

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

Chairperson Patricia Fairchild called to order a regular meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission at 6:15 p.m. on Wednesday, March 3, 2010, at the Armory. In attendance were Vice-Chairperson Fran Ducotey, 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 Dan Lovallo, with a second by Jim Pescatore, the Commission voted unanimously to accept the minutes of the February 3, 2010 meeting.

Correspondence

Superintendent Brett Simmons presented to the Commission a copy of an email he had sent to Mayor Bingham regarding a meeting for the Parks and Recreation Department and the Board of Education to discuss improved utilization of BOE ball fields. This meeting has been scheduled for March 9, 2010.

Also presented was correspondence from Bill Van Buren and Mr. Simmons' response regarding the condition of a midget football practice field which was used for parking for the July 4, 2009 fireworks display.

Citizen's Comments

Rob Manchester from the Torrington Tornadoes addressed the Commission and inquired as to the status of his request for modification of an existing field to an intermediate field with 70-foot base paths. Mr. Manchester informed the Commission that he had confirmed with the Eastern Region office of Little League that the field, if modified, could still be used as a district all star field as long as the field met all the tournament specs by moving the bases back and adjusting the pitcher's mound. Mr. Manchester stated that he had looked at the Toro softball fields and thought that they would be suitable for use for the Tornadoes games; and stated that although he would request field time for one game per week and two games every other weekend, he would utilize whatever field time was available. Commissioners expressed concern over the heavy utilization of the softball fields currently and whether the schedule could accommodate his request. Superintendent Simmons suggested that the Tornadoes schedule away games at the start of the season until a determination is made on a potential field.

Facility Use

- On a motion by Jim Pescatore with a second by Fran DuCotey, the Commission voted unanimously to approve a request from Harvest Baptist Church for use of the Armory for a men/boys basketball game (date TBD).

- On a motion by Dan Lovallo with a second by Fran DuCotey, the Commission voted unanimously to approve all of the pre-approved facility requests (National Youth Service Day – April 20, 2010 – Coe Memorial Park; National Day of Prayer – May 6, 2010 – Coe Memorial Park; St. Patrick’s Day Celebration – March 13, 2010 – Coe Memorial Park).

Program Updates

Recreation Director, Donna Winn updated the Commission as follows:

- March 27 – Easter Egg Hunt at Coe Memorial Park, with the Armory as the rain location.
- The Department has been approached by someone interested in teaching a class on Ukrainian egg decorating. This class could be offered to children 12 years and older, and perhaps to adults as well.
- Breakfast with the Easter Bunny has been scheduled for March 28 at the Elks Lodge.
- Ms. Winn reported that the Winter Carnival, held February 6, was a huge success. Although the weather was cold, the event was well attended and the various attractions, especially the skaters from the International Ice Skating Rink in Simsbury, offered much enjoyment to the carnival-goers.
- Plans are ongoing for a “transportation” event in conjunction with the Torrington Municipal and Teachers Federal Credit Union (TMTFCU) and the Torrington police and fire departments. This year’s event will focus not only on vehicles, but other modes of transportation as well.
- In another joint effort with the TMTFCU, plans for two movie nights are continuing – one to be held at Fuessenich Park and the other to be held at Coe Memorial Park.
- A Pitch, Hit, and Run event will be held this year on April 25, 2010.
- The Titans will be involved in the Home Run Derby, with Fuessenich Park being the possible location for the event. A meeting will be scheduled to finalize details for this event.
- Belly dancing will be offered again this year, as well as many of the regular summer programs such as the NW Baseball Clinic and Make the Play Basketball Clinic, to name a few.

Superintendent Simmons announced that a marketing contest will be held for a slogan for the Department. One hundred dollars and a certificate will be awarded to the creator of the winning entry. Deadline for the event is May 1, 2010.

A 2010 event schedule of hiking events to explore Torrington has been prepared by Kim Barbieri, Zoning Enforcement Officer for the City of Torrington and was distributed to the Commission.

Softball Updates

In follow-up to last month's Commission request for Superintendent Simmons to research a suitable softball for use this year, Brett Simmons reported on an ASA-approved softball with a .40 COR, 375 compression. Purchasing will be obtaining quotes for this ball as well as for the composite bats that will be purchased for the men's softball league. Following discussion, Duke Wall made a motion that the Commission increase the fees for the men's league by \$60 to pay for the new composite bats and any associated costs. The motion was seconded by Fran DuCotey and approved unanimously.

A discussion was then held relative to the type of ball to purchase for the women's softball league, with safety being a primary concern. Following discussion, a motion was made by Dan Lovallo that the women's softball league be changed from a modified league to a slow pitch league. Duke Wall seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously. As a result of this change, it was decided to continue to use the same ball that had been used last year for the women's softball league.

In light of the fact that only six teams had expressed interest in a wood bat division and that such a league was offered in Bantam, it was decided to not pursue such a league at this time.

An update to the softball rules was presented to the Commission. Included in the updates was a proposal for a "favorite son" rule. This new rule would allow former residents who grew up and graduated from high school in Torrington to come back and play in the league for a \$25 non-resident fee. Concern was expressed that such a rule would increase the number of non-residents on each team to six players. Following discussion, a motion was made by Duke Wall that the Commission not approve the proposed "favorite son" rule as the softball league already has a rule in effect allowing three out-of-town players. This motion was seconded by Fran DuCotey and approved unanimously.

Capital / Budget Updates

Brett Simmons highlighted some of the updates to the capital budget:

- Joe Alicata has begun work on designing a ventilation system for the gymnasium as well as redesigning the front steps to the Armory.
- Ceiling tiles have been purchased for Recreation Hall.
- Repairs to the awnings, the purchase of a new wind screen, and restoration of the flag pole are planned for Fuessenich Park.
- New play equipment has been ordered for the Burrville and Ruwet playgrounds and a new playscape for Oak Avenue, which will be installed in the spring.

- A new, replacement snow blower is scheduled to be purchased.
- Work on the Ruwet field is planned.
- Repairs are planned, with the help of Mike Flowers, to address grading and in-field issues at Fuessenich Park.
- New back-stop padding is needed at Fuessenich Park.
- The purchase of a storage container is being considered.
- The next phase of gate installations is being planned.
- Paving to provide a hard surface for the parking of the Parks Department trailers is planned at the Winthrop Street storage area.

On a motion by Fran DuCotey with a second by Duke Wall, the Commission voted to approve the capital plan updates as presented by Superintendent Brett Simmons.

Facility Operations

Superintendent Simmons reported that repairs are underway at the Armory. Ceiling tiles have been replaced and trim work has been done in the kitchen. New thresholds are also being installed at the entrance to both the kitchen and the gymnasium. Work is continuing to close up Christmas Village for the year and some improvements are being made in the Toy Shop. When necessary, considerable time is spent clearing parking lots and sidewalks from winter storms. Work will continue on repairs at both the Armory and Recreation Hall, as well as preparing equipment for the spring.

During the months of March through June, the ice rink will be taken down, repairs will be done at Fuessenich, and the playscape will be installed at Oak Avenue, in addition to work on readying the ball fields for play. Work at the pool and the pump house will also be scheduled.

The contract with Still River Gardens is hoped to be finalized soon; and plans are proceeding to secure a contract with Active Net for Recreation Department software.

Superintendent Simmons reported that there is a problem with an abundance of geese at Fuessenich Park. A policy may be needed on geese management and the prohibition of feeding geese, especially at Besse Pond.

The City Council has voted not to expend funds for the yearly fireworks display given the current economic situation. Commissioners suggested fund raising as was done in 2009. A follow-up meeting to discuss the fireworks with Mayor Bingham has been scheduled.

Chairperson Patty Fairchild noted with sadness the passing of former Parks Department employee, Anthony "Gus" Lucia earlier that day. Commissioners paused for a moment of silence in tribute to Gus. Discussion was held regarding a memorial for Gus at Christmas Village that could be in place for the next season.

Total donations to date for Christmas Village stand at \$17,465.

Coe Memorial Park Updates

There being no quorum, no Coe Memorial Park meeting was held earlier this evening. A special joint meeting of the Commission and the Coe Memorial Park Advisory Committee has been planned for Monday, March 15 at 5 p.m. to discuss action on the spruce trees at the Park.

New Business

A Parks and Field Use Policy was presented to the Commission for their review. Superintendent Simmons was complimented on the thoroughness of the Policy which will be acted upon at a future Commission meeting.

Old Business

Superintendent Simmons presented copies of a 2004 memo from the Purchasing Agent waiving the bid process and allowing the Torrington Little League to run the concession service at the Oak Avenue concession stand with proceeds to benefit park improvements. Following discussion, it was agreed that a meeting be set up with the Little League president to discuss the possibility of going out to bid on the concession service at Oak Avenue.

Adjournment

On a motion by Dan Lovallo with a second by Jim Pescatore, the Commission voted to adjourn at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn Rategan
Parks Department Secretary