’x4’x12’ posts installed 4’ deep set in concrete; 1’x6’x8’ boards installed on both sides w/decking screws.
  
  Jennifer Rodgers moved to accept the request to construct a rebounder wall, as set forth in the proposal, meeting all Town requirements. Jillian Miner seconded. Motion voted in the affirmative by Marie Gallo-Hall, Jillian Miner, Jennifer Rodgers, Jennifer Bynes and Bob Martin. Motion carried.

Chairman’s Remarks: None.

Staff Report:
- New Facility Rental Application & Guidelines Packet:
  - The updated Facility Rental Applications & Guidelines Packet was distributed to the Commission for their review. Changes were made to remain consistent with the newly updated alcohol policy & enforcement and new reservation application forms have been
drafted, including separate forms for groups & individuals, with separate requirements and fees listed.

- Field Use Policies:
  - Ms. Rubin noted that it has been a long time since the fees have been looked at, and it may be time to reevaluate the policies, and increase fees based on neighboring facility’s fees being significantly higher. Ms. Gallo-Hall requested numbers for the Commission to consider, including pricing from neighboring facilities. She added that we may need to change the fees from a flat fee to hourly. Ms. Bynes added that we want to make sure we stay competitive.

Old Business:
- Park Rules Review:
  - Ms. Rubin distributed the updated park rules, based on staff recommendations following the January meeting discussion. She noted that one last change was noted today, in that we would like to change the rule regarding face masks to be specific toward full-face masks, to allow for goggles.

Ms. Gallo-Hall moved to accept the proposed rules, including the amendment regarding full-face masks. Bob Martin seconded. Motion voted in the affirmative by Marie Gallo-Hall, Jillian Miner, Jennifer Bynes, Jennifer Rodgers and Bob Martin. Motion carried.

- Youth Basketball Board Update:
  - Ms. Gallo-Hall noted that the current situation involving a youth coach who may be facing criminal charges regarding inappropriate contact with young people, understanding that there are confidentiality issues involved, she would like that the Commission be made aware of these types of issues arise in the future. She noted that she was approached by a member of the public and was caught off-guard, as she had not heard anything about it. Ms. Rubin noted that she was also made aware just shortly before it was reported in the local newspaper. She also added that this investigation stemmed from his involvement with Little League; while the person in question has coached travel basketball in years prior, he is not currently involved with Youth Basketball.

    - Ms. Bynes asked if there is something we can do, in supporting the Department, in asking the Police Department to notify us when something like this comes up, particularly involving youth, and/or sports coaches just so we are aware and can respond to members of the public who have questions. She would be happy to respond, that there is an active investigation and that we cannot comment on open investigations.

    - Ms. Gallo-Hall would like the community to know that the Parks & Recreation Commission takes these kinds of issues seriously and we want to protect our children. We want parents to know that when they drop their kids off at practice that they are safe. We want them to have fun and learn skills, but above all, be safe.

  - Ms. Rodgers noted that she has brought an issue to attention of the Board recently, that the 5/6 program rules should be changed. It is still very much about skill development, rather than competitive basketball. They are still playing 3/4 rules, not normal basketball. There is no pressing, no double teaming. Her concern, is that these are kids that in 1-2 short years will be playing travel or middle school basketball, and won’t be prepared. It’s demeaning. If we are playing good sportsmanship, then we wouldn’t double team or full court press when we’re up 20 points. There may be kids who don’t
make travel, and want to play and can’t or won’t because of the rules because it’s not normal basketball – she feels that we will lose kids as a result. It puts our kids at a disadvantage. Ms. Bynes noted that not learning the proper rules/skills at this age, may cause a safety issue for these kids as they begin playing more competitive basketball.

- Ms. Rubin noted that there is a bit of a national crisis, in that there are no best practice standards, or universal rules that all age groups and programs follow. Until that changes, these discrepancies will continue to exist.
- Ms. Bynes noted that the travel program is a feeder program for the high school teams, so our high school teams will suffer if these kids are not prepared/experienced in how to play that level of basketball.
- Ms. Rubin noted that this issue has been brought to the Lakes Region Basketball Board, and that it will be on the agenda for the end of season wrap-up meeting. Ms. Rodgers will be in attendance to assist with the conversation. If the Lakes Region Board is not in agreement as to changing the rules, the Commission has the authority to instruct staff to explore other options.
- Ms. Rubin noted that the Commission will need to meet with Coventry Youth Basketball Board to review this year’s program and plan for next year. She also suggested that we appoint a Commission subcommittee to help develop the agenda.

- Softball Fields Committee Update:
  - Ms. Rodgers reported that Town Manager John Elsesser attended their most recent meeting with an update; the studies have not been done yet, but it should be completed within the next 2 months. Ms. Miner asked which option seems to be the most viable? Ms. Rodgers noted that there is a proposal to build a new senior housing complex on the land the Town already owns across the street from Miller-Richardson, which would leave room for the softball fields toward the front of the property. Her concern is that the senior housing development is waiting on a grant, so she does not want the softball field project to be delayed due to that. Ms. Rubin explained that this plan may actually be to the softball field project’s advantage and that timing should not be an issue.
  - Ms. Gallo-Hall asked if the Commission can make an inquiry to the Town Council as to the progress of this issue. Ms. Rubin noted that we will have a budget meeting with the Town Council sometime in March, which is the perfect opportunity to express our priorities.

- Budget Review: Minimum Wage Impact – Beach & Rental Fees
  - Ms. Rubin noted that staff have considered the options and beach budget, and we have a few to discuss:
    - 1. We can cut down on hours we stay open; open later in the morning/stay open later in the evening; close Lisicke & keep Patriots open. Ms. Gallo-Hall noted that we would not want to close Lisicke Beach.
    - 2. Cut the Gatekeeper at Patriots Park, Monday-Friday – the daily parking fees they take in do not cover their salary as it is. The beach would then remain open & staffed with lifeguards but there would be no charge as there would be no one there to collect. Camp is running Monday-Friday, and that is our priority. She said the savings amount to approx. $3,000 a year. Additionally, the Town Manager would like us to consider spending that savings on a Special Constable to work weekends at Patriots Park, patrolling the park and writing tickets for infractions. Ms. Gallo-Hall believes that we should not be in the business of
public safety; that is why we have a paid police department. The Commission agreed to table the issue of a Special Constable tabled for further discussion.

- Ms. Rubin explained that in addition to discussing changes in hours of operations, we are also proposing an increase in fees for both daily parking fees at Patriots Park & Resident Beach Stickers. The proposal is as follows:
  - Resident Parking Stickers: Increase from $20 for the first vehicle to $25 for the first vehicle and from $10 for each additional to $12 for each additional.
  - Daily Parking Fees at Patriots Park: There will be no charge Monday-Friday in lieu of a gatekeeper. Weekend parking fees will increase from $25 per car to $30 per car.
  - All other fees will remain the same, including vans/buses, the one-day guest parking pass will remain at $5 each, and the senior sticker will remain free for M-F use at either beach.

- Ms. Gallo-Hall noted that these increases have become necessary due to the minimum wage increase & new State of CT parking sales tax that will have to be included.

Jillian Miner moved to increase parking fees for the 2020 beach season as follows: Resident Parking Sticker to $25 for the first vehicle & $12 for each additional; Weekend Parking fees at Patriots Park to $30 per car. Both increases are in light of both the increase in minimum wage & State of CT parking tax. Jennifer Rodgers seconded. Motion voted in the affirmative by Marie Gallo-Hall, Jillian Miner, Jennifer Bynes, Bob Martin and Jennifer Rodgers. Motion carried.

- Elections: Call for Nominations:

Jillian Miner moved to nominate Marie Gallo-Hall for the position of Chairperson. Jillian Miner seconded. Marie Gallo-Hall accepted the nomination.

Marie Gallo-Hall moved to nominate Jennifer Rodgers for the position of Vice-Chair. Jillian Miner seconded. Jennifer Rodgers accepted the nomination.

Marie Gallo-Hall moved to nominate Bob Martin for the position of Secretary. Jennifer Rodgers seconded. Bob Martin accepted the nomination.

New Business:

- Consideration of the request from Barbara Pare, Republican Town Committee for waiver of one-year suspension:
  - Ms. Gallo-Hall said that there are consequences to one’s actions, and in this case there were repercussions beyond just this suspension in that all renters now have additional fees to pay and forms to fill out. This occurrence alerted us to the fact that there was a weakness in our policies that have led us to review our policy and procedures, including working with the Chief of Police & State of CT Liquor Commission to determine how the policies should be enforced. As a result, we are now enforcing the policy differently, and now all renters must now purchase the insurance policy if they plan to serve alcohol or allow for BYOB.
  - Ms. Bynes noted that our responsibility is to the Parks & Recreation Department and the Town of Coventry, to protect our liability. Ms. Rodgers noted that this suspension does go beyond just this group; it’s affected everyone who wants to rent moving forward. She added that regardless of the group, this decision should stand, in her opinion.
• The Commission agreed that the sanction should stand, and that the suspension remains in effect until July 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 2020. The group is welcomed back, following the suspension in July.

• Creaser Park Long Range Plan:
  o Ms. Rubin noted that the Town Manager has asked that we look into a long range plan to determine future plans for the park as a whole, with special consideration toward the buildings. The Commission requested that we include Eric Thomas, as a representative of the Protected Spaces Stewardship Sub-Committee in the future discussions. Issue tabled.

\textbf{Adjourn:} With no other business to discuss the meeting was adjourned at 8:41pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Caterina Merriam,
Recreation Supervisor

\textbf{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.
Hello Wendy and Park and Rec Commissioners,

I appreciate the opportunity to be heard by the Commissioners of our town's Park and Rec department. Working out of Boston this week prevents me from being present at your meeting this Thursday.

The purpose of my communication is to ask for leniency for Coventry's Republican Town Committee in the matter of town property use. It had been ruled that the RTC was banned from having events on any town property based on information given that they had sold alcohol at an event. As a new RTC member at the time, I was not aware we had been accused of this act, which meant I could not be heard in this matter. My perspective in the actions of volunteers at the event may have been beneficial. It was not until I had started to plan fund raisers and events for the RTC that I became aware of the ruling. I along with the RTC have respected this decision. As I understand it, the RTC is banned until July 2020. I am requesting, as an RTC member, and new Chairman of the event committee, to be allowed to have events on town property, and would be willing to do so on probation until July. Any event given by the RTC would not include alcohol in any way on town property. I would be willing to take full responsibility for this promise. As the Chairman for events and fund raising, it has caused quite a hardship. As a professional event planner, I
bring many skills to the RTC and pay close attention to detail. I would also promise to oversee all events. Please consider my request. I have many ideas that will bring family fun, entertainment and unity to our town. One of our spring ideas is a cardboard boat race for families. I would also like to partner with social services and the senior center. We had a brief discussion this past winter about having a health and wellness event for seniors at Patriot Parks Lodge. Please feel free to call me with any questions. I can be reached at 860-882-4413.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your consideration in this matter.

Respectfully yours,
Barbara Pare

On Wed, Feb 12, 2020 at 3:38 PM Wendy Rubin <wrubin@coventryct.org> wrote:

Yes an email would be helpful in advance. They meet on the 2\textsuperscript{nd} Thursday of each month, so the next one would be March 12\textsuperscript{th}. If you send the email to me I can forward it to the Commissioners.

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Park Rules

Parks are open from sunrise to sunset.
Park only in designated areas, please keep off grass.
Please keep our parks clean, take out what you bring in.
Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult.
All dogs must be leashed. Please pick up after your dog.
No pets on athletic fields and adjoining spectator areas.

The Following Are Strictly Prohibited:

- Littering
- Camping
- Overnight parking
- Alcohol or glass containers
- Open fires
- Fireworks or firearms
- Hunting or trapping
- Feeding wildlife
- Bicycles, skateboards or motorized vehicles on beaches, ball fields or playing area
- Rough housing
**Waterfront Park Rules**

Parks are open from sunrise to sunset.

Park only in designated areas, please keep off grass.

Please keep our parks clean, take out what you bring in.

Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult on the beach or in the water.

No animals except assistive animals.

**No Lifeguards = No Swimming.**

Swim only in designated areas.

*Please use appropriate swimwear, no jeans.*

*Use Swim Diapers.*

**The Following Are Strictly Prohibited:**

- Littering
- Camping,
- Overnight parking
- Alcohol or glass containers
- Open fires
- Fireworks or firearms
- Fishing or watercraft in swim areas
- Hunting or trapping
- Feeding wildlife
- Boats or trailers
- Bicycles, skateboards or motorized vehicles on beaches, ball fields or playing areas
- Rough housing
- Throwing rocks, mud, or sand
- Full face swim masks or snorkels
- Flotation devices
- Scuba diving
- Moving buoys
- Climbing on rocks