The Coventry Parks & Recreation Commission held a special meeting on Thursday, May 21st, 2020 via virtual platform, ZOOM. Marie Gallo-Hall called the meeting to order at 6:33pm.

**Members Present:** Marie Gallo-Hall, Jennifer Rodgers, Beverly Carlson (logged in at 6:35pm) and Bob Martin.

**Members Absent:** Jillian Miner.

**Others Present:** Wendy Rubin, Director of Parks & Recreation; Caterina Merriam, Recreation Supervisor; Mike Blouin, Ashley Gagnon, Bonnie Edmonds, Matt Hunt and Matt Harrington, Softball Field Committee.

**Old Business:**
- Softball Field Committee Update:
  - Bonnie Edmondson began by highlighting the Softball Field Committee’s progress over the past several months, since their inception in 2018. Please see attached report.
  - The Committee is now requesting approval/support of the Parks & Recreation Commission prior to seeking additional funding & support from the Town Council.
  - Ms. Gallo-Hall confirmed that this is the lot across from Miller-Richardson Field. Ms. Rodgers said that it is the land located behind St. Mary’s Cemetery. Ms. Gallo-Hall also inquired if there is an easement or right of way that would need to be built. The Committee noted that they have not heard anything more on that.
  - Ms. Gallo-Hall asked about a crosswalk, connecting Miller-Richardson Field to the softball location. Ms. Rodgers noted that the area for the softball fields is set so far back, that it’s not likely walkable. Ms. Edmonds noted that they can likely inquire about including a crosswalk or blinking yellow light for safety purposes.
  - Ms. Rodgers noted that there was no perfect location, but that this is the best option presented. The next step is securing the funding, with the help of the Town Council coupled with various fundraising efforts. Ms. Gallo-Hall asked if the Committee has had a conversation with the Town Council regarding funding; she knows that there were several cuts discussed at their last meeting.
    - Ms. Edmonds has spoken with Town Manager and have requested a meeting with the Town Council to present their plans and discuss next steps. First step was to present to Parks & Recreation for support; we are answering a charge from the Town Council to address a serious concern within the Community and hope to be a part of the solution.
    - Ms. Rubin noted that the Committee is also seeking potential grant opportunities to help with the funding. She went on to say that it was never the intent that the project be entirely funded by the Town Council.
  - Ms. Carlson noted that their presentation is very clear and shows the thought that they’ve put into this.

Marie Gallo-Hall moved to endorse the proposal set forth by the Coventry Softball Field Study Committee with respect to the location and costs outlined in that report. Bob Martin seconded.
Motion voted in the affirmative by Marie Gallo-Hall, Bob Martin and Beverly Carlson. Jennifer Rodgers abstained. Motion carried with one abstention.

- Summer Operations: COVID-19 Impact:
  - Beach Update:
    - Ms. Rubin noted that in her most recent meeting with Emergency Management, the June 13th open date for beaches was discussed, and it was encouraged that we remain consistent with the June 20th Re-Open CT Phase 2 date.
    - Marie Gallo-Hall moved to amend the prior decision to tentatively open beaches on June 13th, and change it to June 20th to be in line with the State of CT Re-Open plan, Phase 2. Beverly Carlson seconded. Motion voted in the affirmative by Marie Gallo-Hall, Beverly Carlson, Jennifer Rodgers and Bob Martin. Motion carried unanimously.

  - Camp Wangumbaug:
    - Ms. Merriam prepared a report detailing year’s plans/requirements set forth by the State of CT Office of Early Childhood, along with the Guidelines and Application for Approval for Expansion for the Commission’s review. Ms. Gallo-Hall asked if everyone had the chance to review the materials; the members said yes. Ms. Carlson noted that she feels like the restrictions put forth are pretty complicated and would be difficult to implement.
    - Ms. Gallo-Hall noted that due to the uncertainty of the COVID-19 issue, coupled with these restrictions and the financial impact, she does not feel comfortable opening Camp this year. She is very concerned regarding safety, both for the kids and our staff.
    - Ms. Rodgers added that while a lot of families rely on our program as their form of childcare, we should consider offering what we can, especially if we can bring in a little revenue. Ms. Rodgers also said it would be difficult to determine how to conduct registration for that few available spots; how do you decide who gets to go? Ms. Merriam noted that the program would come in at a loss this year, regardless of what is offered, due to the lower enrollment numbers required (max 30).
    - Mr. Martin noted that while he would love to be able to sign his kids up for a camp program, especially in light of the quarantine, he understands the concerns regarding COVID-19 and why a program should not be offered.
    - Ms. Merriam noted some of the major concerns noted in the report:
      - The indoor locations provided at Patriots Park, which would be used in case of inclement weather are not ideal and would be difficult to manage. Groups would need to be broken up between 3 separate buildings, making supervision difficult. It also bears the question of how/where health screenings would be conducted.
      - We would not feel comfortable moving forward without hiring a Camp Nurse; it would take time to go through the hiring process to get someone on board.
      - Registration is another unknown, in terms of how we could conduct it in a fair manner.
    - Ms. Gallo-Hall echoed that the indoor facilities are a major concern. She asked if our staff are comfortable working this summer or if we have heard any concerns from them. Ms. Merriam noted that she and the Camp Management staff
including Megan Yanez and Hayley Jacobs have been working diligently to work through these guidelines and determine the best course of action, and it has not been easy. She has polled the Counselors and they are all intending on returning this summer, as long as it’s safe. They are understanding that the circumstances may dictate that the program close, but they are hopeful and happy to return. She did hear from one staff person who had a few concerns regarding supervising the kids within the limits of social distancing, and having to reinforce those guidelines. Particularly after a long absence from school, kids will be kids and want to hug and high-five each other and play the way we normally do at camp, and those things just won’t be an option. So it will be difficult for kids to understand and staff to reinforce.

- Ms. Gallo-Hall asked about the financial impact of the Camp program when it normally runs. Ms. Rubin noted that the Camp program, on a good year, tends to yield a profit that helps to fund the rest of the Department’s activities. We do have a healthy fund balance, that if we don’t run the program we can tap into to get us through to next year when we can open normally and hopefully make up the difference.

- Ms. Merriam noted that she and the staff feel that it may be early to decide; Re-Open CT is only in phase 1. She noted that we could watch the trends over the next week or so to see how it’s going, which would give us a little more time to work through some of the questions we still have. Ms. Gallo-Hall asked how much is really going to change in a week. Ms. Carlson noted that she would be happy postponing a vote if another week will help. Ms. Rodgers noted that families need to know, and that we should decide sooner rather than later.

- Ms. Gallo-Hall asked the staff what their “gut feeling” was on the issue. Ms. Merriam said that there is no clear cut answer, either way. She and the staff are still very torn and are not leaning one way over the other. She added that they are recommending delaying open Camp until at least 7/6, which we can do and still delay a decision. Ms. Rubin added that there are alternatives to an on-site day camp, and we could develop some programs and promotions to stay engaged with the campers and staff throughout the summer.

- The Commission discussed the program changes effectively changing our program from “Camp” to “childcare.” Ms. Rubin noted that philosophically, Parks & Recreation Departments are not charged with providing childcare; it does not fall within the intention of our mission. Ms. Gallo-Hall noted that she too sent her children to our Camp for their entire childhood right up until they were Counselors themselves. She said that as a working parent it did act as her childcare through the summer months, but that the kids enjoyed going to Camp because of the kind of program it was; this summer will not be “Camp.”

Marie Gallo-Hall moved that given the current situation with COVID-19, the uncertainties associated with it and the requirements being handed down by the State of CT, that Camp Wangumbaug not be held for the 2020 summer season. Bob Martin seconded. Motion voted in the affirmative by Marie Gallo-Hall, Jennifer Rodgers, Beverly Carlson and Bob Martin. Motion carried unanimously.

- Marie Gallo-Hall added that the Commission has given this issue considerable thought, and soul searching, to determine the best course of action for the
safety of the kids. It is with heavy hearts that we have decided to cancel Camp for the summer of 2020.

**Adjourn:** With no other business to discuss the meeting was adjourned at 7:40pm.

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.