

Park and Recreation Commission

Minutes

(meeting taped)

Monthly meeting: Monday, December 10, 2007 in the New City Hall.

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

By roll call, members present: John Walsh, James Benanto, Andrew Cota, Nick Serednitsky and William Clynch. Al Felice and David Mikos were excused. It was noted that Mr. Felice has indicated that he has resigned but there is no record of the communication with the Mayor.

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

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA:

Without objection, the agenda was accepted, with the notation that it is Monday, December 10, 2007.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A motion was made by William Clynch and second by Nick Serednitsky. Move to accept the minutes of November 13, 2007, as written. Motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC PORTION:

No one came forward.

CORRESPONDENCES:

An incident report has been filed regarding an injury to a fan during the Derby/Shelton football game. A woman fell while stepping down in the bleachers and was transported by ambulance to the emergency room. Mr. O'Connell did speak with family members of the person injured.

Members and Mr. O'Connell discussed the installation of railings as per the Fire Marshall's findings of code requirements. There is funding in the Capital Plan for bleacher replacement but said funding is currently frozen. The project has been discussed previously and was in the planning stage. The intent is that safety concerns are a priority and would be done prior to continuing on the remainder of the bleacher replacements. Mr. O'Connell will approach the Capital Planning Commission to release said funding. Members discussed the funding that would be needed to complete the replacement. It may have to be done in stages. Also, in question is the replacement of the visitor's bleachers that were removed a few years ago. It was expected to cost approximately \$70,000 to replace the visitor's bleachers. Members indicated that this matter should be discussed with the Board of Education as the bleacher use is primarily for High School athletic events.

Mr. O'Connell noted that another line item in the Capital Plan for the 2006-2007 budget was the initial stage of the bleacher replacement. The vendor was paid minus a retainer and at the close of the budget there was \$5,000 remaining in the account. The retainer was not carried over in the current budget. Mr. O'Connell will ask the Capital Planning Commission to reinstate the remaining funds into the budget.

Motion was made by James Benanto and second by Nick Serednitsky. Move to recommend to the Capital Planning Commission to set the priority of the bleacher replacement funding to 1) include the installation of railings in the bleacher sections, 2) replace the section of bleachers closest to the baseball field and 3) replace the remainder of the bleachers. Motion carried unanimously.

Members discussed the inefficiency of the Field House and Public Works storage area. A few years ago a maintenance garage was considered to house the equipment and supplies for maintaining the fields and earmarked for funding through the capital plan. The funding was never finalized. The visitor's area has always been substandard due to the Public Works adjoining storage use. It was questioned whether Public Works could be relocated and could the space be used for a weight room. The room at the High School has limited space. This is something to be raised with the Board of Education. They will be invited to the next meeting.

Chairman Walsh noted the report developed by the Recreation Committee defined authorities, jurisdictions and policies for recreational and athletic programs and facilities. The report was presented to the Board of Alderman but never acted upon. The Board of Alderman will be approached to reopen discussion on this report.

DIRECTOR REPORTS:

Parks & Recreation Director's Report: Mr. O'Connell reported the YMCA has decided not to continue the supervision of the Skate Park. He spoke with Shelton and as per the 5-year lease, the area must have supervision. The park is going into it's fourth year of the lease. There is funding in the budget to partially fund hiring staff to supervise the area. He will continue discussions with Shelton to determine the best way to move forward.

Basketball is going very well. The Derby Veteran's Community Center is very busy with the School athletic programs using the facility in the afternoon. Evenings are dedicated to Youth Basketball and on Thursday the Men's League plays. The weekend schedule is filled by the travel teams.

There have been incidents of vandalism at the Derby Veteran's Community Center. The door and window on the Olivia Street side were broken. A report has been filed and Mr. O'Connell is speaking with the Police Chief about increasing police presence as well as possibly adding additional security.

High School Athletic Director's Report: Mr. Orazetti was not present.

NEW or OTHER BUSINESS:

A.) 2008 meeting Schedule:

Motion was made by James Benanto and second by Nick Serednitsky. Move to adopt the Park and Recreation Commission meeting schedule for the 2008 calendar year to be the second Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m. with the exception of October and November, which would be scheduled for Tuesday, October 14th and Tuesday, November 11th to be held at City Hall. Motion carried unanimously.

January 14, 2008	February 11, 2008
March 10, 2008	April 14, 2008
May 12, 2008	June 9, 2008
July 14, 2008	August 11, 2008
September 8, 2008	October 14, 2008 (Tuesday)
November 11, 2008 (Tuesday)	December 8, 2008

B.) Other

Mr. Clynch stressed the need to discuss the overuse of the facilities. The fields are in the worst condition they have ever been, in his opinion. He asked if Public Works is capable of performing all the necessary maintenance. Mr. O'Connell indicated that materials are being purchased and maintenance is being performed but the seasons crowd any opportunity to perform substantial repair. Chairman Walsh indicated that this is the reason that the Board of Education and the Parks & Recreation Commission have to sit down and address this serious, chronic problem. Yes, Witek Park is being managed so that the

necessary maintenance is being done and the level of use is monitored. Witek Park continues to be under the Board of Alderman jurisdiction. This level of care must be placed on all the facilities. The long-range plan done almost a decade ago described the fields as overused. The Little League field needed and still needs the field reconstructed as there is minimal topsoil existing. The decade old plan included Witek Park with three soccer fields and baseball fields and a restructuring of the use of the existing facilities. Certainly, the two fields at Witek Park is a good beginning and the park relieves a bit of the use on the other fields. The Parks & Recreation Commission and the Board of Education will have to discuss the future steps needs to continue to enhance and support recreation in the City.

Mr. Clynch suggested that no soccer should be playing on the football and softball field. Experts advise that there should be no more than 20 games a season played on a grass field. Football itself is more than that many games. He suggested that the City explore using space at the Ansonia Nature Center or Emmett O'Brien to relieve the overuse.

Members were all in agreement that the conditions have reached a critical stage. Mr. Benanto noted that a field was closed this past fall due to health conditions, this is unacceptable. Intentions are to more fully utilize Bradley School next fall which will help but there has to be serious discussions with the Board of Alderman and the Board of Education. Many other towns are also experiencing these problems. Other towns are considering artificial turf as a possible solution. Another factor in this issue is the staffing at Public Works. When they were restructured, they lost employees but yet additional facilities were added to their duties. Certainly, the Recreation Capital plan has been the recipient of funding in many ways over the past few years and the members are cognizant of taxpayer concerns. They want to have discussions to move forward in stages to bring forward a workable, safe structure for recreation and athletics in the City.

Motion was made by James Benanto and second by Nick Serednitsky. Move to adjourn at 8:14 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully prepared,
Karen Kemmesies, secretary

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