

Park and Recreation Commission

Minutes

(meeting taped)

Monthly meeting: Monday, May 14, 2007 in the New City Hall.

Meeting was called to order at 7:06 p.m.

By roll call, members present: John Walsh, Al Felice, David Mikos, Nick Serednitsky and James Benanto. Andrew Cota arrived at 7:40 p.m. Beverly Moran was 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 David Mikos and second by Nick Serednitsky. Move to accept the minutes of April 9, 2007, as written. Motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC PORTION:

No one came forward.

CORRESPONDENCES:

Nothing was presented.

DIRECTOR REPORTS:

Parks & Recreation Director's Report: Mr. O'Connell reported that the spring programs are underway and going well. There was some confusion with the volunteer who was opening the gates at Witek Park and so now the Public Works is opening the gates on the weekdays and the Police open them on the weekends.

It was uncertain whether the summer program would be held at Bradley School due to the playground being closed. Mr. O'Connell will try to contact the volunteers who have adopted this project as well as the Board of Alderman. It was noted that suggestions were made that the Parks & Recreation Commission should oversee the facility but Chairman Walsh indicated that there is no funding in place at this time within the budget. Chairman Walsh will contact Board of Alderman President Ken Hughes to clarify this matter. Mr. O'Connell noted that the free lunch program will be run again this summer at the Derby Veteran's Community Center with gymnasium included.

Mr. O'Connell asked permission to look at the fee structure for the Derby Veteran's Community Center. Members noted that the revenue goes directly into the general fund for the City. It was questioned whether the additional revenue generated by an increase could be directed toward the Center so as to demonstrate the purpose of the increase. Mr. O'Connell stated that he sought changes in the daily fees. Currently, they are \$1.00 per visit and he asked that it be increased to \$3.00. He noted that other similar facilities charge \$4.00 or more. During the summer, the Derby Veteran's Community Center is inundated with children taking advantage of the pool. Lines form outside while they wait their turn. The pool size and the supervision by the lifeguard support approximately 25 children at a time. The locker rooms need to be monitored as well which requires additional staff.

Motion was made by Al Felice and second by David Mikos. Move to adopt the following daily pool rate effective June 1, 2007 – the fee for under twelve (12) is \$3.00 and twelve (12) and over is \$4.00 per day. Motion carried unanimously.

Utilizing the state bid, the outfield softball fence project will be done by the Frankson Fence Company of North Haven. There is \$20,000 capital funding available. The cost of the project is \$10,941 with \$1,350 additional charges for the takedown and removal of the old fence. It will be twelve (12) feet high and two hundred and forty (240) feet long, consisting of a top, middle and bottom rail chain link fence. Members noted that the design should be such that there will be no curling at the bottom of the fence and the chain link is sufficiently laced to the rails. They also questioned the warrantee on the material. Mr. O'Connell will contact the supplier on the warrantee.

The City Engineer is still meeting with the contractor for the bleachers to resolve any pending issues.

A fifteen session Yoga class will be held at the Derby Veteran's Community Center rather than the Derby Public Library. A press release was sent to the local papers for a start date of May 24th but has yet to be published so the start date may change. The sessions will be Monday and Wednesday from 6:15 p.m. to 7:15 p.m. at a cost of \$125 for the program or \$10.00 per session.

Mr. Benanto noted that men's soccer teams have been practicing at Witek Park two nights per week. Mr. O'Connell indicated that they were given use of the field for Sunday morning games only and he will investigate. They were told that they could use Bradley on Wednesday nights but were told that Witek Park could not be used for practice. Mr. O'Connell will contact the Soccer League to confirm their schedule of use of the fields and to confirm that they understand that they are not allowed to extend their authorization beyond said schedule. Another concern was the way people are parking wherever they want up by the fields at the Park. Also, the person closing the gates has advised that fishermen have been parking above and staying after dark which does not allow for the gates to be closed at the regular time. Mr. O'Connell stated that the Board of Alderman approved the signs for the Park that specify "No unauthorized use is allowed" and the signs have been ordered. He will look into all of the concerns.

Members discussed all the fields. They would certainly like to have the ability to allow unfettered use but scheduling is necessary so as to maintain the integrity of the surfaces. They also have to weigh when the field can be played on when weather has made the conditions less than favorable. They continue to try to balance the requests with the limited space.

Members questioned the status of the lighting pole structures at the softball field. They questioned whether they will interfere with the fence installation and more importantly, the safety of play at the field. Mr. O'Connell will contact the Public Works and assess the situation. Members questioned whether there is discussion on replacing the lights. It was noted that the Parks & Recreation programs have no need for the lights at this time. The lights are used by the Board of Education programs. It was questioned whether the Board of Alderman should be contacted to pursue a capital project. Members expressed their concern that the Board of Education has not come forward to pursue the issue. As they are the primary users, they should be seeking their replacement.

It was noted that the capital money for the football field lamp replacement is still frozen and members questioned whether the existing lighting has deteriorated to a point where safety may become a concern. This too should be a concern for the Board of Education. It was suggested that the lights be tested and the lumens be measured so as to ascertain the urgency of this matter.

Members discussed the relationship between the Parks & Recreation and the Board of Education. While certainly facility sharing is a necessity, they questioned whether the Board of Education takes into account the recreational and athletic needs. It was noted that during the discussions about the new Middle School, there was no discussion of fields or how the building could be designed to include gymnasium

space that could multitask. Members expressed a need for a stronger relationship with the Board of Education. It was suggested that they be invited to a Commission meeting.

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

NEW or OTHER BUSINESS:

B.) Update on Review Committee: Mr. Walsh indicated that the Board of Alderman Sub-Committee's response to the report was very favorable but he was uncertain what the next step will be. He noted the chronic problem with projects, both in design and follow through to completion. The Recreation Director is a part time position and currently he has to chase around to get the expertise and help on the projects. There is no central contact person within the City staffing to handle the day to day duty of following a project from conception to completion. Mr. O'Connell and the Commission should be talking about programs, not projects. Chairman Walsh expressed his frustration dealing with issues that the commission should not have to deal with. He noted many projects, the bleachers are not done, the future of lights is uncertain, the Greenway is progressing very well but is not yet done, the playground feel into disrepair because no one was charged with its maintenance. There are other projects that have yet to be initiated. There is still the issue of lack of space which translates into the inability to add any new programs. There is also the matter of pride. A deteriorated facility reflects poorly on the City and also has a mental impact on the players. The members again expressed the need to partner with the Board of Education to pursue the outstanding issues and issues yet to be realized.

C.) Discussion of 2007 – 2008 Parks & Recreation Budget: The budget was delivered to the Board of Apportionment and Taxation and they have raised no questions as of this meeting.

D.) Other business: Mr. Felice questioned if there is a problem with the irrigation system at Witek Park as there are spots on the field that would benefit from watering. Mr. O'Connell stated that the Board of Alderman is still overseeing the Park. Mr. Felice will speak with Mr. Hughes.

Mr. Mikos stated that he has been approached by parents suggesting a high school age basketball league. Mr. O'Connell suggested looking at it later in the season. Possibly, it can be like other programs where Derby can develop a multi-town league to generate a playing schedule.

Mr. Benanto noted that indications are that the CIAC will allow the co-op arrangement between Derby High School and Emmett O'Brien. He indicated that the CIAC is watchful of the number of players on the teams and should either school draw enough players in the future, then consideration would be given to phasing out the union between the two schools.

Motion was made by David Mikos and second by James Benanto. Move to adjourn at 8:25 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully prepared,
Karen Kemmesies, secretary

These minutes are subject to the Commission's approval at their next scheduled meeting.