

**TOWN OF DARIEN
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
PUBLIC HEARING AND REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 18, 2012**

ATTENDANCE: Jane Branigan; Susan Daly; Erika Morris; Andy Hunter;
Charlie Goodyear; Mary Flynn; Marianne Gutierrez (8:20 p.m.)

STAFF: Susan Swiatek, Director; Jim Coghlan, Asst Director

OTHER: Debbie Parnon, Chairman, Weed Beach Building Committee;
Courtney Darby

PUBLIC HEARING: FEES AND CHARGES

Ms. Branigan opened the Public Hearing portion of the meeting at 7:35 p.m.

Ms. Debbie Parnon, Chairman of the Weed Beach Building Committee, said she felt it was justified to raise the fees due to the new building at Weed Beach.

Ms. Branigan closed the Public Hearing portion of the meeting at 7:36 p.m.

Ms. Swiatek and the Commissioners then discussed the fee schedule that she provided. It was suggested that the Park Permit Resident, Park Permit Senior, Replacement Permit, and Town Employee fee be raised \$5.00 each, even though some of them were raised \$5.00 last year. This potential fee increase would offset the cost of the new Weed Beach buildings. It was mentioned that even though the fees were raised last year, sales of beach permits did not drop last year. Ms. Swiatek urged the Commissioners to consider the purpose for raising the fees. She provided a budget sheet showing the number of park permits sold to date, with projected sales at the current fee as well as the raised fee. More discussion took place regarding the potential fee increases, citing that the Weed Beach project is nearing completion, and whether or not the fees currently in place cover operating expenses.

It was further suggested that the fee for non-resident entry be increased from \$70 to \$75, and the fee for both daily and block paddle tennis court fees be increased from \$15/\$20 to \$20/\$25.

Mr. Goodyear suggested sending a letter to 1st Selectman Stevenson to let her know that they are considering increasing the fees for park permits, and the Commission needs to know what items related to the beach will be kept in the budget, which has already been submitted.

Ms. Swiatek then discussed the paddle tennis court fees, saying that the expenses are not currently being covered by fee income. She distributed a copy of the operating costs for the paddle tennis courts, citing attendant's fees, lights, and propane as the primary expenses.

Ms. Gutierrez arrived at 8:20 p.m.

**** MR. GOODYEAR MOVED TO RAISE THE PADDLE TENNIS COURT FEES FOR THE 2012/2013 SEASON TO \$20 DAY/\$25 EVENING FOR DAILY AND BLOCK USE.**

**** MS. FLYNN SECONDED.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

DISCUSS NEW PADDLE TENNIS BUILDING POLICIES

Ms. Parnon said they are working on the commemorative side of the project and are determining a list of items to furnish the warming hut. She mentioned that it would be nice to furnish it for the players when they play from October to March, and then the furniture can be moved out and replaced with folding chairs and tables in the off-season when it will be rented out. A picture of New Canaan's facility, built with private funds, was distributed. She noted that the new warming hut should be used for only paddle tennis groups during the paddle tennis season.

Ms. Swiatek read a copy of the provided Weed Beach Warming Hut Rental Policy. She and the Commissioners then discussed the policies. She mentioned that she is awaiting word on the official capacity number. She said there is the possibility to dedicate one court (or more) to a 1 and ½ hour time slot, depending on need, and they discussed cancellation policies, rental usage, etc. She said that it would be best to keep it simple and small-scaled for the first year. She said she would check with the risk management department of the Town's insurance company, and Town Counsel, to discuss insurance coverage and related questions. It was decided that parties at the warming hut will be on Friday or Saturday nights only, and only one at a time, with an attendant on the premises. The building will be cleaned once a day. The rental fee will be \$100.00 for a minimum of three hours (\$300.00), and the deposit amount will be \$300.00. There will not be any smoking allowed inside and outside the building, particularly on the decks. Use of the firepit was discussed also, and Ms. Swiatek confirmed that the switch to the firepit is located inside the attendant's office.

APPROVE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 14, 2011

The changes to the minutes of the December 14, 2011 meeting are as follows:

On page 3, 1st paragraph, last sentence, change "year" to "yet".

On page 3, 2nd paragraph, 2nd sentence, change "and removed the Ross Property repairs and Jr. Sailing portable ramp" to "and the removal of the Ross Property repairs and Jr. Sailing portable ramp".

On page 4, 1st paragraph, the 1st sentence should read: “Ms. Swiatek said the Jr. Sailing Building Group has agreed to pay for a little more than half the cost for making repairs to the heating and hot water systems.”

**** MS. DALY MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 14, 2011 MEETING AS AMENDED.**

**** MS. MORRIS SECONDED.**

**** MOTION PASSED WITH SIX (6) VOTES IN FAVOR (BRANIGAN, DALY, FLYNN, MORRIS, GOODYEAR, GUTIERREZ) AND ONE (1) VOTE ABSTAINED (HUNTER).**

UPDATE ON WEED BEACH MASTER PLAN PROJECT

Ms. Swiatek said the project is still on schedule, according to the contractors, they are still within the lower budget. She said they are under \$130,000 in change orders, which includes the siding and the stone veneer change orders, which had already been approved. The Construction Manager from Wernert Construction has resigned and has been replaced to ensure the project continues to move along. There was discussion on the guardhouse, and while a new guardhouse is not part of the project, there was a cost of \$40,000 to have it constructed to look similar to the bathhouse. She said a copy of the planting plan from the Garden Club has been sent to the 1st Selectman.

DISCUSS BUDGET PROPOSAL FISCAL 2013

Ms. Swiatek distributed copies of the budget proposal for fiscal 2013 and said that the operating budget was approved as submitted for the most part. There is a meeting on February 1, 2012 when the budget is presented to the Board of Selectmen, and she welcomed anyone who could attend to join her. She will send an email to the Commissioners when the budget is approved.

REPORTS:

a) Director

Ms. Swiatek said that her report is as submitted. She reminded the Commissioners that the Performance Measures Meeting will be held on Saturday, January 21, 2012 at 12:00 noon and welcomed anyone who could attend to join her.

b) Assistant Director

Mr. Coghlan reported that the winter program registration numbers increased. The Spring/Summer brochure will be mailed out the first week of March, and registration begins March 7, 2012 for residents, and March 14, 2012 for non-residents.

c) Chairman

Ms. Branigan said that Mr. Tom Golden had passed away and bequeathed his estate to Yale University. He owned several properties in Darien, but one in particular, a house near Baker Field, should be purchased by the Town, as it sits inside the park.

d) Sub-Committee's

Ms. Morris said that everything is fine with the parks.

DISCUSS ANY OTHER BUSINESS (TWO THIRDS VOTE REQUIRED)

Mr. Goodyear suggested that the Commission discuss the Dog Park Rules and Regulations at the next meeting for review in the spring.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ADJOURN MEETING

**** MS. GUTIERREZ MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.**

**** MS. FLYNN SECONDED.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Marr
Telesco Secretarial Services

NEXT MEETING: Regular Meeting February 15, 2012, 7:30 pm; Room 119, Darien Town Hall