

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE NEWTOWN PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
TOWN HALL SOUTH
FEBRUARY 14, 2012**

These minutes are subject to approval by the Newtown Parks and Recreation Commission.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Marks called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm.

Commission Members present: Marks, Brookes, Yanni Jr., and Barczak,

Commission Members absent: Crick Owen and DiNicola

Staff present: Mangold and Samuelson

Staff absent: Reggiano

Public: FJ Urso from the American Legion Baseball team, and Jim Swift from Babe Ruth Baseball

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

**(m/s/c: Yanni Jr./Brookes) “Motion to accept the minutes from the January 10, 2012 meeting as amended.”
Section 5, second item, sentence should read “This truck replacement in question has been in the shop for repairs
an average of 7.3 times over the last three years”.**

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- Jim Swift from Babe Ruth Baseball requesting information about irrigation at Glander Field. Assistant Director Samuelson informed Mr. Swift that he had just updated Randy and Richard Dieckman from Babe Ruth at the field scheduling meeting which was held just prior to the Commission meeting. Chairman Marks excused Assistant Director Samuelson to take Mr. Swift into the hallway to give him the update. Assistant Director Samuelson then returned to the meeting.

CORRESPONDENCE

- None

CHAIRMAN’S REPORT

- Chairman Marks reported that he, Director Mangold, Commissioner Brookes and Assistant Director Samuelson attended the Board of Selectman meeting to review the Parks and Recreation budget that was presented. The replacement truck was left in the budget and they were in favor of the matching funds for the dog park. The budget passed without any changes.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT

- Trail Committee – still trying to get guidelines for a trail from the Conservation Commission. The Committee has two work dates planned for the Pole Bridge trail, which has been approved by the Conservation Commission.
- Dog Park – Director Mangold reported that Assistant Director Reggiano has received quotes for fencing. She then realized that the design for the fencing area was incorrect. So it will have to go back to George Benson and Rob Sibley for approval so that she can get new quotes.
- Our new Park Maintainer, Nelson Lopes, started yesterday. He was hired as a replacement for Santiago Soto, but not as a supervisor. This still leaves the department down one maintainer.
- Victory Garden –Director Mangold, Harvey Pessin and his wife Brid will be attending the Kick Off Meeting and Garden Lecture being held on February 29th, from 3:30 to 6:00pm at the Municipal Center. Director Mangold, Harvey Pessin, Rob Sibley, George Benson and Assistant Director Samuelson will be meeting on March 1st to discuss possible locations at Fairfield Hills for the Victory Garden if the Ambulance Garage were to be built at Fairfield Hills. The facility would be built on the property that the garden now sits on. It would not affect the garden this coming spring/summer. The facility has not yet been approved but is looking very favorable at this point. Mr. Pessin has more ideas for community activities such as a tree nursery or a small orchard.
- Barbara Toomey from Newtown is involved with the Transitions Initiative. Their Initiative is to have the Town be more self reliant. She also sits on the Sustainable Energy Commission. They were responsible for getting the Town to switch to LED lights for the Newtown Christmas tree this past year.

- Newtown Youth Academy – Pete D’Amico sent an email to invite the sports groups from town to attend a meeting at his place of business to discuss whether they are meeting the needs of the organizations. That meeting is scheduled for February 27th at 6:00 pm. Keith Miller from NYA contacted Fairfield County Tennis (Parks and Recreation’s contracted tennis teachers) to see if they would like to run their tennis program through NYA. Fairfield County Tennis then brought this to Director Mangold and Assistant Director Reggiano’s attention. Mr. Miller then sent an unpleasant email to Fairfield County Tennis about informing Parks and Recreation of their discussion. Fairfield County Tennis does not want to leave Parks and Recreation.
- Treadwell Pool House bid – No bids were received. Director Mangold and Assistant Director Samuelson will meet to figure out how to proceed with this project. Four people showed up at pre-bid meeting and two seemed very interested.
- Director Mangold asked the Commission to submit names for the 90’ baseball Field at Fairfield Hills. The field could then be dedicated at a future date.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF PARKS – PARKS AND FIELD REPORT

- See report.
- Large sink hole in the parking lot of Treadwell Park has been repaired and the park has been reopened.
- Work at Oakview field continues. Property was surveyed and it was found that the Town owns more of the property than originally thought. The split rail fence has been removed between the field and the neighbor. He would like to install a chain link fence with a vegetative buffer. Neighbor is not happy with survey (she has a skating rink built on part of Town property) and told Assistant Director Samuelson that she will be contacting a lawyer. Assistant Director Samuelson has relayed that information to the First Selectman. When the project is complete the field will be able to house 2 - U11 soccer fields or 1 full size field. This project is about 8 weeks behind due to October snow storm.
- Fiber optics conduit has been completed for the Maintenance Garage.
- Pallet racks are up at the Maintenance Garage
- The requested work at the High School has been completed.
- The backstop at Watertown field has been removed so that field construction can begin when scheduled.
- Installation of underground conduit for dedicated phone lines for Maintenance Garage has begun.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF RECREATION REPORT

- None

OLD BUSINESS

1. FJ URSO – American Legion Baseball – The Admirals – asking for a one year exemption to utilize fields

- Mr. Urso gave background information on the American Legion Baseball League “The Admirals” Post 202 and Post 100 out of Bethel and Redding. American Legion is the oldest league in the country. 75% of college players and 61% of professional major league players have played for this league. The fee is under \$500.00 per player as opposed to up to \$3000.00 per player in AAU travel teams. Plus they don’t travel as far as the other leagues. They play 24 games per season and both the senior and junior teams have made the playoffs. He is here to request field time for 6 – 7 dates, with 5 double headers on 90’ fields.
- Age groups are high school freshman to freshman in college. College freshman are allowed to return to play for one year. Juniors are age 15- 17, Senior 18 – 20 years old. Babe Ruth only goes up to age 18. The max roster is 15. Forty kids are trying out. The kids are contracted to play all games. Pitchers only have to play games that they start so they can participate in other games or camps. The roster could be submitted in the next couple of weeks. A little over 50% of kids are Newtown residents. Six or seven players on junior and senior teams are Newtown players. Two players can be double rostered. American Legion doesn’t meet 80% residency requirement.
- The Redding Fields are not very good to play on, short home run fence. They do use Bethel High School field with lights. The Admirals have never used our Fairfield Hills 90’ field. Mr. Urso is requesting 10 to 12 dates with half on the weekends. He wants double headers on the same weekend day for seniors and juniors.
- The Commission also has concerns with travel soccer and softball who want fields for travels teams. At the present time there is no policy in place for this type of scheduling. The Commission has discussed this in the past and still does not have a policy in place. All members agreed that a policy needs to be written. They agreed to have the start of a policy in place by the March meeting. It will be a work in progress.
- Chairman Mark’s is concerned with the Admirals not getting support from Redding. Mr. Urso explained that Redding has tried to break off with American Legion to go to Weston. Their High School coach wants this to happen but they are not approved to break off.
- The season starts the day after the last day of high school season. And the playoffs are in August.
- The topic of past surcharges being paid was brought up again. Mr. Urso was asked last year to bring in receipts that it had been paid and to date no receipts have been received. Chairman Marks was also upset that

for 3-5 years Babe Ruth was subletting field time to American Legion without Parks and Recreations knowledge. No information was given to Parks and Recreation as well as no rosters, or schedules. This is very upsetting to the Commission. Mr. Urso claims that Assistant Director Samuelson was informed. Chairman Marks explained that the Commission sets the rules and they were not aware of the use and no one requested fields from the Commission. Chairman Marks is considering asking for 3 years worth or surcharge money to cover the years in question. Mr. Urso claims that there were other teams who did not pay surcharge at the time.

- Mr. Urso explained that American Legion pays Bethel for the use of their field and lights. Bethel also has a summer league who uses the field.
- Commissioner Yanni Jr. is concerned with the continued one year exemption becoming the norm. And those exceptions should not be perpetual. Especially when the residency requirements among other requirements have not been met.
- Again the subject was discussed of no policy in place for organizations who do not meet the requirements. In the past, time has been allocated to American Legion after field time has been scheduled for the in town leagues. The Commission agreed that a policy needs to be in place as soon as possible for the March meeting. The policy should be subject to revisions and will include types of field, fees and times. Also, it needs to be decided on whether we charge the same fee across the board or do we charge extra for the premium fields. We would also have to decide if a town employee needs to be present at the field during a rental use. Mr. Urso is willing to pay a premium over anyone else. The Commission will set fees for hours requested for an organization. The Commission cannot be bought. There was a tournament fee charged last year for the use of the Fairfield Hills baseball field. Chairman Marks would like to know if the money from the rental of the fields could be used for the Park Gift Fund to purchase items for the parks.
- Without a policy in place Commissioner Brookes stated that if she were asked to vote tonight on an exemption she would vote no.

(m/s/c: Brookes/Barczak) "Motion to table request only until the March meeting."

- Assistant Director Samuelson suggested utilizing the Board of Education policy for renting of the Blue and Gold field at the High School. This would include facility use charges, it would be a good start but we should set our own fees. Director Mangold will contact Bethel to see how they handle this. Assistant Director Samuelson will get Policy from the Board of Education.
- Chairman Marks made it very clear to Mr. Urso that he was again asking that before the next Commission meeting (March 13th) that Mr. Urso clearly number and address item by item listed on the Request for Field Allocation list and to put it in writing and get it back to him so that all Commissioners have time to review it before the next meeting.
- Commissioner Brookes commented to the Commission that the past surcharge money is lost to the Commission so they should just let that issue go. The Commissioners agreed.
- Assistant Director Samuelson reported to the Commission and Mr. Urso that there have been times when our staff has caught teams on the field playing that take off running when they see a Parks and Recreation staff member.
- Assistant Director Samuelson also told the Commission that at the field scheduling meeting he asked for the schedules to be submitted noting travel team times and recreation teams' times. He is concerned that travel teams are getting more time then recreation teams on the fields.

2. VICTORY GARDEN UPDATE

- See Director's Report

3. BUDGET UPDATE

- See Chairman's Report

4. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT UPDATE

- Waiting for the Board of Education study group to make a formal recommendation on any potential school closing. If a school were to become available Parks and Recreation might be able to use it as a Community Center. Nothing has been decided on this topic. Monies possibly in the CIP could be put into a school facility instead of a new facility.
- Director Mangold will forward information to First Selectman Llodra from the Commission on Aging that they didn't want to be in a Community Center with Parks and Recreation.

5. UPDATE OF THE NEWTOWN PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

- Director Mangold has submitted the Parks and Recreation portion of the Plan of Conservation and Development. There will be a public hearing on March 15. Director Mangold is not sure she can make the public hearing that night and that she would let the Commission know the time in case anyone can go.

6. OTHER

None

NEW BUSINESS

1. OTHER

- Commissioner Yanni Jr. reported that he attended at Cultural Arts Commission meeting and that the Arts Commission is planning to put benches on the trail at Fairfield Hills. They also want to hold a Cultural Arts Festival at Fairfield Hills. He wanted to make sure that Director Mangold was aware of these activities.
- Commissioner Yanni will be bringing photos of a parking lot set up that he thought might be useful at Eichler's Cove.

(m/s/c:Barczak/Yanni Jr.) "Motion to adjourn." The meeting ended at 8:06pm.

Respectfully submitted by,
Donna Benson
Clerk