



TOWN OF NEWTOWN
Fairfield Hills Authority
MINUTES

**The Fairfield Hills Authority held a Meeting on August 26, 2019
in Council Chambers at the Municipal Center, 3 Primrose Street, Newtown CT 06470**

These minutes are subject to the approval of the FHA at their next meeting.

Present: Ross Carley, Renata Adler, Michael Holmes, Andrew Philbin

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Absent: Brook Clark, Walt Motyka, Melissa Beylouni, Terry Sagedy, Christal Preszler

Public Attendance: none

Also Present: Amy Mangold – Director of Parks & Recreation, Brad Accettella – Bike & Trail Committee member and Director of Product & Supply Chain for Guardian Bikes (donated 140 bikes), Clinton DePaolo – Parks & Recreation Commissioner, Kim Chiappetta (clerk)

The meeting was called to order at 7:09 p.m. without a quorum.

Public Participation:

None

Minutes:

Acceptance of the minutes was tabled until next meeting due to lack of quorum.

Bike Share Program:

Chairman Ross Carley asked Parks & Rec Director Amy Mangold to present the Bike Share Program to the Authority. Ms. Mangold explained that the Bike Lending Program would be run by the Parks & Rec department out of the Community Center and would allow for adults to sign-out a bike for a child to ride around the campus under adult supervision. At this time there are no adult bikes available through the program. Details of the program are still being worked out. Amy introduced Brad Accettella, member of the Bike & Trail Committee and Director of Product & Supply Chain for Guardian Bikes. Mr. Accettella brought a demo bike into the middle of the room and explained that Guardian Bikes was a start-up company that received funding on the show Shark Tank. He explained that these children's bikes have a world-wide patented brake design where there is one brake lever that operates both the front and rear brakes. This unique design prevents children from flipping over the handle bars due to grabbing the front brake too hard. The donated bikes vary in size accommodating children from between 4 to 12 years old. Brad has been in the bike industry for 25 years and has worked on many bike grant programs before, specifically helping with Cunningham Park in Queens, NY. Currently Brad is working through the Bike & Trail Committee to obtain a grant for a bike park in town. Amy shared with the group diagrams of various bike parks and told the members that American Ramp Company, (who created the skate park at Dickenson Park), have expressed that the Newtown community would be a good model for a bike park or pump track. She continued to explain that there is no defined location at this time and it would have to be examined. Amy added that she would love to have the location on campus, but they need to determine various factors. Dickenson Park may also be a good location.

Amy noted that Clinton did research of bike share/lending programs. Clinton explained to the group that the program will require children to wear a helmet and will heavily suggest that children wear a reflective vest so parents can maintain visibility of their children at all times. There may be the possibility of incorporating signage to let children and parents know of areas of concern. (Ex. blind corner, intersection, etc.) A usage waiver will ensure parents understand the rules and know they are responsible for their child and the need to strike a balance with walkers, runners and pet walkers. The plan is to begin the project with a smaller number of bikes, then scale up if necessary. The group discussed concerns with injuries to riders as well as others on campus. Clinton explained that the Parks & Rec Committee also had the same concerns and will be holding a bicycling safety program. Also, they are considering not lending bikes when large events are being held on campus. Ross expressed his concerns with the number of bikes on the trail while people are walking and asked how the Committee will determine the appropriate number to loan at one time. Clinton explained that they will be starting the program with a small number of bikes, then determine an appropriate number based upon whether Parks & Rec receives any complaints or safety concerns, and based upon demand. Ross also expressed legal concerns. Amy explained that she has already reviewed risk and liability with the insurance company. She recognized that there can always be a scenario where someone will try to sue the town, but much research was done to ensure the waiver is carefully worded. The Town's insurance company did not see any concerns. Renata also expressed concerns with seniors walking. Amy said that there are already rules for the trails stating travel must not exceed 10 miles/hour and riders must yield to pedestrians. The thought is the program will help parents who are lugging their children's bikes to the campus. Kids riding bikes on campus are already pretty popular and this would not be anything new. Amy reiterated the program will be starting small and they will ensure there are no complaints or safety concerns after its launch. Andrew Philbin said that he felt it was a great idea. He asked how bikes would be checked in and out. Clinton said that parents must sign-off that they understand the rules before taking the bike out for their child. The group then discussed the benefits of a bike park. Brad explained encouraging kids to cycle helps them to socialize and learn how to make decisions.

Amy then informed Authority members that she met with the Victory Garden Committee and talked about cleaning up the area and moving the compost closer to the tree line. She is working with Christal and George to schedule a meeting to see the areas.

Chairman's Report

Homestead grove and duplex preservation:

Ross told members he has been checking the campus property and is very concerned about the decay of the duplexes, more specifically the roofs. He also expressed concerns with intruders and damage to buildings. A priority is to find funding to secure the buildings. Ross expressed he would like to get the roofs of the duplexes repaired to ensure the buildings are not lost. He is concerned that the leaking and decaying roofs will eventually destroy the interior.

He also told members that a referendum was coming in April of 2020 regarding the potential for mixed use housing on campus. Prior to the referendum there will be 3 – 4 informational meetings to ensure the public is well educated on the topic. He felt the results of the campus survey did not provide a clear answer as to what should be done with the buildings. Ross continued to express concerns that the buildings could not wait another 5 years and that there are certain grants currently available for revitalization that may not be available in the future.

Member Updates

No member updates.

Staff Update

Events & Activities – Kim:

Kiosk Update:

Kim Chiappetta told members that the design of Eagle Scout kiosk roof had to be modified slightly to allow for additional support, and that the project is progressing.

EDA Grant:

Kim told everyone that the EDA Public Works grant application to replace the sanitary sewer mains on the Fairfield Hills campus is still in review. We are in the process of responding to the 5th round of questions and requests for additional information from the EDA.

Events:

Kim began by telling members that the Farmer's Market continues to be successful in its new location. The next event is the REACH car show on Sunday, September 8th in its new location Homestead Grove. The Arts Festival, scheduled for 9/20 – 9/22, is in final review and will be approved very soon.

Remaining events for the year are:

- Fall Festival Carnival 9/27 – 9/29
- Merry Hill & Newtown Volunteer Ambulance – Funtober Fest Saturday, October 5th.
- Newtown Congregational Church C.R.O.P. Walk Sunday, October 20th

Adjournment: With no further business, Renata Adler made a motion to adjourn, Mike Holmes seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 8:09 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Kimberly Chiappetta, Clerk.*