

Torrington Parks and Recreation Commission
Minutes of November 3, 2010 Meeting

Chairperson Patricia Fairchild called to order a regular meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission at 6:04 P.M. on Wednesday, November 3, 2010 at the Armory. In attendance were Secretary Dan Lovallo, Commissioners Jim Pescatore and Duke Wall, Superintendent of Parks and Recreation Brett Simmons, and Recreation Director Donna Winn.

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

On a motion by Duke Wall with a second by Jim Pescatore, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the October 20, 2010 special meeting.

Correspondence

Patricia Fairchild informed the Commission that she had received a letter from the organizers of “Miles for Moe” expressing their thanks and appreciation to the Commission for allowing that activity to be held at Coe Memorial Park.

Brett Simmons reported that he had received a letter from Ed Gadomski from the Tri-State Baseball League regarding the proposed facility use fees and a request regarding use of Fuessenich Park for some of their playoff tournament games.

A letter was received from the Civil Air Patrol requesting internet access during their Thursday night meetings in the Armory. Internet access would assist them in their preparation for disaster relief and for online testing of cadets. Mr. Simmons stated that he had forwarded this request to the IT Department and was awaiting their input before the Commission would be asked to take action.

An email regarding past fees charged for the “Tour of Litchfield Hills” race was discussed.

The press release for the Armory’s 100 Year Anniversary Celebration to be held November 7, 2010 was referenced.

Citizen’s Comments

City resident Mark Molitano expressed his concerns relative to the proposed policy and fee schedule and the high percentage of children within the City that receive free or reduced lunches. Mr. Molitano referenced the budget and tax increases and stated that if even one child could not play because of the increase in fees, then the Commission would be making the wrong decision. Mr.

Molitano further stated that it was his intention to bring his concerns before the City Council.

Mike Banziruk addressed the Commission and referenced Superintendent Brett Simmons' report to the Coe Memorial Park Advisory Committee which stated that there were 29 Mity-Lite tables at the Park. Since 40 Mity-Lite tables had been originally purchased with Coe Trust funds, Mr. Banziruk questioned whether the City would be reimbursing the money for the remainder of the tables as he noted this would be a significant burden for the Coe Trust to bear. Mr. Banziruk referenced pictures that were included in a 2008 email that showed Mity-Lite tables being used at the City Hall and questioned if the tables were still there, or were they thrown out or floating somewhere else. Patricia Fairchild stated that this would be discussed further during the Coe portion of the meeting.

Santa Charlie Allen of Rocky Hill, Connecticut addressed the Commission to express his thanks for allowing the use of Christmas Village for their recent New England meeting of the University of Santa Clauses. Santa Charlie commented that the Village made a wonderful backdrop for their gathering and presented pictures of the assembly to the Commission.

Facility Use

On a motion by Dan Lovallo with a second by Jim Pescatore, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the facility request from the Torrington Fire Department for use of the Armory on November 18, 2010.

On a motion by Dan Lovallo with a second by Jim Pescatore, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the request from MADD for use of Coe Memorial Park on January 10, May 2, and September 5, 2011.

On a motion by Jim Pescatore with a second by Dan Lovallo, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the request from the Torrington Christian Academy for use of the Armory gymnasium on dates requested from December 14, 2010 to March 1, 2011.

On a motion by Jim Pescatore with a second by Dan Lovallo, the Commission voted unanimously to allow Ms. Stacey to use the upstairs meeting room for her registrations on December 2 and December 3, 2010.

On a motion by Duke Wall with a second by Dan Lovallo, the Commission voted unanimously to waive the fees for the Tour of Litchfield Hills' use of Coe Memorial Park for two years.

Program Updates

Ms. Winn reported to the Commission as follows:

- The Halloween Party held October 29 went very well despite the lack of publicity for the event. Quite a few children attended the Party, which was enjoyed by all.
- Students of the Torrington High School have started to respond to a request for volunteers to serve as elves at Christmas Village.
- A meeting will be held with Lynn Whittaker to try to revive the Howliday Jubilee Pooch Contest which was canceled last year due to low interest.
- It was reported that to date, 31 people have signed up for the Radio City Music Hall trip. The New York City drop-off trip was cancelled due to low response.

Christmas Village Updates

- Plans are progressing for the Toy Shower, with WZBG and the Pedlar on board for the event. At the Shower, Joy Zublena's grandson will be singing "Santa's Message," a song written for Christmas Village. Letters were sent out to former IDOL contestants and to the Warner to recruit singers to perform at the Shower. Trolley rides will be provided by Wood Acres Farm. An ice sculptor will also be in attendance.
- Volunteers from the Senior Center have offered to cover the entire first shift at the hot chocolate booth for the season this year. The wigs and beards were cleaned and brought up to the Village. A few of the Santas from the University have been recruited for service at the Village, and individuals are calling to sign up to volunteer as Santas and elves.
- The tree lighting will take place on Friday, November 26. The THS Band will perform in front of City Hall. The Police Athletic League will be donating hot chocolate and popcorn for the event.
- Ms. Fairchild informed the Commission that contrary to their previous plan, the Village will be open for full days, 1 p.m. until 8:30 p.m., from December 5 until December 23. The Village will be open 9 a.m. to 12:00 Noon on Christmas Eve.
- Discussion was held regarding how to handle the large attendance at VIP Night. On a motion by Duke Wall with a second by Dan Lovallo, the Commission voted unanimously to have two shifts for VIP night.

Facility Updates

Superintendent Simmons announced that the press release for the Armory's 100 year anniversary celebration to be held on November 7 was distributed. A final planning meeting will be held on November 4. The program for the event was read, and it was noted that donations of tables and chairs, flowers, and refreshments have been offered for the celebration.

Sports Updates

- The Young Men's Basketball League will start their season the last Sunday in November. To date, 10 teams have registered.
- A softball meeting will be held in January. Decisions on bats and balls to be used for the coming season will be needed.

Capital Budget Updates

Mr. Simmons referenced the Capital budget report contained within the meeting packet and summarized by stating that many projects will be planned through the winter months for work in the spring such as a survey and engineering design for Fuessenich Park. Many projects that were underway in the summer and fall are near completion. Of note:

- The motor starts for the Armory gymnasium ventilation system were installed and once tested, the project will be complete.
- Work will begin soon on next year's capital budget. Small paving projects in line with the Street Department's paving schedule are planned for smaller parking areas such as those at Rec Hall, Jiggs Donahue, and at the Christmas Village.
- Plans will be made for work on the drainage for Oak Avenue in cooperation with the DOT, with possibly going out to bid on this in the spring.
- Plans for work on Alvord Park to improve access to the lower lot and traffic flow for the area will be considered.

Facility Updates

Mr. Simmons reported that fall clean-up is ongoing, with graffiti removal being an ongoing issue. Field lining is winding down. Projects recently completed include:

- Equipment which was removed from the Winthrop Street garage during work on the ceiling was moved back into the building.

- Slate tiles were replaced at Christmas Village.
- Work on the area for the ice rink was recently completed and work to install the ice rink will begin soon.
- Areas along the Still River Greenway, Machuga property, and Alvord Park were mowed.
- Backflows and water meters were removed in preparation for winter.
- Renovations at Ruwet field were completed.
- Hanging baskets were taken down along Main Street.
- Fields were fertilized and overseeded as necessary.
- Work has begun in preparing Christmas Village for the upcoming season.
- Fuessenich Park is now closed for the season.
- Still River Gardens planted mums and is now splitting and moving perennials, planting bulbs, and beginning to winterize the beds.
- The second phase of signage is underway.
- Work to replace the snowflake bulbs with LED lights is underway.

Mr. Simmons announced that a flyer was prepared on a park watch program to try to curb recurring problems with graffiti and vandalism. Meetings have been held with the Police Department and Mayor to this end. Mr. Simmons explained the intent to try to get some of the local neighbors to help watch for vandalism and to report it. The Commission was invited to walk through Borzani Park on Jackson Street on November 9 at 4 p.m. prior to making a decision on what should be done as far as possible removal of the play scape. In addition, Mr. Simmons suggested that a meet and greet be held in the parks in the spring to kick off the park watch problem. A suggestion was made that video cameras be installed in the parks, to which Mr. Simmons responded that this would require input from Corporation Counsel.

Coe Memorial Park Updates

Mr. Simmons reviewed the motions passed at the October 27 Coe Memorial Park Advisory Committee meeting. The Committee has requested to be provided with the information received regarding the scope of work needed for the Carriage House roof repair and the estimates received. Mr. Simmons stated that the Parks Department has been working with Tremco to review all of the facility

roofs and make assessments on each. Tremco is in the process of putting together a full computerized program of their findings. The information requested will be provided to the Coe Memorial Park Advisory Committee.

Another topic discussed at the Coe Memorial Park Advisory Committee meeting centered around removal of the spruce trees and comments made that funds may have already been expended for removal of the spruce trees. Mr. Simmons reported to the Commission that although a proposal was received from Mike Zaharek to transplant all of the trees at a cost of \$6,300, this proposal was not accepted and only one tree was transplanted at a cost of \$700, which was paid with Trust funds. The tree that was transplanted in West Torrington was paid for with Parks Department funds. It was noted that the spruce tree transplanted within the Park was dying and that the Coe Memorial Park Advisory Committee had accepted the offer from Mr. Zaharak to transplant another tree to be the new Christmas tree.

Discussion was held relative to the motion passed that the fall garden plans as submitted by Still River Gardens be returned to the vendor for more detail as per the suggestions made by Kim Barbieri for color and design. It was stated that the plans submitted by Still River Gardens were within their contract.

With regard to the tables, it was noted that 11 tables have been lost since their purchase in 1998. It was stated that although the loss of the tables was unfortunate, controls have been tightened since Brett Simmons joined the Parks Department in July 2008, and no property of the Coe Trust is removed from the Park. Mrs. Fairchild requested and received copies of the email that Mr. Banziruk referenced earlier in the meeting for further Commission review.

Old Business

The proposed Parks and Field Use Policies and Fees were then discussed. Brett Simmons stated that at the October 20 special meeting, some valid points were made but also noted that much time and effort was spent in the process to research the fees and proven standards of other communities. In discussions since the October 20 meeting, thought has been given to instituting the policies and creating a committee comprised of members from OWTS, the Board of Education, and representatives from some of the other affected organizations to discuss the Fee Schedule and consider other options. On a motion by Jim Pescatore with a second by Dan Lovallo, the Commission voted unanimously to adopt the proposed Parks and Field Use Policy (the Fee Schedule to be acted upon at a later date). Mr. Simmons offered suggestions as to those who might serve on the committee, and stated that gathering the groups to work together on this would be a step in the right direction.

The memorial dedication in memory of Anthony "Gus" Lucia will be held Saturday, November 13, at 12 noon, with the family arriving at 11 a.m. Rev.

Steve Darr will be providing an invocation and Mayor Bingham, Patricia Fairchild, and others will be speaking at the dedication. The site has been prepared and the trees will be planted soon. The granite monument and bench will be in place for the dedication.

New Business

Mr. Simmons stated that he is working to create a form that can be completed online where residents can anonymously report issues in City parks. In the spring, Mr. Simmons would like to hold meetings in different parks with area residents, police, and Commission members in attendance to share ideas and establish plans for the park watch program.

Other Business

On a motion by Dan Lovallo with a second by Jim Pescatore, the Commission voted unanimously to recommend that Tom Keslow be allowed to continue as concessionaire of Fuessenich Park for the 2011 season.

Adjournment

On a motion by Dan Lovallo with a second by Jim Pescatore, the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn at 7:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn Rategan
Parks Department Secretary