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TOWN OF NEWTOWN
PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

Newtown Parks and Recreation Commission
Regular Meeting, Tuesday, April 18, 2023 @ 6:00 P.M.
Newtown Teen Center, 53 Church Hill Road, Newtown, CT 06470

MINUTES ARE NOT FINALIZED UNTIL APPROVED BY THE PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Present: Clinton De Paolo, Aaron Britton, Rance Thompson, Warren Spencer, Jim Parker, David Payne, Vincent Yanni, Jr.

Absent: Rance Thompson

Also Present: Amy Mangold, Director, Carl Samuelson, Assistant Director/Parks, RoseAnn Reggiano, Assistant Director/Recreation

Chairman De Paolo called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

Public Participation:

Elizabeth Lynch, Crabapple Lane – Ms. Lynch came to this meeting to discuss the pickleball courts in town. She stated that the courts have heavy usage and would like to request a reserve system for fair playing time. She also requested that the cracks in the courts be repaired, showing pictures to the commission on the condition of each court around town. Ms. Lynch also asked that fencing at Fairfield Hills be installed to help keep the balls in the court and away from the poison ivy and roadways. Ms. Lynch further discussed the conditions of the parking area surrounding the Fairfield Hills courts and how there are potholes and dusty conditions on the courts when cars park. She would also like to see the windshields be reinstalled on the Treadwell Park courts. Ms. Lynch summed up her statement by saying there is a great need for courts, and she would like to see Newtown build permanent dedicated pickleball courts for residents.

William Manfredonia, Monitor Hill Road – Mr. Manfredonia began his statement by thanking the Parks and Recreation Department for everything they do. He stated that pickleball is the fastest growing game and all ages are playing. He reminded the Commission that play can happen approximately 7 to 8 months out of the year. Mr. Manfredonia reported that currently the pickleball courts at Fairfield Hills are in horrible condition and he asked the Commission to help get them in better shape.

Howard Becker, Brookside Court – Mr. Becker moved to Newtown from the NY area. He stated that in his last town they had built nine new pickleball courts and would like to see the same happen in Newtown. He has met many friends through this game and believes it is a big benefit to residents to invest time and money into them.

Sandy Orleman, Bears Hill Road – Ms. Orleman reiterated the same sentiments as other residents who spoke before her. She wanted the Commission to know that the Fairfield Hills courts are a mess, and she supports funding the repairs.

Ed Miklaszewski, Chimney Swift Drive – Mr. Miklaszewski asked the Commission if there was money anywhere to install new pickleball courts. Mr. Miklaszewski also reminded the Commission that fencing for the Fairfield Hills courts could be rented as a short-term solution.

Judy O'Toole, Clearview Drive – Ms. O'Toole agreed that Treadwell Park pickleball courts need repair. She stated that the courts, in their current condition stay wet with puddles and become unsafe for play.

Chairman De Paolo addressed the residents by stating he is also a pickleball player since a young age. He reminded them that the Commission tried, not that many years ago to get a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) approved at the referendum, but it unfortunately failed. Chairman De Paolo respected the outpouring of residents at tonight's meeting and felt it gave strength to the cause.

Carl Samuelson stated that the Fairfield Hills courts were improved because the CIP was denied at the referendum. He also reminded the residents that unfortunately the parking lot is under the control of the Fairfield Hills Authority and any changes to them or the temporary courts themselves need to be approved by that town body. He stated that unfortunately the town is limited to what crack repair material can be used because it does need to be temporary, according to the Fairfield Hills Authority. And the same was said about the fencing, because once again the courts are temporary. He felt if money kept being used to go towards these temporary fixes it could diminish the funds for permanent courts to be built.

Amy Mangold stated that the department and Commission are on the resident's side, but there are a lot of layers for approval of new courts. Mrs. Mangold asked that the residents keep supporting new courts and showing up to meetings as needed. She asked that residents put their heads together to become more creative in fundraising or grants for much needed money as that is what she believes will be needed to help support the cause. Mrs. Mangold stated she will get clarification on the process for approval of new courts at Fairfield Hills and get that information to individuals who attended tonight's meeting.

RoseAnn Reggiano stated she understands the frustration of the residents and knows there is a growing need for courts, both indoor and outdoor play. She supported the sentiments of the residents and agreed with the need for better courts.

Glen Boyle, Park Lane – Mr. Boyle also stated that he was in attendance to support new pickleball courts. He asked two questions for the Commission to answer. 1. How do we get a referendum to vote on? And 2. Who are the people that have the power to make changes at Fairfield Hills? Mr. Boyle also asked residents to write to the local politicians and newspapers to show support.

The Commission agreed that the individuals to contact for such approval of a project would be the First Selectman, the Board of Selectman, the Economic Development Commission, and the Fairfield Hills Authority. The referendum process would start with the Board of Selectman and work its way up the Legislative Council.

Jan Brown, Lori Lynn Circle – Ms. Brown was also in attendance to support the pickleball courts. She asked if there were any American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) funds still available that could be used towards this project. Mrs. Mangold responded that she believes those funds have been assigned to projects, but suggested that she contact the town's Finance Director, Robert Tait, to confirm.

Kim Duffy, Chestnut Knoll – Ms. Duffy was in attendance to support the pickleball courts. She asked if there was any other town property, besides the Fairfield Hill campus for new courts to be built. Mrs. Mangold responded that off the top of her head she doesn't believe so. She also stated that the department always needs to be mindful of the residential areas that surround the parks, and that noise and lighting can be a challenge at those locations.

Amy Mangold thanked everyone for their support and asked for a small bit of time to gather information and get back to the group on how to proceed. Chairman De Paolo also echoed these thoughts, as he felt it would ensure a more successful outcome.

Consideration and action on the minutes: Commissioner Spencer moved to accept the minutes of the special meeting of March 21, 2023. Commissioner Yanni seconded. All in favor.

Old Business:

a. Dickinson Pavilion Repairs – Mr. Samuelson reported that the pavilion was fenced off as scheduled. The company completing the work is looking to start in 10 days, stripping off the roof first. Mr. Samuelson said there is a small delay in the completion date of the project because the company doing the work did not properly order the material needed. He is holding the company to the Memorial Day completion date, so individuals who already rented the pavilion for events will not be moved or cancelled.

b. Teen Center Repairs/Wi-Fi Installation – Mr. Samuelson reported that the Wi-Fi installation is moving forward. Spectrum has been out to assess the building and current wiring. He will keep the Commission apprised of any happenings.

c. 2023 Meeting Schedule – No further action needed, as this was completed at the March 21, 2023 Special Meeting.

d. Bicycle Playground – Chairman De Paolo stated the new playground is completed but not open. He stated that he was happy with the outcome, and he feels it blends very well into the surrounding landscape.

Mrs. Mangold distributed and reviewed a list of proposed rules and regulations. She asked that the Commission review for approval at tonight's meeting. Mrs. Mangold also invited the Commission to attend the grand opening of the playground taking place on Wednesday, June 7th at 5pm.

Commissioner Yanni moved to accept the Bicycle Playground Rules and Regulations as presented with the changes discussed by the Commission and with final input from the town insurance company. Commissioner Warren seconded. All in favor.

Amy Mangold then discussed that the department needs an additional \$17,700 in funding for a total of \$23,000 to complete the project. She stated that an entrance concrete slab and picnic table concrete slab needed to be built, along with purchasing picnic tables, bike racks, topsoil, and site work landscaping finishings. She reminded the Commission that this number did not include asphalt for the area where Lewis Tree currently stages their trucks. After a brief discussion among Commissioners, it was decided that the most critical finishings to fund at this time are the topsoil, labor to spread the soil, and the concrete slab to the playground trail entrance. Mrs. Mangold also felt that it was possible for some, if not all of the landscaping, picnic tables and bike racks to be donated in the future. Mrs. Mangold stated that there is money in the surcharge account that could be used. She further justified this usage because the department could replenish the account with future programming that would happen at the playground.

Commissioner Yanni moved to allocate \$5,000 from the Parks & Recreation Department surcharge account to install a concrete slab at the entrance of the bicycle playground trail, purchase topsoil and pay for the labor to spread the topsoil. He also motioned that any monies received due to programming at this playground would be deposited back into the surcharge account. Commissioner Parker seconded. All in Favor.

e. 2023-2024 Budget – Chairman De Paolo reminded everyone that the budget was being voted on next week and to please go vote.

New Business: None.

Correspondence: None.

Chairman's Report: Chairman De Paolo asked that everyone attend the bicycle playground grand opening.

Director's Report: Amy Mangold reported that the department is still looking for summer staff and to please encourage anyone to apply that is interested. Summer staff t-shirts will be ordered shortly after the bid process is complete. The vendor for Eichlor's Cove overnight security is currently being finalized and she is happy to report that the new vendor is \$15 per hour cheaper than last year's vendor. The Rail Trail Grant through the Genium Foundation was awarded to Newtown and the department has already received a check in the amount of \$6,721.70. Mrs. Mangold stated that before they can officially deposit the check the funds needed to be accepted by the Board of Selectman. Mrs. Mangold was also excited to announce that there is \$56,000 in camp scholarship funding and she believes this funding can last up to 10 years.

Assistant Director's Report:

Assistant Director/Recreation – RoseAnn Reggiano reported that the spring Easter egg hunt event was a huge success and a lot of kids attended. She had special prize eggs and Easter Bunny pictures as a part of the event. She is currently planning the Rooster Run and is excited about all the funding coming in. Ms. Reggiano requested that lighting at the Fairfield Hills Pavilion be installed so individuals could rent the space.

Assistant Director/Parks – Carl Samuelson reported that fields are open a week before the anticipated date, and all nets were up. The docks at Eichlor's Cove are being repaired, but unfortunately the vendor building the new dock walkways are four to five months out from even starting the towns project. Mr. Samuelson said that the reason for the delay was because the company had shut down during COVID and still was not completely re-staffed. He would rather wait for a well-built product rather than something rushed. They are still waiting for test results from the water at Dickenson Park before bathrooms can be re-opened. His staff is calling every day to check and see if results are available. These results are needed to get approval from the Health Department to reopen the bathroom facilities. The Newtown Youth Academy is requesting the Town of Newtown pay and install gutter guards on their building to prevent baseballs from getting stuck and clog gutters. Newtown Youth Baseball is asking for fencing in between the two Watertown fields and around the Watertown fields. Artificial fields have also been a topic of recent discussion with the group and how they can start campaigning for the funds, like what the Newtown Youth Football Association did for their new turf field at the high school.

Commissioner's Out and About: None.

Adjournment: Having no further business Commissioner Yanni moved to adjourn the regular meeting of the Newtown Parks and Recreation Commission at 8:23 p.m. Commissioner Payne seconded. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole Kullgren, Clerk Pro Tem