

Park and Recreation Commission

Minutes

(meeting taped)

Monthly meeting: Monday, October 11, 2011 in the City Hall.

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

By roll call, members present: Andrew Cota, David Mikos, Beverly Moran, James Benanto, Red Clynych and Ronald Sill. Nick Serednitsky was excused.

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

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA:

Motion made by Beverly Moran and second by Ron Sill. Move to accept the agenda, as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Motion made by David Mikos and second by Red Clynych. Move to accept the minutes of September 12, 2011, as written. Motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC PORTION:

No one was present.

CORRESPONDENCES:

Mr. O'Connell submitted a letter dated September 21, 2011 from Prescott W. May of May & Kulas, P.C., Attorneys at Law, 12 Bank Street, Seymour, Ct. Their client, Emanuel Caldwell, is commencing an action against the city regarding an incident occurring on May 25, 2011 at the Derby Veteran's Community Center where the claim is that he slipped on the basketball court in the gymnasium resulting in a tear of his anterior cruciate ligament which will require surgery to correct. Mr. O'Connell has forwarded the communication to the Corporation Counsel and the City's insurance carrier.

NEW or OTHER BUSINESS:

Weather conditions policy for field use: Mr. O'Connell compiled information regarding wind speed scales and the related damages that may occur under defined circumstances. He indicated that the athletic director is looking for policy that would dictate when an athletic event should be called due to weather. Mr. O'Connell noted that the sloped topography, mature trees, multiple light poles and location of the press box at Ryan Field must be considered when making any decision.

Members discussed whether this matter should be directed to the Board of Education as the issue involves a school activity. They questioned whether the Board of Education maintains their own insurance regarding these events or does it fall under the City's umbrella. They sought clarification on the liabilities.

Reviewing the wind speed scales, a force 8 wind is defined as 39-46 miles per hour winds or a gale force wind. Conditions would be that it would be difficult to walk against the wind and twigs and small branches would likely be blown off trees. Members felt that the director should base his decision on wind forecast predictions obtained at least four hours prior to the start of the game. Members were confident with Mr. O'Connell's decisions on field conditions and the postponements of games.

The members decided to approach the Corporation Counsel to further explore the liabilities of field use under deteriorating weather conditions as well as to seek clarification on whether this is a recreation or education matter. The agenda item was continued until next month.

Security protocols and recreation events: Mr. O'Connell communicated with Lt. Sal Froscono of the Derby Police Department regarding the incident at the Pop Warner game. Lt. Froscono offered some basic guidance. He encouraged a pro-active approach suggesting that the playing areas be completely fenced off and clearly posted to deter spectators from gaining access. He also felt the coaching staff should be encouraged to be stern but not confrontational and they should monitor the sidelines for any possible developing situations.

Members noted that an announcement is made at athletic events stating the rules regarding expectations at the facility. It was suggested that Pop Warner consider a code of conduct policy for their events be studied and adopted detailing the expectations of the attendees. Currently, there are no visitor's bleachers at the Ryan Field. The purchase of new bleachers has been presented to the Capital Planning Commission but funding has yet to be allocated. This incident may well raise the priority for this purchase. Mr. O'Connell indicated that he has had conversations with Pop Warner since the incident and is reassured that the Pop Warner directors recognize and are moving forward in an affirmative way to insure a positive experience for the players and attendees.

DIRECTOR REPORTS:

Parks & Recreation Director's Report: Mr. O'Connell has been meeting with Little League Director Ken Marcucio and Public Works director Ron Culmo. They have been discussing field maintenance for the fall season as well as next year's spring season. Customarily, the Little League coaches have performed the necessary maintenance on the field. As reported at previous meetings, this practice is disappearing. Mr. O'Connell will continue to oversee and develop plans for the future needs of the program.

Basketball registration is planned for the second week in November. Mr. Mikos questioned whether the Middle School gymnasium will be available this year. Last year, it was understood that the school had not been fully turned over to the city and as such the gym was unavailable. With the shortage of gymnasium space and with the very successful basketball program at the Derby Veteran's Community Center, additional gymnasium space is in great demand. Mr. O'Connell will explore it's availability.

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

Motion was made by Red Clynch and second by Beverly Moran. Move to adjourn at 8:12 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully prepared,

Karen Kemmesies, secretary

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