

Torrington Parks and Recreation Commission

Minutes of January 6, 2010 Meeting

Chairperson Patricia Fairchild called to order a regular meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission on Wednesday, January 7, 2010, at 6:04 P.M. in the Armory. In attendance were Secretary Dan Lovallo, Commissioner Jim Pescatore, Superintendent Brett Simmons, and Recreation Director Donna Winn.

On a motion by Dan Lovallo with a second by Jim Pescatore, the Commission voted unanimously to accept the minutes of the December 2, 2009 regular Commission meeting.

Correspondence

Brett Simmons distributed an email he had received from Linda Raskauskas, wherein Ms. Raskauskas expressed her interest in volunteering to help make improvements to Charlene Susan Besse Park by freshening the paint on the trail blazes and putting together a trail map of the park which could be uploaded to the Parks and Recreation website as a reference for other hikers such as herself. Ms. Raskauskas commented that she felt the park was a great little gem, perfect for local hiking and snowshoeing. Mr. Simmons stated that he would like to meet with Ms. Raskauskas in the spring to look at the trails.

Chairman Fairchild read a copy of a letter sent to Mayor Bingham from Miles Borzilleri of Torrington Savings Bank, thanking both the Mayor and the Coe Trust Search Committee for their recommendation to the City Council that Torrington Savings Bank serve as successor trustee of the Adelaide Coe Godfrey Trust. Mr. Borzilleri further stated that he looked forward to working with the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Coe Memorial Park Advisory Committee.

Citizen Comments

None

Facility Use

Request from Duane Knowles, Marine Corps League for use of the Armory kitchen on January 19 - Motion to approve by Dan Lovallo, seconded by Jim Pescatore with unanimous approval.

Request from Cystic Fibrosis for use of Coe Memorial Park on May 22, 2010 for the Great Strides Walk-A-Thon. A motion to approve the outside use of Coe Memorial Park only without fees for this event was made by Dan Lovallo, seconded by Jim Pescatore, and approved unanimously. If the inside of the Civic Center is needed, maintenance fees of \$50 per hour will be charged.

New Business

A motion to change the order of the agenda to address New Business was made by Jim Pescatore, seconded by Dan Lovallo, and approved unanimously.

Arman Corpaci presented his plans for renovating the Sacred Heart school property at 95 Grove Street into senior housing and thereby converting what he considered blighted property into taxable property. Mr. Corpaci explained that in order for the renovation plan to proceed, they would need another twenty feet of land for additional parking spaces, land which could be obtained if the Parks and Recreation Commission were willing to donate land from the Jiggs Donahue playground which abuts the Sacred Heart lot. The land that Mr. Corpaci is requesting is undeveloped park land that is part of a flood plain. Although engineering of the property has not been done, Mr. Corpaci has met with Land Use and Zoning; and was advised to obtain approval from the Commission before proceeding. Following discussion, a motion was made by Jim Pescatore that the Commission grant temporary approval of the plan, with Commission involvement with the review process and authorizing Brett Simmons to act in this capacity. The motion was seconded by Dan Lovallo and approved unanimously.

David Klineberg and Jay Zammiello of Our Baseball Haven gave the Commission an update on their progress to date, citing scheduling as their main issue at the moment. Their plans include trying to use local high school fields for practice rather than Fuessenich Park in order to free up field time for other users. Mr. Klineberg stated that they will have a better idea of their dates and times once they have their scheduling meeting next month. Our Baseball Haven has hired Gregg Hunt as their team manager. Membership continues to grow with approximately 400 members to date. An open call has been issued for logo suggestions. It was also reported that Our Baseball Haven will be joining the Northwest Chamber of Commerce; and has been finalizing details to work with non-profit organizations such as the United Way and plans to donate gate receipts to those organizations. Messrs. Klineberg and Zammiello expressed their appreciation to the Commission for their willingness to work with Our Baseball Haven and announced that a meeting has been proposed for January 19 with the Mayor's office to discuss the Fuessenich Park lease. In closing, Brett Simmons invited the Torrington Titans to participate in the Parks and Recreation Winter Carnival scheduled for February 6.

Programs

Donna Winn reported:

- Christmas Village went very well with very few scheduling problems with elves and Santa's. A final Christmas Village wrap-up meeting will be held with Parks Department staff.
- Last Night went well, with approximately 500 people attending. Donna suggested that the Recreation Department might want to partner with another organization for next year's event as so many volunteers are needed to fully staff all of the activities.
- The Winter Carnival will be held February 6 from 1-4 p.m., with assistance from the First Congregation Church, Northwest Hills Credit Union, and the Boy and Girl Scout organizations. Other vendors are still being recruited, but Sharon Audubon has committed to present their Hawk and Owl program.
- The Easter Egg Hunt will most likely be held the weekend before Easter.
- A meeting was recently held with Julie Kot from the Torrington Municipal and Teachers Federal Credit Union, with suggestions for two movie nights in the coming year – one at

Coe Memorial Park and another at West Torrington as well as other events such as "Touch a Truck." Future meetings to discuss other events where Parks and Recreation might collaborate with the Credit Unit will be held.

- The Lions Club has expressed interest in sponsoring a pet expo that the Recreation Department may partner with.

Sports

Information from the Men's Softball Committee was distributed which contained the findings of their recent survey, including the comments and emails they received. A cover letter included in the information highlighted the fact that many of the survey-takers were in favor of the City purchasing composite bats for use in the softball leagues. It was noted that the City of Stamford as well as the Town of Winsted also provided composite bats for their softball leagues. It was suggested that the Commissioners review the information for discussion at the January 13 Special Parks and Recreation Commission meeting.

Capital

Superintendent Simmons reviewed details of the proposed 2010-2011 capital plan with the Commission. In addition to the proposed current year capital improvement budget of \$115,000, Mr. Simmons has proposed adding a line for Class A major park improvements in the amount of \$200,000 which would be part of a five-year plan for parking lot paving projects, updates and improvements to ball fields, and development of the Machuga property. Also, Mr. Simmons would like to start a capital reserve for a Parks maintenance facility with \$200,000 budgeted for the first year. The total for general fund capital improvements for this fiscal year would be \$515,000. Other capital projects include a new exhaust system in the gymnasium and replacement of front entrance stairs at the Armory. Mr. Simmons explained that with funding of \$115,000, only smaller projects and minor improvements are able to be made; however, he emphasized that with the number of facilities within Torrington, it is important to make other major improvements to keep all Torrington's facilities up to standard considering the amount of use they receive. The small Parks facility at Oak Avenue makes for an inefficient use of manpower in that equipment is stored at various locations around the City and much time is spent driving workers to pick up equipment. In addition, more projects could be completed during the winter months if there was sufficient space to bring benches, tables, etc. inside for painting and repair.

Following Mr. Simmon's review, a motion to accept the proposed capital budget was made by Jim Pescatore, seconded by Dan Lovallo, and approved unanimously.

In response to a question from Jim Pescatore regarding new bleachers for Fuessenich Park, Brett Simmons replied that a meeting would be held with the Fuessenich Park Partnership and the State-contracted vendor for bleachers to discuss the options for the bleachers. Mr. Simmons will keep the Commission updated on the status of this endeavor.

Facility Operations

Christmas Village has been the primary focus of the Parks operation over the past month. Mr. Simmons also reported:

- The Parks Department has begun some minor repairs at Coe Memorial Park as a result of a recent safety inspection.
- The Parks Department has assisted the Recreation Department in its events such as Christmas Village and the opening day parade as well as Last Night.
- The Rules and Recreation kiosk for winter sports at Major Besse Field in West Torrington is almost complete and should be installed by the end of the week. The ice rink was installed but strong winds and time constraints due to Christmas Village have slowed its completion. The rink is now flooded and awaits installation of the perimeter kick plate. The Police Department has been notified to make frequent patrols while the rink is being completed. Mr. Simmons reported that the pond has frozen and would have been ready for skating, but the decision to install the ice rink will ensure a longer skating season once it is completed. A discussion was held regarding using both the pond and ice rink for skating; however, the increased overtime expense to supervise two facilities would make it very costly. Mr. Simmons stated that once the rink is open, there will be dedicated hours for hockey playing on the ice. It was noted that the Parks Department has obtained all the equipment necessary to effectively resurface the ice.
- The Parks Department has been involved with storm maintenance as it is responsible for clearing many miles of sidewalks as well as parking lots in the City.
- Upcoming winter projects include carpentry work and painting at the Teen Center and Armory. Also, demolition of the playscape at Oak Avenue may begin this winter as well. Quotes for the new playscape are being finalized and the new playscape is planned to be installed in the late spring. A storage unit may be purchased for storage of playscape components and for use with future projects as the cost is quite reasonable compared with rental prices.
- Tree work is planned at Alvord and Oak Avenue.
- Work is underway on a design for the front entrance and exhaust system for the Armory gymnasium.
- Still River Gardens will be meeting with the Mayor's Office and Corporation Counsel to finalize their contract. They are also working with Kim Barbieri in the Planning Department to come up with a template for garden design.
- There have been delays in finalizing details with Active Network, specifically with our IT Department as they determine if there will be additional hardware requirements and associated costs before the plan is presented to the City Council.
- A facility brochure was recently uploaded on the City's website and will be updated (e.g., direction links, etc.) as new features are added.

Coe Memorial Park

As all present Commission members were in attendance for the preceding Coe Memorial Park Advisory Meeting, no updates were necessary.

Old Business

None to report.

Other Business

None to report.

Adjournment

On a motion by Jim Pescatore, with a second by Dan Lovallo, the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn at 7:20 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn Rategan

Parks Department Secretary