The Coventry Parks & Recreation Commission held a regular meeting on Thursday, May 14th, 2020 via virtual platform, ZOOM. Marie Gallo-Hall called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm.

**Members Present:** Marie Gallo-Hall, Jillian Miner (logged in at 6:33pm), Jennifer Rodgers, Beverly Carlson and Bob Martin.

**Members Absent:** None.

**Others Present:** Wendy Rubin, Director of Parks & Recreation; Caterina Merriam, Recreation Supervisor; Meredith Hopkins, Aquatics Director and Lakota Potter, Assistant Aquatics Director.

**Audience of Citizens:** None.

**Acceptance of Minutes:**
Marie Gallo-Hall moved to accept the February 13th meeting minutes. Bob Martin seconded. Motion voted in the affirmative by Marie Gallo-Hall, Beverly Carlson, Jennifer Rodgers, Jillian Miner and Bob Martin. Motion carried.

**Correspondence:** None.

**Chair’s Remarks:** Ms. Gallo-Hall noted the following items:
- She noted that Commission Member Jennifer Byines has resigned from the Parks & Recreation Commission. She went on to thank Ms. Byines for all her hard work and dedication to both the Commission and the community.
- She also offered her thanks to Ms. Rubin and Ms. Merriam for their hard work these last several weeks, navigating through these very uncertain and challenging times.

**Staff Report:**
Written Staff Reports for the months of March & April were sent electronically to the membership for their review ahead of the meeting. Ms. Rubin noted the following items:
- **COVID-19 Response:**
  - Ms. Rubin reviewed the timeline of actions taken by the Department since the pandemic started back in March. She added that staff been participating in several webinars & trainings to learn more about how to handle operations during the pandemic, and have been monitoring regulations closely and doing a lot with our Facebook page to keep people engaged.
- **Creaser Park:**
  - Ms. Rubin noted that the disc golf course project is close to finishing. Our consultant, Karl Molitoris has been out at the site doing a lot of the manual labor needed to complete the project, along with a community service person. The last few holes (7, 8 & 9) have been delayed slightly due to some tree issues.
  - Signs are almost done; as soon as they are in-hand, they will go out along with the baskets. The first 6 holes are a complete loop, and can be a full game for people, so if
the last few holes take a little longer to complete, folks can still get out there and play. We will likely schedule a ribbon cutting for some time after the pandemic subsides and restrictions are lifted.

Old Business:
- Elections:

  Beverly Carlson moved to accept the slate of officers as nominated at the February 13th 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.

New Business:
- Summer Operations: COVID-19 Impact: Parks & Beaches:
  - Ms. Rubin began by noting that the COVID-19 pandemic has proven to be a challenge with summer planning, particularly because the information keeps changing. That being said, the warm weather is here and we need to be mindful that people will be at the parks so we need to be ready. Ms. Rubin posed the question, that if we close the beaches for swimming, how do we monitor attendance and bring in revenue. She mentioned that we could cross-train Gatekeepers and Park Maintainers as “Park Rangers” of sorts, and the Police Department has already said that they would help with the training.
  - Ms. Rubin also said that the timing is tough; Memorial Day is only a week away. We do not have time to have Lifeguards ready and working by then, but we can have other staff on to monitor the parks and manage trash. We are expecting guidance from the State of CT very soon regarding beaches, so we should wait until we have the time to review that and put those guidelines into place. DEEP is working directly with the Department of Public Health on those guidelines, so they should have a good understanding of how we operate.
  - Ms. Gallo-Hall noted that within the Department’s COVID-19 Re-Entry Plan, there are four conditions to re-open beaches and that they all sound reasonable, but how do we know if we meet those conditions? Ms. Rubin said that the State’s guidance will determine that. She said that most communities she has looked into have swimming included in Phase 3 or 4 of their re-open plans.
  - Ms. Gallo-Hall said that she is concerned that once we open beaches, that we may putting our employees at risk, in policing social distancing. She has heard many stories of people becoming belligerent and aggressive to those enforcing rules and does not want our staff, most of whom are teenagers & college-aged kids, put in that position. How would we handle this?
    - Ms. Rubin said that our Lifeguards feel comfortable enforcing rules, as their entire job function is to enforce rules. If we do not open for swimming, Lifeguards can fill this role. If we do open swimming, we would need additional staff to do the policing.
  - Ms. Rubin also mentioned a concern for trash & misuse of park facilities. Ms. Gallo-Hall asked how we open beaches and parks without bathrooms. Ms. Rubin noted that most communities are bringing in portable toilets with hand sanitizer or portable hand washing stations & signage detailing the cleaning schedule and noting that use is at your own risk. She went on to note that some communities are fencing off playgrounds and pavilions to limit use and reduce exposure.
Ms. Rubin also noted that we can reduce capacity at the beaches, to limit the number of people there at one time. Ms. Gallo-Hall supported this saying that we should not be filling to capacity. Ms. Rubin noted that the full capacity is much higher than our normal attendance, so spacing is not the issue, but rather what we can comfortably control.

Ms. Gallo-Hall asked if we are permitted to conduct health screenings at the entrances. Ms. Rubin said that we can take temperatures and ask screening questions at the gate. Lakota Potter added that the problem with health screenings, is that it does not take in account those who are asymptomatic.

Ms. Gallo-Hall suggested that the group break the issue down into smaller questions:
- 1. Will we/can we open parks this summer?
- 2. What will opening “look like?” When will we open?
- 3. What do we do in the interim, before officially opening?

Ms. Rubin said that parks are essential for overall wellbeing and mental health, especially after so many have been in quarantine at home during this time. We need to weigh that against everything else.

Beginning with question 1, Ms. Gallo-Hall polled each member for their thoughts; the consensus was that everyone was on board and in support of opening in some capacity. They agreed that most people will go to the beaches whether they’re “open” or not, so we need to put some measures into place to ensure some control.

Ms. Gallo-Hall said that since the Commission is on board with opening beaches, we should decide when. She said that she believes we should wait until at least June; Memorial Day is too soon. The group agreed that opening should take place sometime in June, no sooner, with resident stickers required and a reduced parking fee at Patriots Park for Non-Residents.

Ms. Gallo-Hall acknowledged that the group was in favor of planning a target opening date of 6/13, which will remain subject to change. She then asked what our plans will be for the interim. The Commission agreed that staff need to be on at both beaches to monitor use and enforce social distancing policies. They agreed to have 2 staff on at a time at Lisicke Beach and 3 staff on at a time at Patriots Park to enforce new guidelines.

Ms. Gallo-Hall noted that she understands that the Police Department do not want to be the social distancing police, however she would like to reiterate that if our staff have any issues enforcing rules and have any difficulties, that they can call the Police Department for support/assistance.

Marie Gallo-Hall moved to accept the following:
- A target opening date for beaches of 6/13/2020 which is subject to change based on conditions & changing guidance;
- Attempt to obtain 1 portable toilet per park with signs noting the cleaning schedule;
- Staff Lisicke Beach with 2 staff & Patriots Park with 3 staff prior to 6/13/2020 to enforce social distancing rules;
- Require $25 Resident Beach Stickers (to be purchased online) and a reduced $10 non-resident parking fee at Patriots Park until opening on 6/13/2020.

Jennifer Rodgers seconded. Motion voted in the affirmative by Marie Gallo-Hall, Jennifer Rodgers, Beverly Carlson, Jillian Miner and Bob Martin. Motion carried.

Ms. Gallo-Hall then asked about Swim Lessons and what our plans are. Ms. Rubin noted that lessons are proving to be tough to plan for; major modifications would need to be made that ultimately compromise the quality of the swim instruction. Additionally, qualified staff are in
short supply. She noted that we opened Level Testing registration to weigh the community’s interest, and we only have 3 kids registered. The Commission agreed to put lessons “on hold” and re-evaluate mid-summer; we just do not have enough information to move forward at this point.

Marie Gallo-Hall moved to postpone Swim Lessons with a possible reevaluation in July/August. Beverly seconded. Motion voted in the affirmative by Marie Gallo-Hall, Jennifer Rodgers, Beverly Carlson, Jillian Miner and Bob Martin. Motion Carried.

Marie Gallo-Hall moved to postpone Boat Rentals with a possible reevaluation in the coming months. Beverly Carlson seconded. Motion voted in the affirmative by Marie Gall-Hall, Jennifer Rodgers, Beverly Carlson, Jillian Miner and Bob Martin. Motion carried.

- Marie Gallo-Hall inquired about an update on Facility Rentals. Ms. Rubin noted that we have postponed/cancelled all rentals of the Patriots Park Lodge & Mill Brook Place through June. Cancellations have been dependent on the Governor’s social gathering orders and continues to be monitored/adjusted as needed.
- Ms. Merriam gave a quick update as to where Camp guidelines/recommendations are. She noted that we are anticipating new guidelines from the state in the next week or so, which will help our discussion at our next meeting on 5/21.
- Ms. Rubin offered an update on ball fields & sports leagues, noting that only families & groups of 5 or less are being permitted onto fields, both Town & School; no organized activities. Ms. Rodgers added that Little League rules vary state-to-state, and CT is currently allowing Little League to resume activities in Phase 2, which is June 20th. She also reported that Windham/Willimantic has postponed through the Summer.

Adjourn: With no other business to discuss the meeting was adjourned at 8:20pm.

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.