

Torrington Parks and Recreation Commission

Minutes of February 3, 2010 Meeting

Chairperson Patricia Fairchild called to order a regular meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission on Wednesday, February 3, 2010, at 6:00 P.M. in the Armory. In attendance were Secretary Dan Lovallo, Commissioners Jim Pescatore and Duke Wall, Superintendent Brett Simmons, and Recreation Director Donna Winn.

On a motion by Jim Pescatore with a second by Duke Wall, the Commission voted unanimously to accept the minutes of the January 6, 2010 regular Commission meeting.

On a motion by Dan Lovallo with a second by Duke Wall, the Commission voted unanimously to accept the minutes of the January 13, 2010 special Commission meeting.

Facility Use

Request from the Mayor's Office for use of the Armory Kitchen for Department Head meetings on February 25 and April 22 – Motion to approve made by Dan Lovallo, seconded by Jim Pescatore, and approved unanimously.

Requests from the Torrington Board of Baseball Umpires and Northwest Corner ASA Umpires Association to hold their meetings in the Armory conference room – Following discussion, a motion was made by Dan Lovallo that the Commission accept the requests from both the Torrington Board of Baseball Umpires and Northwest Corner ASA Umpires for use of the Armory building on dates when the building is open, and waive the fees. The motion was seconded by Duke Wall, and approved unanimously. This approval is for meetings scheduled during the spring and summer; fall/winter meeting dates will be reviewed at a later date. Should there be no scheduled activities in the Armory on a specific meeting date, maintenance fees of \$50/hour would apply.

Request from USSSA to hold tournaments at Toro I & II as per their submitted schedule – Brett Simmons recommended that two Commissioners work with himself and Donna Winn to develop a fee schedule for events such as this. Following discussion, Jim Pescatore made a motion that the Commission approve the USSSA request contingent on the pending fee schedule. Duke Wall seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously. Commissioners Wall and Pescatore have agreed to assist with the development of this fee schedule.

Request from Biff Pond of the P38 Baseball League for use of Fuessenich Park on July 25 – August 2 for the Connecticut American Legion Baseball State Tournament – A motion to approve the request was made by Dan Lovallo, seconded by Duke Wall, and approved unanimously. Superintendent Simmons reminded the Commission that the Titans would still be playing during these dates, and that he hoped that a few Titan games could be worked in those days. It was suggested that Biff Pond speak with the Titans to work on the scheduling. Superintendent Simmons commented that the Titans have been very pro-active in working with the other teams playing at Fuessenich and that the Recreation Department has been working to

set the schedule for Fuessenich before the Titans' league scheduling meeting at the end of February.

Request from the Torrington Registrars of Voters for use of both the Coe Memorial Park Civic Center and the Armory on August 10 for a state primary, if needed, and on November 2 for the municipal election – Motion to approve made by Dan Lovallo, seconded by Jim Pescatore, and approved unanimously.

Request from the Torrington Lions Club to hold a dog show at the Armory on June 26, with set-up on June 25 – A representative from the Torrington Lions Club stated that donations received from this event would be used for a machine that would test pre-schoolers for lazy eye before they enter school as well as for eye glasses for needy children. A motion to approve the request for a dog show at the Armory on June 26 was made by Dan Lovallo, seconded by Jim Pescatore, and approved unanimously. Maintenance fees of \$50/hour are to be charged.

Request from Torrington Babe Ruth for use of the Oak Avenue Babe Ruth field from April 1 through November 1, 2010 – Motion to approve made by Duke Wall, seconded by Dan Lovallo, and approved unanimously.

Old Business

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

Rob Manchester addressed the Commission regarding the alteration of Major Besse Field in West Torrington to become a multi-purpose field, with 70-foot base paths. This would involve removing grass from the outfield, installing more clay for the infield, and creating a larger pitcher's mound. Mr. Manchester felt that he could get the material donated and that the work to complete the job should take no more than two days to complete. The purpose for creating this multi-purpose field would be to provide a home field for a new U11-12 travel league, which would include 12-13 players who would try out for the team. Mr. Manchester presented a letter from Kim Deep, Torrington Little League, in support of the proposal, and stated that he would work around the dates and times that the Little League had use of the field.

Superintendent Simmons voiced his concern over the heavy spring workload that the Parks Department had in preparing all the parks and fields for spring use. Fred Bonvicini, speaking in support of a multi-purpose field, inquired as to whether an outside firm could do the preparation work for this field if they would compensate Parks Department employees for the money they would have received for overtime pay. Following a lengthy discussion, a motion was made by Duke Wall that a meeting between the Torrington Tornadoes and Brett Simmons be scheduled at their earliest convenience. This motion was seconded by Jim Pescatore, and approved unanimously.

Program Updates

- Superintendent Simmons stated that the Winter Carnival would be held on Saturday, February 6, weather-permitting. Many great activities are planned, including an ice

skating exhibition, a hawk and owl program, an ice sculptor, model railroad exhibit, DJ, games, chili contest, and other activities. Mr. Simmons stated that many high school students were signed up to volunteer, and that flyers had been distributed to promote this event.

- Recreation Director Donna Winn is working on the Easter Egg Hung in conjunction with the Elk's Breakfast with the Easter Bunny.
- A meeting was held regarding a planned "Touch a Truck" event to be sponsored in conjunction with the Torrington Municipal and Teachers Federal Credit Union. The tentative date for this event is June 6 with the location to be determined.
- The Recreation Department staff is working on the spring/summer brochure.
- Planning is in progress for the summer concerts and programs.
- Meetings have been held with Torrington High School in an effort to encourage students to volunteer at recreation events as well as to develop three pilot internship programs with students. One internship would be for students to plan and run an event from start to finish, with Parks and Recreation oversight and evaluation of the event. The second internship would be for the students to plan a mini-camp for the April vacation; and the third internship would be for students to create a video production of a public service announcement or commercial as a marketing tool for the Parks & Recreation website. The intent of these pilot programs would be to recruit future park and recreation professionals.

Softball Updates

As a result of the special meeting held January 13, Superintendent Simmons reported that he has been looking into composite bats and the possibility of the Department purchasing said bats. Mr. Simmons stated that if this was the direction that the Commission wished to pursue, the league fees would have to be increased to cover the cost of the bats estimated to be approximately \$3,600 for 12 bats Easton bats. If the league fees were increased by \$60, the additional revenue would amount to \$2,580. Mr. Simmons explained that six bats would be in use (3 sizes, 3 bats per field) and six bats would be in reserve, with the hope that the bats could then be used the following year.

Another issue of concern involves the suggestion to have the umpires bring the bats to the games. Since logistically this may not work, Superintendent Simmons offered another option; that being a storage box that could be anchored to the first building at Toro field. Keys to the storage box would be given to the umpires. With the cost of the storage box being approximately \$2,100, the Department is looking at a total investment of close to \$5,000 for this endeavor.

Following a lengthy discussion, a motion was made by Duke Wall that the Torrington Recreational Softball League go to composite bats that will be supplied by the Parks and

Recreation Department, and that there will be an increase in the fees to cover the cost of the bats and storage box. This was seconded by Jim Pescatore and approved unanimously.

Discussion then centered around the type of ball to be used for the upcoming season and the potential safety issue that might arise if the league were to switch back to the balls used prior to the last season. Superintendent Simmons proposed looking into a ball that was similar to the ball used this past season, but one that had ASA approval. The Commission agreed that Mr. Simmons should investigate if there was a ball that would meet that criteria.

Capital Updates

Discussion was held regarding the Capital Improvement Plan that was approved at the January Commission meeting. Ms. Fairchild stated that one of the line items in the approved plan was for \$35,000 for capital improvements for the Coe Memorial Park, however, the Coe Memorial Park Advisory Committee at the preceding meeting had questioned this increase and has stated that they would like no further monies put into the Park until they are sure where the monies will come from. Following discussion, a motion was made by Jim Pescatore that the Commission go with Brett's recommendation to keep the \$35,000 budgeted for Coe Memorial Park in the capital improvement plan; and if the fund is determined to have no money, the Commission will back out this amount. The motion was seconded by Duke Wall and approved unanimously.

Superintendent Simmons summarized the large capital expense items that he is trying to budget for such as a new Parks Department facility and other major and minor items, including paving of Parks facility parking lots and access roads, field improvements, and park development at Charlene Besse and Machuga properties. Duke Wall then moved that Brett Simmons proceed with presenting to the Mayor the capital and operating budgets for the Parks Department, Recreation Department, and Coe Memorial Park. Jim Pescatore seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Facility Operations

Superintendent Simmons summarized the projects recently completed by Parks and Recreation Staff, including the removal of lights and pole wraps along Main Street, maintenance for winter storms, maintenance of the ice rink, the construction of kiosks for West Torrington and Besse Pool, replacement of floor tiles at the Armory, and tree work at Oak Avenue, Toro fields, and behind the Armory that was completed by Precise Landscaping. Winter projects as time permits will include the installation of trim within the Armory kitchen and painting, replacement of some ceiling tiles, and painting the ceiling in the Gymnasium. In addition, Mr. Simmons is planning to have an information board at the Armory that will display aerial photographs of the City's facilities. Trim work and painting at the Teen Center is also planned as well as installation of new blinds in some of our buildings. An RFQ is being finalized for designing the Armory front steps and for an exhaust system for the Gymnasium.

Superintendent Simmons also stated that the contract with Still River Gardens is being finalized. Work is also continuing with the City's IT Department, with plans to move forward with a presentation of the recreation software package to the City Council for their approval. Mr.

Simmons expressed his concern over the timing of implementation of the software and stated that the implementation might have to be behind the scenes in the beginning as he does not want to implement the system in the heart of the recreation season.

Coe Memorial Park Updates

Chairperson Patty Fairchild informed the Commission of the Coe Memorial Park Advisory Committee's discussions regarding digging up the spruce trees along the Social Security side of the Park. A proposal has been made that some of the trees be donated to the Town of Winchester. Ms. Fairchild stated that before the Commission starts looking into giving away property that belongs to the Trust, this matter needs to be presented to the City Council for their approval. Jim Pescatore then moved that the Commission recommend to the City Council that they look into the proposal to remove trees from Coe Memorial Park for a donation to the Town of Winchester. The motion was seconded by Duke Wall, and approved unanimously.

New Business

In response to a question regarding entrance signs at Toro Field, Superintendent Simmons replied that he is working on entrance signs for four or five of the facilities initially, with Toro being one of the first locations to receive the signs. An RFP will be developed to gather pricing and options. Mr. Simmons stated his intention to have two signs at each facility, with entrance signs being more elaborate and the rules and regulations signs to be made of aluminum with vinyl lettering.

Adjournment

On a motion by Duke Wall, with a second by Jim Pescatore, the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn at 7:49 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn Rategan

Parks Department Secretary

