

**TOWN OF DARIEN  
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING  
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2011**

**ATTENDANCE:** Charles Goodyear; Susan Daly; Bob Marchesi;  
Andy Hunter; Mary Flynn; Marianne Gutierrez (7:42 p.m.);  
Susan Graham (7:37 p.m.)

**STAFF:** Susan Swiatek, Director; Jim Coghlan, Assistant Director

**OTHER:** Patricia Bumgardner, DDOG;  
Cecelia Mundt, Parks & Rec RTM Member and DDOG;  
Julie Frank, DDOG;  
Jim Patrick, Vice Chair Public Health & Safety, RTM Member;  
Cheryl Russell; Tony Imbimbo, RTM Member; Lloyd Plehaty;  
Karen Armour, RTM Moderator

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Goodyear called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. He explained that he is chairing the meeting in the absence of Chairman Branigan. He said that item #6 on the agenda, Discussion on Dogs in Parks with DDOG, would take place at the end of the regular meeting agenda, at approximately 8:30 p.m., and last for 45 minutes.

**APPROVE MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING; REGULAR MEETING OF  
JANUARY 19, 2011**

The correction(s) to the regular meeting of January 19, 2011 are as follows:

On page 2, under UPDATE ON WEED BEACH MASTER PLAN PROJECT, the 3<sup>rd</sup> sentence should read: "The Town will bid the project and the prevailing wage will apply."

On page 3, under Sub-Committee, change "Sub-Committee" to "Report by DDOG Liaison".

On page 3, under Sub-Committee, the 3<sup>rd</sup> sentence should read: "A pilot program was discussed."

**\*\* MS. DALY MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR  
MEETING OF JANUARY 19, 2011.**

**\*\* MS. FLYNN SECONDED.**

**\*\* MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION ON REVENUE AND FEE SCHEDULE FOR FY 2012**

Ms. Swiatek explained that this takes effect in the spring. The public hearing was held last night on fees, and she provided an updated fee schedule. The increases are as follows: Park permits

from \$35.00 to \$40.00; Senior Park permits from \$35.00 to \$40.00; Replacement permits from \$30.00 to \$40.00; Town Employee permits from \$35.00 to \$40.00; Non-Resident Taxpayer permits from \$65.00 to \$70.00; Sitter/Nanny Vehicle permits from \$65.00 to \$70.00; Volunteer Fireman permits from \$35.00 to \$40.00; and Paddle Tennis daily and block fees from \$12.00 day/\$16.00 evening to \$15.00 day/\$20.00 evening. Volunteer firemen and also seniors get on park permit free per family. Ms. Swiatek said that the revenue projection would now be \$376,300 from \$323,305.

- \*\* MS. FLYNN MOVED TO APPROVE THE REVENUE AND FEE SCHEDULE FOR FY2012 AS SUBMITTED.**
- \*\* MR. MARCHESI SECONDED.**
- \*\* MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### **UPDATE ON WEED BEACH MASTER PLAN PROJECT**

Ms. Gutierrez arrived at 7:42 p.m.

#### **a. APPOINT KENT EPPLEY TO THE BUILDING COMMITTEE**

Ms. Daly explained that Mr. Eppley is a well-known builder in town. He comes with strong qualifications. She said that he will be an asset to the project, with his hands-on building and trade experience.

- \*\* MS. DALY MOVED TO APPOINT KENT EPPLEY TO THE BUILDING COMMITTEE.**
- \*\* MR. MARCHESI SECONDED.**
- \*\* MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

#### **b. PROJECT TIMELINE**

Ms. Swiatek said they are working through the negotiations with the owner's representative. She said they reviewed some timelines and are settling on starting the project at the end of August/beginning of September. The construction wouldn't begin until the end of the beach season. The intent is to maintain public access to facilities as much and as safely as possible. The paddle courts will continue to operate. The operation trailer for the paddle courts will have to temporarily relocate across from where it currently is.

### **BUDGET FY 2012 REQUEST STATUS**

Ms. Swiatek said the Board of Selectmen has finished reviewing the budget and sent it to the Board of Finance. A significant operating item cut from the budget is for the Parks & Recreation Facility Maintenance Contractual account. She explained that in the past they would reimburse the Nature Center for bathroom costs. The facility is being returned to the Nature Center and will therefore no longer be part of the Parks & Recreation account. The more significant change is under the capital budget, where two items were approved. The paddle court resurfacing project, which is in Year 3 of a 5 Year program of renovations, was approved. The reserve

equipment replacement project was also approved. The beach sand project, the dog park seed money, repairs to the Ross property, and repairs to Holahan Field were not approved.

## REPORTS

a) Director

Ms. Swiatek said the Public Works crews have been working tirelessly with snow removal. Leaks are being repaired at the Senior Center. The Performance Measures meeting took place recently, and she said she can share the presentation with the Commissioners if needed.

b) Assistant Director

Mr. Coghlan said the Spring/Summer brochure will be mailed out next week. Registration starts on March 2, 2011. Beach stickers will be sold both in the Parks & Recreation office and on-line. Upgrades to software and the servers is underway, and the website and on-line registration will have a new look. The Public Works Department is now offering the purchase of dump permits on-line.

c) Chairman

There was no report.

d) Sub-Committee

There was no report.

## PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Tony Imbimbo asked about the bathroom project at Weed Beach. Ms. Swiatek said the bathrooms are currently being cleaned once a day, and the project will be bid out to have them cleaned twice a day.

**\*\* MR. GOODYEAR MOVED TO APPROVE A BRIEF RECESS.**

**\*\* MS. FLYNN SECONDED.**

**\*\* MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Goodyear called a brief recess at 8:05 p.m. and said the meeting will resume at 8:30 p.m. to discuss Dogs in Parks with DDOG.

## DISCUSSION ON DOGS IN PARKS WITH DDOG

Mr. Goodyear called the meeting to order at 8:30 p.m. He said the overall objective was for the Parks & Recreation Commission to develop and approve a plan to allow dogs to be off-leash at certain times under certain circumstances in some parks and fields under the Parks & Recreation Commission's jurisdiction. It is anticipated that the RTM will pass an ordinance as soon as

March of 2011 requiring all dogs to be on-leash in Darien at all times except as designated by the Parks & Recreation Commission. The RTM will set an effective date for the ordinance.

Mr. Goodyear distributed a one-page draft of the Parks & Recreation Dog Leash Rules, explaining that he had reviewed this with Ms. Swiatek and Ms. Graham only. It is as follows:

**Off Leash Parks/Fields:** Baker Park (wooded areas only); Stony Brook Park; Tilley's Pond, daily hours dawn-10 a.m., 6 p.m.–dusk (except during special events); Weed Beach (November-March only, except playground, tennis and paddle areas).

**On Leash at all Times:** Cherry Lwn Park; Holahan Field and Town Hall; McGuane Field; Selleck's Woods.

**Off limits to Dogs at all Times:** Pear Tree Point Beach (except seeing eye dogs and access to Darien Boat Club).

**Steps Before Implementation:** Woodland Park – meet with “Friends” group to identify areas and finalize days and hours; Stony Brook Park – DDOG group to lead effort to design trail and bridge system and raise funds to construct same; Baker Park – DDOG group to organize volunteers to improve trails in wooded area; Tilley Pond – discuss hours and days plan with “Friends” and adjust as appropriate.

Review overall plan with Darien Police Department. Establish enforcement plan. P&R Public Hearing followed by approval of final plan.

He then reviewed the summary and said it was a talking piece only. He said that the safety of adults, children and dogs was the most important aspect; the rules need to be enforceable and enforced; and everyone needs to be respectful of the work and concerns of people who have been involved with the Town's parks and nature preserves.

Ms. Patty Bumgardner, one of the founding owners of DDOG, welcomed everyone and thanked them for their support.

Ms. Graham arrived at 8:42 p.m.

Mr. Marchesi complimented Mr. Goodyear for his hard work in putting together the Dog Leash rules.

Ms. Julie Frank of DDOG thanked everyone for letting DDOG have a voice in the community. She spoke mainly in support of Woodland Park and Selleck's Woods, excluding Dunlop. She presented some information on the Aspetuck Nature Preserve, a land trust and nature preserve area. They allow dogs off-leash there in 41 of the 42 nature preserves, and they have rules that are posted throughout the area. She mentioned a stewardship program for Woodland Park, where people have the best concerns of the park in mind. She suggested that the same rules at Aspetuck be incorporated at Woodland Park. She said they would pay for the signage at Woodland Park. She distributed copies of her presentation.

Ms. Bumgardner explained the history of DDOG, beginning in April of 2009, and said the large group of DDOG volunteers has been working very hard since then to get off-leash areas for dogs in various areas of Darien. DDOG remains committed to finding a fair and equitable solution, as well as making it a collaborative effort. She said for the record that she has two children who play sports on the town's fields, and she wouldn't try to get off-leash areas for dogs if there was a vicious dog issue at Cherry Lawn Park. She said that Cherry Lawn Park works well for Senior Citizens because of the flat terrain, plenty of parking, it is a safe and open area, there are no tick issues, and it is an active community center of dog owners. She read the Cherry Lawn Park rules, and distributed copies of her presentation.

Mr. Goodyear thanked DDOG for their efforts and said that he will recommend to Ms. Branigan that a working group of Commissioners be put together.

Mr. Lloyd Plehaty, RTM Member of TGS&A, suggested that the Commission regulations and RTM ordinances are separate but related, and he suggested that all groups be kept informed of communication and progress regarding DDOG.

Mr. James Patrick, Vice Chair of the Public Health & Safety of the RTM, asked if this would be on the RTM agenda for their March meeting. Mr. Goodyear said he would get back to him.

Ms. Karen Armour, RTM Moderator, said DDOG and the Parks & Recreation Commission is well underway in making strides for off-leash dog rules and regulations.

Ms. Cheryl Russell said that she is concerned about Weed Beach and feels that it is a health issue and dangerous to have dogs at the beach.

**OTHER BUSINESS (TWO-THIRDS VOTE)**

**NEXT MEETING: Regular Meeting Wednesday, March 16, 2011 7:30 p.m.**  
**Darien Town Hall, Room 119**

- \*\* MS. DALY MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
- \*\* MS. GUTIERREZ SECONDED.**
- \*\* MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting ended at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Marr  
Telesco Secretarial Services

