

PARKS COMMISSIONERS
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2010
5:45 P.M.
MASON LIBRARY

PRESENT:
PAUL GIBBONS, CHAIRMAN
CHRISTINE WARD
KAREN SMITH
STEVE BANNON
CHARLES BOUTEILLER

ALSO PRESENT: **JOE SOKUL, DPW SUPERINTENDENT**
KEVIN O'DONNELL – TOWN MANAGER
JENISE LUCEY – BERKSHIRE SOUTH

The meeting of the Parks Commissioners was called to order at 5:45 p.m.

1. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

MOTION: Ms. Smith to approve the minutes from the August 9, 2010 meeting.

SECOND: Ms. Ward

VOTE: 5-0

2. **PARK CARE AND MAINTENANCE:**

A. **Updates from Joe Sokul**

Mr. Sokul advised that fall clean-up of the parks and cemeteries have begun. The keys for the shed at Memorial Field have been distributed. The shed will be painted in the spring.

Mr. Gibbons advised that Kompan Big Toys sent a replacement part for the swings at Olympian Meadows. He advised there was a recall on the cap end part because it could develop cracks. Mr. Avery removed the swings and will replace the part.

The concession stand at Olympian Meadows has been closed up. The DPW goes down there about twice a week to clean the bathrooms. The gate at Olympian Meadows needs to be fixed. Mr. Sokul noted that he would look at the warning track at Memorial Field and the gate at Olympian Meadows.

Mr. Bouteller noted that the sharp edges on the top of the fence at Olympian Meadows need to be turned down so the sharp ends don't go through the covering. Mr. Sokul said he would contact Berkshire Fence about fixing that.

3. **UPDATES FROM BERKSHIRE SOUTH REGIONAL COMMUNITY CENTER:**

Ms. Lucey advised that Laura Martin will be attending the Parks Meetings in the future. Ms. Lucey said that the back part of the skate park is beginning to fill in with leaves as well as the skate bowl. She asked if the DPW could help clean it up. She also noted that there is between 50 to 80 kids on weekends. The busiest time of the day is between 4:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. Ms. Lucey advised that the skaters at the park are requesting more ramps. Ms. Smith said that they need to attend a meeting to address what they are looking for. Ms. Lucey also advised that there is a flickering light on the large light pole in the front area at Memorial Field. Mr. Sokul said he would contact National Grid to see who owns the light.

Re: Housatonic Playground: Ms. Lucey advised that the hours between 12:00 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. is the busiest time of the day. She suggested that the hours could be adjusted for next year to 12:00 noon to 6:00 p.m.

Ms. Lucey said that Lake Mansfield served close to 6,000 people for the summer. She noted on July 4th there were approximately 290 people at the lake. There were no major incidents where the police had to be called. 29 children took swim lessons this year which was less than last year.

4. **UPDATES FROM THE LAKE MANSFIELD IMPROVEMENT TASK FORCE:**

Ms. Ward advised that the ropes need to be replaced and the weed fabric needs to be removed. Also signage needs to be put up explaining the weed fabric and what it is used for. Ms. Ward said there needs to be a complete revision of all rules governing the lake and all parks, including the conservation forest, beach area and boat area. She advised that the task force would make recommendations and forward them to the Board of Selectmen. There was a question about putting tarps over the ramps at the skate park at Memorial Field.

Ms. Ward noted that the elderberry bash was very successful at Lake Mansfield. About 50 people came from The Claire Teague Senior Center and Fairview Commons for a picnic. The Great Barrington Garden Club provided hotdogs, salads & desserts. Fairview Commons provided for Roger the Jester. Rebecca Tillinghast (Senior Ctr. Director) and the Garden Club helped plan the event. The Week before the Garden Club & Lake Mansfield Association provided for the planting of 5 new blueberry bushes and 4 new elderberry bushes in the Lake Mansfield beach area.

5. **OLD BUSINESS:**

A. **Capital Projects – needs assessment for Grove Street Park.**

Mr. Sokul advised that he will obtain prices for the fencing and for sealing the basketball court at Grove Street Park. Two picnic tables were placed there along with a couple of garbage cans.

6. **NEW BUSINESS:**

A. **Kevin O'Donnell, Town Manager – re: Town Hall Park and Capital Funds.** He advised that there is \$19,000 currently in the Capital Improvements line item for parks equipment. He noted this money will not be rolled over after FY12. It was advised that the Parks Commissioners need to develop a long term plan for placing low maintenance recreation equipment such as basket ball courts, batting cages, bocce ball courts, hand ball or racket ball courts on various town owned property locations. Open space needs to be reviewed such as the area behind Town Hall, Wastewater Treatment Plant, Senior Center and Housatonic School. The current equipment at the parks also needs to be inventoried. Recreational areas for the aging population should be addressed rather than just the needs of children. Mr. O'Donnell stated that we need to know what needs to be spent per capita on Parks. He advised not to focus on the green property next to the court house property because the Town is still trying to work out a long term lease with the State or possibly selling the property as one piece. Mr. O'Donnell noted he would forward a memo to the Parks Commissioners outlining his ideas. He also noted that he wanted to combine recreation with the wellness program. Ms. Ward advised that there is a current Open Space Plan. Mr. O'Donnell said he would try to locate the current Open Space Plan. It was suggested that the Lake Mansfield Task Force attend the meeting when the uses for open spaces is discussed.

Ms. Smith asked why the Town doesn't have public bathrooms. It was noted that the cost of maintenance is very expensive and because of that Mr. O'Donnell noted he would not support it. Mr. Boutellier noted that instead of regular toilets, we have portalets where other towns and cities have public bathrooms.

Mr. O'Donnell noted that Ms. Iredale wants to contribute a swing set through the 250th Anniversary Committee to be set up in an area behind Town Hall. Mr. Sokul noted that the parking lot behind Town Hall may be revamped with a connector road from Town Hall to St. James Church to allow for additional parking. Mr. Sokul advised that he has forwarded suggestions to the Committee of possible locations where the swing set could go.

A policy guideline needs to be developed as to what should be sent to the Parks Commissioners for review.

Mr. Boutellier inquired if it would be possible for the members of the committee be expanded to 7 or is the number of members is fixed. It was suggested to try and obtain a representative from Housatonic and a senior citizen.

Ms. Lucey advised that the Police Department needs to have more of a presence at Memorial Field. She noted that they drove in once in a while but did not exit the cruiser. Ms. Lucey said she would get the data to Mr. O'Donnell on the Police visits.

B. Representative from 250th Anniversary celebration Committee to discuss events at parks.

Nobody was present.

C. Appointment of a Parks Commissioner to the Master Plan Committee.

(Discussion/Vote) Mr. O'Donnell noted that the committee is going to update the current master plan. It would be a two year commitment consisting of 15 members with a subcommittee meeting once a week and then eventually twice a month. Ms. Ward and Ms. Smith noted that they would share the responsibility. Mr. O'Donnell noted that he would forward a memo with the scope of duties.

D. Set date for October meeting.

The next meeting of the Parks Commissioners will be Tuesday, October 12, 2010 at 5:00 p.m. at the Mason Library.

The meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Wichmann
Secretary