

NEW FAIRFIELD PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
4 Brush Hill Road
New Fairfield, Connecticut 06812
Telephone (203)312-5633 Fax (203)312-5636

REGULAR MEETING

Minutes
Monday, September 14, 2009
7:00 p.m.

TOWN HALL CONFERENCE ROOM

PRESENT:

Fred Testor, Melissa Fidanza, Chris Van Steen, Tom Edwards, Steve Burfeind, Steve Merullo (Parks & Recreation Director), Kelly Ferris, Denise Coccozza (Secretary)

GUESTS:

Scott Roberti, New Fairfield Baseball

Joe Garufi, NF Dog Park

Cynthia Stevens, members of the Ball Pond Advisory Committee (BPAC) & Friends of Ball Pond

1. Call to Order: Meeting called to order at 7:06 p.m. by Melissa Fidanza.

2. Public Comment

- a) Cynthia Stevens and other members of the BPAC were in attendance to follow up from a letter sent to the Parks & Recreation Commission on 8/17/09. The letter outlined some proposed improvements to the Ball Pond Town Park, which has suffered significant erosion over the years. Ms. Stevens also noted that road sand and nutrients are also filling in the lake. The Friends of Ball Pond organization has been working with Didona Associates Landscape Architects to develop an improvement plan to upgrade the appearance and remedy the erosion. Under the proposal, the suggested improvements would be funded by Parks & Recreation as part of the fiscal '11 budget as the park is currently town property. The current cost estimate for the plantings, boulders, fence repairs and other improvements is approximately \$6500 plus labor. Steve Merullo will be asked to determine labor costs. During the July meeting Bill O'Keeffe was appointed to represent Parks & Recreation at the BPAC meetings; Ms. Stevens expressed her appreciation for Mr. O'Keeffe's attendance and involvement.

Discussion followed Ms. Stevens' presentation. Fred Testor was concerned about the park's location along a dangerous road and that the proposed improvements would only benefit the surrounding community due to limited parking. Ms. Stevens replied that the park is town property and it is the town's responsibility to maintain it. She said the park

is an “eyesore” and detracts from the value of the town in terms of water quality and home values. Steve Burfeind suggested that it should either be fixed and used as a park or let it return to its natural state. Melissa Fidanza pointed out that a subcommittee was formed for this, and the subcommittee should report back on its recommendation. Mr. Testor suggested obtaining comparative quotes, assuming that the Finance board would want to see multiple quotes and an itemized listing of expected costs.

- b) Scott Roberti, representing New Fairfield Baseball, presented a request for expanded use of Cashman field. As the high school baseball field is currently the only 90-foot field available for ages 13 and up, this presents challenges in terms of scheduling practice times for high school and Babe Ruth players. The field is also closed during the fall for maintenance, which means that NF baseball cannot have a fall league. Mr. Roberti noted that all surrounding towns that NF competes against have at least 2 90-foot baseball fields. In addition, there is currently no field with a 70-foot infield, which is needed for the 12-year old summer teams.

Mr. Roberti stated that the ideal solution to these issues would be to construct an additional high school/Babe Ruth field with 90-foot bases and 2 Cal Ripken fields with 60-foot bases, one of which would be convertible into 70-foot bases. However, given that this will take some time to construct, a short-term solution for the upcoming year would be to modify the Cashman infield to allow practice for high school and Babe Ruth programs, as well as the 12-year old teams that compete on a 70-foot infield. This would mean cutting 30’ of grass to extend the field from 60’ to 90’. A portable mound could be used so as not to disrupt the field for softball, which currently uses Cashman. The consensus among the group was that there is a good amount of idle time in which baseball teams could use Cashman field. Tom Edwards inquired about the timeframe for the work on the field. Mr. Roberti replied that it should be done late fall 2009, before the heavy winter season. Melissa Fidanza suggested that the next steps are to have Steve Merullo weigh in on the labor and costs to cover the project. Mr. Roberti said that New Fairfield Baseball might be able to assist with some manpower and materials for the project.

3. Approval of Minutes July 13th

Fred Testor made a motion to approve the July 13th minutes. Melissa Fidanza seconded the motion. Steve Burfeind abstained, as he was not present on July 13th.

Vote: 4 Yes, 0 No. Motion passed unanimously.

4. Chairman Comments

None

5. Director Update

- a). Dog Park – The contract has been revised to reflect the revisions voted on and approved at the July meeting. Joe Garufi acknowledged that it just needs to be signed by all respective parties and he will coordinate. Fred Testor reported that the Dog Park is back to

its original proposed location behind the Cashman fence. The members discussed their concerns with location and the impact that the multiple fences would have on the site's appearance. Layout & positioning of the fences was also discussed and the commission members agreed that one of the prior drawings appeared to flow better than the current proposed positioning. Mr. Garufi said he will go back to the zoning board with the prior drawing. He will let Fred Testor know when the next meeting is so there will be some Parks & Recreation support. Mr. Garufi also announced that NFD OG received a grant from Petco that will cover fencing and possibly some of the escrow funds.

b). Rebel Turf Bathrooms – Fred Testor reported that the slab is complete and walls are to be poured on 9/15. He relayed that the Board of Education requested a section of the basement for storage. It will cost approximately \$1600 to secure storage partitions on each side of the basement; the Booster club will cover the cost of one side and Parks & Recreation will cover the other side, pending a favorable vote at a later date. A request was made to the Lions Club for a commercial ice machine that would be stored inside the structure and used for injuries. All teams would have access to the ice.

c). Turkey Run - Kelly Ferris was on hand to provide an update. The 25th Annual Turkey Run is set for Sunday, November 22. Savings Bank of Danbury is contributing \$250 toward the race. The route was modified last year and based on feedback received, the route will go back to the original route to avoid crossing at any major roads. Discussion followed regarding how to cut costs to make the race more profitable for Parks & Recreation. Steve Merullo and Kelly Ferris said that fewer shirts will be ordered this year, as there were too many leftover last year. All runners who register by 11/13 will receive a shirt. Mr. Merullo suggested that Melissa Fidanza work with Kelly to come up with a strategy for prizes or contests.

d). Fall Brochure – Ms. Ferris reported that the fall brochure went out last week. There are a few new programs.

6. Subcommittee Reports

a). Fields – Steve Burfeind stated that field usage/scheduling between the high school clubs remains challenging. For instance, the band requested extra practice time on Thursday evenings which would displace 2 soccer teams. The commission members agreed collectively that teams that are already on the schedule should not be displaced.

7. Adjournment

Steve Burfeind made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Tom Edwards seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 9:21 p.m.

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