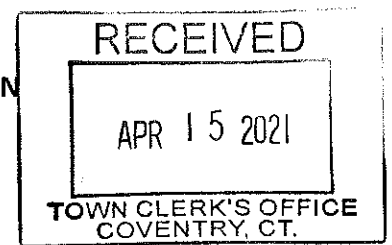


**COVENTRY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, APRIL 8th, 2021**



The Coventry Parks & Recreation Commission held a regular meeting on Thursday, April 8, 2021 via virtual platform, ZOOM. Marie Gallo-Hall called the meeting to order at 6:33pm.

Members Present: Marie Gallo-Hall, Jillian Miner, Jennifer Rodgers, Beverly Carlson and Matthew Kyer.

Members Absent: Bob Martin

Others Present: Wendy Rubin, Director of Parks & Recreation and Eric Thomas, Protected Open Spaces Stewardship Committee

Correspondence:

- Email from Christina Kevorkian, Woodmont Drive regarding after hours cars & foot traffic at Laidlaw Park. Commission discussed with input from Eric Thomas as well. There is currently only the one gate by the emergency access from Woodmont Drive. Eric Thomas also addressed the citizen comments regarding gates and vehicle access. Commission will determine if there's a need for installing a new gate at the Merrow Rd. side to close in the off-season, and after soccer ends each night in-season

- Letter from Corey Scott, Grant Hill Rd., interested in expanding types of activities at Laidlaw Park. Commission discussed. Possible use includes horseshoe pits, swing set, and flower plantings. Matt Kyer suggested that we reach out to garden club to enhance plantings at the park. It would also help if we included the need for gardening volunteers in our newsletter. Picnic tables would be a good idea. Wendy Rubin mentioned that Manny Rodrigues could build us some tables.

Audience of Citizens:

Wendy Rubin explained that Eric Thomas, who chairs the Protected Spaces Stewardship Committee (a subcommittee of the Conservation Commission) was unintentionally not included in our discussion related to XC team use of Laidlaw trails last month. She invited him to this month's meeting to discuss trails in general.

Eric Thomas presented an overview of their committee's purpose and activities. He noted that he has observed an increased use of the park, (not just soccer). He also discussed the condition of trees which will need to be removed for safety measures. Many are dead and or dying. DPW has been notified and the trees have been flagged. Matt Kyer asked if these trees could be used as firewood, and questioned if it could be outsourced to someone that sells firewood. Marie suggested we prioritize which trees need attention. The Protected Open Spaces Committee has training and equipment to assist. At the time, DPW and the Tree Warden were not supporting this idea. Wendy Rubin suggested that it should be revisited with new leadership at DPW. Eric also invited the Commission members for a hike of Laidlaw to see the progress his committee has made in trail improvements. Wendy stated that she feels that at some point in the future, there should be some clarification of roles regarding town trails, specifically the ones that are located within town parks.

Acceptance of Minutes:

Jen Rodgers moved to accept the March 11, 2021 meeting minutes. Matt Kyer seconded. Motion voted in the affirmative by Marie Gallo-Hall, Jennifer Rodgers, Matt Kyer and Beverly Carlson. Motion carried.

Marie Gallo-Hall moved to seat Matt Kyer as a member with full voting rights in Bob Martin's place. Bev Carlson seconded. Motion voted in the affirmative by Marie Gallo-Hall, Jennifer Rodgers, and Beverly Carlson. Matt Kyer abstained. Motion carried.

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Chair's Remarks:

- Ms. Gallo-Hall acknowledged Wendy Rubin's upcoming retirement, wished her all the best and thanked her for her service.
- Ms. Gallo-Hall also welcomed our new Alternate Member, Ashlee Pascarelli to the Commission. Ashlee and her husband Travis are lifelong residents of Coventry with 3 children.

Staff Report:

Written staff report for the month of March was sent electronically to the membership for their review. Ms. Rubin highlighted the following items:

Camp:

- Cat had a baby boy! She is home on leave until end of June. In her absence, camp co-directors Hayley Jacobs and Megan Yanez are moving forward to get camp up & running. Registrations started this week. Camp is limited in its numbers this summer with Covid 19 restrictions. Staffing is in good shape, just need a camp lifeguard and more CIT's.

Aquatics:

- New Aquatics Director is Colleen MacAvoy. Meredith Hopkins is training her in the preseason to take the reins. We have 10 returning guards, and we are losing 5, but with Lisicke not guarded on weekdays we should be ok. Staff need to get extensive Red Cross training to be re-certified this year. Mansfield Community Center staff are helping us with this.

UConn Boating Lease Renewals:

- Wendy is in the process of renewing leases with UConn Men's, Women's Rowing and Sailing club. Women's Varsity team is being discontinued next year, and will become part of Club Sports. They are proposing a re-arrangement of the spaces we use. Logistics need to be worked out.

Programs:

- Cat Merriam did a great job setting us up in her absence – she provided checklists and timelines for all of her duties that will occur in her absence.
- The Spring/Summer brochure is on the website, mailers are going out next week. Registration begins April 19.
- Tag Sale- numbers are low, but we have a few weeks still before we decide on running or not.
- We are collaborating with Youth Services to present a new entertainment series – "Summer Stage by the Lake" with concerts, kids and family activities, movie night, and a magic show.
- Swim lessons – private & semi private offered – staff need WSI training
- Community Garden plots are sold out
- Youth basketball planning a summer program and 3on 3 inter-town league. Waiting to hear from schools re gym availability.
- Jillian Miner is offering a 2 hour Wellness Vision workshop and she described what the course covers.
- Pickleball:
 - Doreen Junious, US Pickleball CT Ambassador hosting a Pickleball social event at the high school courts in June. Demonstrations, giveaways, etc.

Bev Carlson asked for an update on Coventry Lake Community Rowing's dock status. UConn owns the docks and did not put them in this spring. Wendy stated that the issue has been resolved for the short term with a temporary fix.

Old Business:

Softball Field Committee Update:

- Ms. Rodgers said that the Committee has submitted their final report to Town Council. They were slated to meet with Finance Committee this Monday but were postponed until May.

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Marie asked if the funding will be in the referendum this year, Jen is not sure. She offered lawn signs to anyone that wants one.

Budget:

- In advance of tonight's meeting, an excerpt from the Town Manager's report regarding our budget was emailed. Ms. Rubin said that we may be able to take advantage of the American Relief Fund to reduce our deficit for the current fiscal year and possibly this upcoming year. The Finance Committee is not going to make any changes to our budget this fiscal year. Marie is hoping that Wendy can provide her replacement with all the information to continue with our approach to our funding sources. She wants the board to continue to take the same stance as we did this year.

New Business:

Consideration to limit prohibition of dogs at town beaches as seasonal.

- Wendy attended a workshop at Old Lyme McCook Park and saw the signs they use that allows dogs on beaches in the off season. "No Pets from May 1 to Sept 30, leash Law applies at all times." She thought this may be good to consider for Patriots Park and Lisicke Beach. It would not need to be an ordinance change, just a park rule. She also noted that people do not follow posted signs regardless. This would increase the spaces and options for residents to take their dogs with them to parks. Matt Kyer asked if we have a dedicated off-leash dog park. He asked if having one would reduce people using other parks. Wendy stated that people like to have near home options and variety. Covid 19 clearly demonstrated how much people need and appreciate having parks close to home. Discussion followed regarding past history of Creaser Park and the ordinance changes we have made to date, dogs on and off leash and the impact to others on trails and parks. This is not time sensitive, and could wait until after this summer season. It was agreed upon that this topic will be tabled and re-considered at the May meeting.

Position Vacancy:

- Matt Kyer asked Marie if she has been asked to serve on the interview committee. Marie read Town Manager, John Elsesser's email of March 24th. John told her that they are planning to start recruitment soon, he will advertise in CCM, the CT Recreation and Parks Association, and publicly. The Commission will have a seat at the interview panel if desired. He will try to see if we can overlap a few weeks. Budget wise, this could be tough because our fiscal year ends June 30 and he needs to fund Ms. Rubin's severance out of this year's budget too. Most likely Cat Merriam will still be out on leave. Marie does not know when the interview will happen, or whether it's virtual or not. Bob Martin expressed an interest in participating as is Marie. Marie expressed concern for the timing for the transition to ensure continuity. Cat Merriam's absence will impact the transition. Wendy stated that several positions in the field of parks and recreation are opening up so the candidate pool may be spread thin. Bev asked Wendy how many years she served in Coventry to which Wendy replied 13 in Coventry and 41 years in park & rec since college! Marie offered to follow up with John Elsesser.

Adjourn: With no other business to discuss, Marie Gallo-Hall adjourned the meeting at 8:08pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Wendy Rubin
Director of Parks & Recreation

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.