

# *Park and Recreation Commission*

---

## **Minutes**

(meeting taped)

Monthly meeting: Monday, May 8, 2006 in the New City Hall.

Meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

By roll call, members present: John Walsh, Karen Izzo, Beverly Moran, Al Felice and James Benanto. David Mikos and Matt Cripps were excused.

Parks and Recreation Director Dennis O'Connell was present. Athletic Director Joseph Orazetti was excused.

### **ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA:**

Without objection, the agenda was accepted as written.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

A motion was made by Beverly Moran and second by Karen Izzo. Move to accept the minutes of March 13, 2006, as written. Motion carried unanimously.

### **PUBLIC PORTION:**

No public came forward at this time.

### **CORRESPONDENCES:**

Nothing was presented.

### **DIRECTOR REPORTS:**

**Parks & Recreation Director's Report:** Mr. O'Connell reported that the spring programs are underway. Soccer has started; Mr. O'Connell had no numbers of the participants. Little League has approximately 175 participants with four major and four minor teams. Girl's softball has approximately 75 participants and will be a slow pitch self-contained program. Babe Ruth has 2 teams, struggling with approximately 22 participants. Senior Babe Ruth is combined with Ansonia to make 1 team. It was noted that the High School participation is also lower than previous years with only 22 players and this may be representative of the current level of interest in the sport.

Beginner swimming lessons are being offered at the Derby Veteran's Community Center. Cost is \$15 per child and the receipts are divided between the instructor and the center.

The lifeguard class was cancelled due to low registration numbers.

With the decline in numbers for the programs, it was suggested that the Commission explore class sizes at the schools to see if this lower number is representative of the population per age group. With concerns for the obesity epidemic of children in the nation, it is even more important to encourage recreational activities for the youth. Members noted that training strategies during off-seasons and the trend of players focusing on one particular sport is also influencing the numbers.

The Summer Program will run for six weeks from July 5<sup>th</sup> through August 15<sup>th</sup>. It will be run at Bradley School from 9:00 am to 2 pm. The Free Lunch Program will be run again at the Derby Veteran's Community Center and open swim will also be provided in the afternoon.

Regarding the facilities, the Little League fencing and backstops have been cleaned up. All looks good.

The Skate Park has reopened with the YMCA overseeing the operations. First month registration has been strong although Derby participation was modest.

New bleachers were installed at the Derby Veteran's Community Center and they look good. The floor will be done on Memorial Day weekend.

Mr. O'Connell is communicating with Public Works Director Ron Culmo about the bleachers at Ryan Complex football field. They are considering dividing the project into sections so the cost would not be as cumbersome.

The field house was reopened without problems.

The Capital Planning Commission will be meeting in the next few days to review the requests presented from the departments. Members will attend the meeting.

**High School Athletic Director's Report:** Mr. Orazetti was excused.

#### **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**Finance Committee** – Mr. O'Connell is watching the budget and making end of the year transfers as needed. He noted that Noresco installed eight sinks at the Derby Veteran's Community Center as per the contract with the City. One sink fell off and broke and had to be replaced, four others were ready to fall and were reinforced. This was an unexpected expense and a distressing fact being that the installation was done so poorly. Sewer issues arose at the Derby Veteran's Community Center, the City absorbed costs.

Regarding the custodian situation, the Department will have to continue without staff until the new funding from the 2006-2007 tax year is in place.

**Programs Committee** – The Committee did not meet. Interest has been expressed for a Coaching Certification Class, this will be explored.

**Facilities Committee** – Outstanding issues with Witek Park are being reviewed with the contractor. He has been re-fertilizing the fields. No plans are in place to address the water issues in the constructed swales between the fields. These water problems are on the side lines and do not effect the fields.

The target date for Phase I completion of the Greenway is Memorial Day. This continues to be a great success. Signage is being installed along the trail and plans are in the works for the relocation of the fountain.

Chairman Walsh noted that it is unclear who is responsible for getting things done on the Greenway and Witek Park. He will be meeting with the Mayor next week to discuss this matter. He expressed frustration and felt there should be a vision of who is in charge so a proper chain of command is clear and matters can be presented to the appropriate parties. Other projects in the past have also run into difficulties, such as the Amendola bathrooms, because expertise is not provided to oversee such capital projects. It was thought that the Public Works reorganization would address some of this obscurity by providing knowledge staffing supervision but the process has not fully addressed the needs of the department.

**NEW or OTHER BUSINESS:**

A.) Discussion of 2006 – 2007 Parks & Recreation Budget: The operating budget and the capital improvements have been submitted and the Commission is awaiting the vote by the appropriate boards and commissions.

A.) Discussion of Recreation programs: Chairman Walsh referenced the 2000 plan previously prepared by Milone and MacBroom, Inc. commissioned by the Joint Committee comprised of members of the Board of Education, Board of Alderman and Parks & Recreation Commission. He also distributed documents pertaining to the first referendum regarding the proposed recreational upgrades; that was soundly defeated by the voters. He asked that the members review the material for discussion at the next meeting. The plan identified recreational and athletic needs and proposed development that would address said needs.

Mr. Benanto noted that the Team of One opportunities do not seem to be utilized. He indicated that although the High School may not offer a sport such as tennis, golf, swimming, etc., this Team of One concept allows the student to participate utilizing adjoining towns facilities. He felt this could provide additional opportunities that could be explored.

Members discussed how recreation has been transforming through the years. Men's & ladies baseball/softball leagues have disappeared, tennis is a non-issue, adult basketball is disappearing. As new people move into town, they may have new or different ideas for recreation. Certainly, over the years, sports have been added that did not take into account the limitations of the facilities. All this was discussed during the development of the plan and as it is now six years later, the plan should be revisited to determine today's needs. It was mentioned that the interest in recreation may be declining due to the existing poor conditions and the limitations.

Motion was made by Al Felice and second by Beverly Moran Move to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 p.m.  
Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully prepared,  
Karen Kemmesies, secretary