

**TOWN OF DARIEN
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
SEPTEMBER 20, 2012**

ATTENDANCE: Jane Branigan, Chair; Susan Daly, Mary Flynn, Marianne Gutierrez,
Andrew Hunter, Robert Marchesi.

STAFF: Susan Swiatek, Director; James Coghlan, Assistant Director.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Branigan called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. and stated that there was a quorum present.

Approval of Minutes

Meeting of July 18, 2012

Corrections: Page 2, paragraph 2, sentence 3: add the word “could” after people could bring their dogs.

Page 3: Paragraph 3: Correct spelling of warranty not warrantee

Page

**** MS. DALY MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF JULY 18, 2012 AS AMENDED WITH CORRECTIONS NOTED.**

**** MS. GUTIERREZ SECONDED.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

DDOG Guest Presentation; Cherry Lawn Park, Ashley Feehan

Chairman Branigan stated that this update was from last March and was requested by the Cherry Lawn subcommittee and was in response to the town’s movement to extend hours of off-leash restrictions for dogs in the park. Ms. Feehan stated that there was a study based on the proposal to have hours beyond the current 8:30 a.m. restriction, and the based the study on usage patterns and data collected with journals, videos and time stamped clips from June 1, 2011 through September 16, 2012.

Ms. Feehan summarized that the park is not really being used primarily due to safety concerns that the narrow strip of land designated as the dog walking area

is really not sufficient. She then reviewed results of Cherry Lawn Park usage and the conclusion that there is no change and dogs are not a deterrent to park usage for early morning hours.

She reviewed the soccer schedule and noted that there was no conflict as there are no games prior to 10:30 a.m. She summarized that their recommendation is to keep existing hours and to add early hours in the summer and on weekends to accommodate the proposal.

Ms. Flynn stated that she and Erika Morris have reviewed the data and for a long time have supported this recommendation. She referred to an e-mail from Erika and asked for it to be included in the minutes as follows:

I am so very sorry to be missing tonight's meeting. I have had to travel to London for work for the entire week. I would particularly like to be present given the Commission will be discussing the dog issue and I have spent quite a lot of time on this in the last twelve months while working with Mary Flynn on the dog sub-committee. I hope you won't mind if I take a minute to add my two cents on the topic, although I am sure Mary will do a beautiful job of summarizing our findings and making our recommendation.

It is my recommendation that we should leave Cherry Lawn off-leash hours as they are and add morning hours until 8:30am on all weekends and summer months. I have made a tremendous amount of visits throughout the spring and summer to visit the park on both of these additional time slots. I have seen first hand the off-leash demand for these times while there is a consistent dearth of children to be found before 8:30 on the playground, tennis courts, playing fields, etc. I believe the DDOG people have taken the time to document this.

I wish I could be present tonight to underscore my view, having taken the time to witness the effect of our current regulations and realizing they do not exactly match tax payer interests.

Ms. Daly stated that she is okay with the recommended extended hours and suggested that the group look into a fundraising effort for the fence replacement that is targeted to the end user group. She added that they should consider this for the future and to explore options or joint projects with Eagle Scout opportunities.

Ms. Swiatek stated that the dog walking area is larger than what is proposed, and there could be cleaned up with removal of some of the brush to open up the area more. Ms. Switzer then read from the regulations Section 42-Regulation 29 Section B, as follows:

- (1) Cherry Lawn Park: Dogs are not permitted in playground area&, community gardens, or playfields at any time. Dogs are permitted off leash

or lead from May 31 from dawn to 10:30 am Monday – Friday/ are permitted off leash in the Designated Area between the Darien Nature Center and Brookside Road. At times. Dogs must be on leash or lead to and from the parking lot to the Designated.

There was discussion on the parts of the regulations that would need to be amended and it was agreed to the following modification to the regulations.

- ** MS. FLYNN MOVED TO APPROVE THE AMENDED REGULATIONS SECTION 42-R29, (B) DOGS IN PARKS (1) CHERRY LAWN PARK TO REFLECT A CHANGE TO ALLOW DOGS OF LEASH OR LEAD FROM JUNE 1 – AUGUST 31 FROM DAWN TO 8:30 AM MONDAY – SUNDAY, AND TO ADD SATURDAYS AND SUNDAYS OCTOBER 1- MAY 31. CHANGES IN HOURS ARE EFFECTIVE OCTOBER 1, 2012.
- ** MS. GUTIERREZ SECONDED.
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

There was a discussion on the enforcement issue of the regulation and Ms. Branigan stated that there needs to be a new sign or additional wording on the signs. There was a discussion regarding dogs at the beach and Ms. Flynn asked Ms. Feehan to pass along to the DDOG group that this rule needs to be enforced and emphasized that no dogs are allowed at either beach.

Discuss and take action on request made by First Selectman Jayme Stevenson, to allow resident commercial lobster fisherman, Roger Frate, keep a skiff on the Pear Tree Beach boat launching ramp.

First Selectman Stevenson was in attendance and stated that she wanted to reiterate her position that was made at the meeting last month that this unique request and a nice thing to do for a long-standing person who is one of the last lobstermen in the town. She added that it does not interfere with other activities and asked the commission for their due consideration.

A discussion ensued on the potential precedent that would be set to then apply to other requests. .

Ms. Switzer then read from the regulations and it was decided to make an exception to the regulations. Chairman Branigan suggested that the wording needs to be specific relative to the size of the boat and the dates that this exception would be made.

- ** MS. FLYNN MOVED TO APPROVE AN EXCEPTION TO BOATING REGULATIONS TO PERMIT DARIEN RESIDENT AND COMMERCIAL FISHERMAN, ROGER FRATE TO DOCK ONE TWELVE FOOT SKIFF, REGISTRATION NUMBER TO BE DETERMINED, ON THE OUTSIDE

- (PEAR TREE POINT ROAD SIDE) OF THE PEAR TREE BEACH BOAT LAUNCHING RAMP DOCK FROM NOVEMBER 1 THROUGH APRIL 15, TO BE REVIEWED ANNUALLY BY THE COMMISSION.
- ** MS. GUTIERREZ SECONDED.
 - ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Discuss and take action on Rules and Regulations governing the use of Darien Parks

Ms. Swiatek referred to the amended rules and regulations as provided to and reviewed by the Commissioners. There was no further discussion beyond the above mentioned amendments.

- ** MR. HUNTER MOVED TO APPROVE THE DARIEN PARKS & RECREATION RULES AND REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE USE OF DARIEN PARKS AS AMENDED.
- ** MS. DALY SECONDED.
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Discuss and take action on Eagle Scout Project, Stony Brook Park Guest: Andrew Fletcher

Item was removed from the agenda pending further information.

Update on tennis court conditions – Weed Beach, Cherry Lawn Park

Ms. Swiatek stated that Cherry Lawn courts are being rebuilt and repaired with asphalt that will get through the next season. She added that as mentioned before, the courts are at the end of their lifespan and she would like to add the replacement of the courts to the next phase of the project. She added that the tennis courts are covered in more detail in her report.

Director's Report:

Ms. Swiatek presented her report for the record as follows:

Project Status:

- a) Weed Beach Master Plan Project. The project has been completed project is finished. Ongoing maintenance and troubleshooting continue as we learn new facility operations. Final budget accounting will be completed by the beginning of October.
- b) Equipment Replacement. The replacement for truck 5 DAR has been received.
- c) Renovate Gallagher Field. Work is nearing completion. At the time of this report the fencing and sod work remain.
- d) Tennis Courts Work on all courts has either been performed or is nearing completion. Work at Cherry Lawn is nearing completion. Courts 1-3 had all

cracks addressed and the finish resurfaced. The single court was demolished and a new asphalt court was installed. At Weed, the floating surface on the Weed front courts was repaired under warranty. All seams were addressed. Following this work, a resurface coat was applied at a discounted rate. At the same time we asked the contractor to perform a simple repair to the worst 500 feet of cracks on the back courts in an attempt to keep the courts operational in the spring of 2013. The Commission should seek repair funds to demo and rebuild these 40 year old courts in the 2014 budget.

e) Paddle Courts. Specifications for the fourth year of the five year renovation program began in August and are near completion at this time.

f) Divider Door. Work began on removal and replacement of the divider door in the TH gym on September 10. The existing door will be removed now, new one installed in December when we have another window of opportunity.

Photos included:

Gallagher field grade work and new fencing on the paddle courts and demo/rebuild Cherry Lawn.

Ms. Gutierrez left the meeting at 8:35 p.m.

Assistant Director's Report

Mr. Coghlan reviewed his report as follows:

Fall & Winter Programs:

Registration for fall & winter programs began on Tuesday, August 28th, Participation numbers and revenue are similar to this point last year. Included in this report is a graph comparing the amount of money brought in through fall & winter registration over the past nine years.

Our movie night at Weed Beach on Friday, August 31st has a huge success. We showed Dr. Seuss' "The Lorax" and had approximately 500 people attend. The parking lot was completely full but we didn't turn anyone away.

Beach Season

The 2012 beach season came to an end with a pleasant Labor Day weekend. We had lifeguards on duty at Pear Tree Beach until Friday, August 24th Lifeguards were on duty at Weed Beach through Sunday, August 26th and Labor Day weekend.

Security guards were on duty at Pear Tree through Monday, September 3rd and will be on duty through Sunday, September 30th at Weed Beach.

Paddle Court Season

The 2012-2013 paddle court season begins on Monday, October 8th, Block time requests were mailed out on August 16th and have been processed. We have received a large amount of requests for block time and everyone got either their 1st 2nd or 3rd choice of court time except for one group. I am working with the

group to try to accommodate them at another time. We are fully staffed for the season and I will be holding an orientation on Friday October 5th to familiarize everyone with the new building and new procedures. Work was recently completed to resurface court 3, replace all screen sections and snow boards on court 5, and replace various screens on the other courts.

OTHER BUSINESS - None

NEXT MEETING: October 17, 2012: Regular Meeting at 7:30 p.m. Room 119 Darien Town Hall.

Adjournment

** **MR. MARCHESI MOVED TO ADJOURN**

** **MS. DALY SECONDED.**

** **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Marilyn Knox, Telesco Secretarial Services