

**Stonington Recreation Commission  
Regular Meeting  
Monday, September 26, 2011 at 6:00 PM  
Human Services Room**

Present: Vice-Chair Frank Prachniak  
Commissioners: Beth Quesnel, Joe Ciriello, Joe McKernan, Paulla Solar and  
Larry Theadore  
Director of Human Services Beth-Ann Stewart  
Recreation Administrator Joseph Mendonca, Jr.  
Absent: Chairman C. Michael Crowley

I. Publics' Opportunity to Address the Commission

Skateboard Park

Ben Denard, Stonington High School Student & Skateboard Park Advocate  
Mr. Denard was in attendance at the meeting to advocate for a skateboard/bike park, with preferred construction in the vicinity of Spellman Recreation Complex. Mr. Denard presented relevant data regarding park construction, as well as comparisons to area parks and provided information on major manufacturers.

Director of Human Services Beth-Ann Stewart referenced her file of information, which began when she first started researching the possibility of a skate park in 2004. At that time CIRMA had many requirements, including fencing, helmets and padding, as well as signed waivers. At this time the fencing restrictions have been removed, Town insurance will provide coverage, and waivers are no longer required. Director Stewart stated she will research grant opportunities through larger foundations with the blessing of the Commission.

Commission discussion ensued:

Vice-Chair Prachniak:

Willing to see what it takes to construct a skate park, need to look at space available.

Commissioner McKernan:

Supports looking into a skate park; believes location needs to be determined first.

Commissioner Ciriello:

Does not support. Believes too many issues, including cost, size, and liability issue parameters, and noise distraction behind tennis courts & softball field. Also believes this will duplicate existing services and usage will not be there – Pawcatuck residents go to Westerly, and Mystic residents go to Groton; stated there is no long term payback to the community.

Director of Human Services Beth-Ann Stewart:

Director Stewart reminded the Commission that her investigation into a skate park began in 2004, and that her research is available for reference. She further stated she believes Stonington is missing the opportunity to serve a large population, and

Recreation needs to reach out to non traditional sport enthusiasts. Director Stewart suggested that the Town Engineer review sites, and proposed a possible location within view of Human Services as opposed to Spellman Recreation Complex.

First Selectman Haberek stated he would like to see a market analysis, and create a venue as opposed to a park. He also stated that quasi public private options are available, with company donations possible. Suggested looking at properties within close proximity of users.

Vice-Chair Prachniak requested the issue be put on the October agenda, and thanked Mr. Denard for his well done, thorough presentation.

## II. Secretary's Report

A motion was made by Commissioner Quesnel to accept the Secretary's Report. Motion seconded by Commissioner McKernan and approved.

## III. Budget Report

- a. General Fund
- b. Special Activity

A motion was made by Commissioner Theadore to accept the budget reports. Motion seconded by Commissioner Quesnel and approved.

## IV. Communications

Memo Re: Meeting held 08/10/11

Administrator Mendonca brought forward a memo written by Director of Human Services Beth-Ann Stewart and addressed to First Selectman Haberek, regarding the handling of a complaint involving the Recreation Division, in which a meeting was called by the First Selectman, with only select Recreation Commission and Board of Selectmen members invited, for the purpose of reviewing the complaint with Administrator Mendonca.

Commissioner Quesnel asked Administrator Mendonca if he would prefer to discuss this off the record.

Administrator Mendonca requested the Commission clarify the process that will be followed in the event a complaint is brought forward regarding a Recreation program. Administrator Mendonca asked if he will be required to sit in front of the entire Commission if a complaint comes in, or will the complaint be brought to his attention immediately so that he can, as the Recreation Administrator, handle the situation as he sees fit.

First Selectman Haberek stated that if complaint comes to him, he will go to Administrator Mendonca; complaints should go to the person that gets paid to handle them. The First Selectman stated he got the memo, thinks different things; he passed someone in the grocery store, who wanted to meet with him, and when someone wants to meet him, he will meet with that person.

Commissioner Solar stated that it is her opinion that complaints regarding Recreation should be given directly to Administrator Mendonca, and asked the First Selectman if he really wanted to handle issues at that level, when he has staff in that position whose job it is to do so. Commissioner Solar further stated that the First Selectman should be protecting Administrator Mendonca in his position, and relying on Administrator Mendonca to resolve any issues.

Commissioner Ciriello stated that this complaint should have been forwarded to Administrator Mendonca as a common courtesy.

Commissioner Theadore stated this complaint should not have risen to the level of the First Selectman; it should have been referred to Administrator Mendonca immediately, or to Beth-Ann Stewart, as his supervisor. Commissioner Theadore stated that a chain of command should have been followed, and that the First Selectman should have asked if Administrator Mendonca was notified.

Commissioner McKernan stated that as a common courtesy, Beth-Ann Stewart should have been notified of the meeting, as Administrator Mendonca reports to directly to her.

The First Selectman stated he did notify Administrator Mendonca, and stated Administrator Mendonca should be out there to be aware of these issues, and complaints should go to him.

Administrator Mendonca clarified with the Commission that he was never made aware of this complaint until he was confronted during the meeting on August 10<sup>th</sup>.

The First Selectman stated that he tried to handle this complaint in a personal way as opposed to procedural, however going forward he will handle all issues through Director of Human Services Beth-Ann Stewart, as she is Administrator Mendonca's direct supervisor, and request written results regarding the outcome.

Commissioner Quesnel stated she thought the meeting results were accepted well.

#### V. Summer Programs - Recap

- Summer Camp
  - Youth & Family Services Division supported Recreation with the Summer Food Program, serving breakfast & lunch each day.
- Special Events
- Adult Fitness
- Adult League/ Open Run
- Youth Clinics/ Lessons/ Camps

Administrator Mendonca reviewed numbers in each program and all new programs that are getting started.

- VI. Fall Programs- Update
  - a. Started in September
    - Youth Programs/Open Gym
    - Adult Fitness
  - b. Coming in October
    - Adult League/ Open Run

VII. Recreation Administrator's Report

VIII. Other Business

- a. Stonington Rocks
  - The First Selectman stated the concerts went well, and he never tapped into Recreation money
- b. Updates/Future Projects Sub Committees Progress
  - Fitness Exercise Area
  - Hailey's Way Playground
- c. Bike/ Skate Area
- d. Softball- Men's League
- e. BOE (School Dude Meeting/Field Usage/Resting Plan)
- f. Bike & Walking Trails
  - Lois Kain, Mystic resident  
Questioned why Stonington doesn't have a bicycle and/or a walking trail. Discussed "meaningful" open space and also asked why the Town cannot request that the Planning and Zoning Commission start planning this project.

Vice-Chair Prachniak stated the Commission looked into walking trails, however due to permits and associated costs of just simple paths, it was finally realized that the project is too cost prohibitive. In addition, there were issues with the Inland Wetland Commission.

The First Selectman stated that in 2014 the Planning & Zoning Commission will reach out to each commission, and suggested the Recreation Commission put in a request that more bike trails be looked at, and note the various locations that are possible.

- g. Stonington High School Score Board
  - A motion was made by Commissioner Ciriello that the Recreation Commission send a memo to the Planning and Zoning Commission to notify them that the Recreation Commission is in support of installing a replacement score board at Stonington High School football field, and looks favorably on that. Motion seconded by Commissioner McKernan and approved.

IX. Chairman's Comments

X. Meeting Adjourned

A motion was made by Commissioner Quesnel to adjourn. Motion seconded by Commissioner Theodore and approved. Meeting adjourned at 8:09PM.

Respectfully Submitted

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frank Prachniak", written in a cursive style.

Frank Prachniak, Vice-Chairman