

Park and Recreation Commission

Minutes

(meeting taped)

Monthly meeting: Monday, August 11, 2008 in the City Hall.

Meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m.

By roll call, members present: John Walsh, James Benanto, Nick Serednitsky, David Mikos and Red Clynch. Beverly Moran and Andrew Cota 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 David Mikos and second by James Benanto. Move to accept the minutes of June 9, 2008, as written. Motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC PORTION:

Daniel Waleski of 21 Elm Street acknowledged the many years of service Mr. Red Clynch has with recreation in the City of Derby and stated that he is a valuable asset to the Parks & Recreation Commission.

CORRESPONDENCES:

Nothing was presented.

DIRECTOR REPORTS:

Parks & Recreation Director's Report: Mr. O'Connell noted that there was a tragic accident with a swimming pool filtration system recently in Greenwich where the suction of the system trapped a youth. The installer of the system was charged for negligence as new regulations require a number of safety measures to be in place at the time of installation. As the city's pool was put in many years ago, concern for providing adequate safety to the members was discussed and as a safety precaution the Derby Veteran's Community Center pool and Jacuzzi were inspected. Upon inspection, it was found that there were measures that should be implemented. The pool will be closing for its annual maintenance over the Labor Day holiday and at that time the necessary work will be done. An automatic shut off mechanism will be installed in the pool and the Jacuzzi to control the filtration system. This expense was not anticipated and will certainly impact the maintenance budget. Mr. Clynch questioned whether grant funding could be explored.

Pop Warner was awarded a state grant of \$30,000. This will benefit their program greatly. This season will field five teams with approximately 120 participants.

Chairman Walsh noted that he has met the new Superintendent of Schools. They discussed the field situation and how the Board of Education has no fields officially under their jurisdiction. The Superintendent was surprised by this knowledge. Chairman Walsh expressed the desire to continue the working relationship between the Parks & Recreation Commission and the Board of Education so that

the two boards can continue jointly to pursue issues in the best interest of both athletic and recreational ventures in the City.

Chairman Walsh and Mr. O'Connell have been conversing with the Youth Soccer Program directors about the use of both Witek Park and Bradley School for soccer. As this is a two season sport, their use of the fields is extensive and with the High School programs active in the fall, there is an excessive demand of Witek Park in the fall. Mr. O'Connell noted that the men's teams have been moved to Bradley in order to take some demand off of Witek Park. By having the high school soccer at Witek, it reduces the demand on Ryan field. The intent is to try to balance the wear and tear on the fields. Youth Soccer has expressed some concerns for this plan and discussion continues.

Mr. Benanto noticed that the permanent batting cage is under construction at the Ryan Complex. Public Works is assisting in the work. The cage was paid for by the Booster Club for the High School programs. Members noted that the bull pen on the left side of the field seems relatively close to the playing area and they questioned whether this was a safety concern. Mr. O'Connell indicated that the pen is in the out of play zone. He will be observant of any concerns for safety.

Members questioned how the girl's softball program went this year. Mr. O'Connell indicated that he heard no complaints but he noticed that the allocation was not fully expended by the end of the year. It was suggested that the program director(s) be invited to come and discussion the program's future with the members of the Commission.

Mr. O'Connell indicated that everything seems set for the football season. The railings have been installed at the bleachers and working is continuing to provide for the bleacher emergency lighting. Mr. Mikos noted that some of the trees behind the bleachers seem imposing. Mr. O'Connell noted that a few years ago Public Works did bring in a tree company to inspect and cut questionable limbs. He will speak to the Public Works Director about inspecting the area again.

Mr. Waleski interjected that he applauded all of the members for their diligent work and dedication to recreation. He wondered why the Derby Veteran's Community Center pool was not considered for having a High School swimming program. Members indicated that often programs are not developed because of the low interest in the sport. Mr. Waleski suggested conversations with the school. Members noted that many sports have been discontinued over the years, sports such as golf, tennis, field hockey, volley ball, etc. and it was partly due to the limitations of the facilities and partly due to lack of participation. Mr. O'Connell noted the Derby Veteran's Community Center does offer swimming lessons.

Mr. Clynch questioned if Pop Warner was approached to see if they would curtail their first home game until after the High School's first game. Mr. O'Connell indicated that the suggestion was not pursued as schedules had already been made. He noted that the High School has scheduled four preseason home games. Members felt that the schedule was not consistent with a desire to preserve the playing surface. They stressed that the Board of Education must really consider the field situation and it was felt that clarity is needed to determine who has the authority over the fields. Parks & Recreation have and will continue to work cooperatively with the Athletic Department but with fields at a premium there must be a concerted effort to approach a the needs and develop a solution. Members noted that from a distance, Ryan Field looks good but upon closer scrutiny, the center of the field is poor. Mr. O'Connell indicated that the Public Works have been working diligently on all the fields but it is an uphill battle. As Alderman President Ken Hughes has been overseeing Witek Park and has the expertise, he will be asked to look at the football field to see if he could offer suggestions.

Mr. O'Connell stated that the playground summer program at Bradley registered approximately 70 children and the free lunch – free gym had about 35 participants.

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

NEW or OTHER BUSINESS:

Mr. Benanto mentioned that he and Mrs. Moran were on the Greenway recently and although she is not able to attend this evening, she wanted it mentioned that maybe the Parks & Recreation could utilize the bulletin board on the Greenway to post the meeting schedule.

Mr. O'Connell indicated that plans are in the works to have open gym in the fall three days a week. This would be open to Derby youth. He is working out the details for the supervision of the program and the hours that it would be available.

Motion was made by Red Clynch and second by David Mikos. Move to adjourn the meeting at 8:14 pm. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully prepared,
Karen Kemmesies, secretary

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