

TOWN OF DARIEN
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 2011

ATTENDANCE: Jane Branigan; Charlie Goodyear; Susan Daly; Bob Marchesi;
Mary Flynn; Susan Graham; Marianne Gutierrez (7:40 p.m.);
Andy Hunter (8:00 p.m.)

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

OTHER: Rick Pfeiffer; Cecelia Mundt; Danny Frank; Ted Hawkins; Holly Kelly;
Sean Shay; Mark Daly

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Branigan called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

APPROVE MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF MARCH 16, 2011

The correction(s) to the regular meeting of March 16, 2011 are as follows:

On page 1, under APPROVE MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING/REGULAR MEETING OF FEBRUARY 16, 2011, remove "PUBLIC HEARING".

On page 2, under UPDATE ON WEED BEACH MASTER PLAN PROJECT, the 3rd paragraph, 1st sentence should read: "Ms. Daly spoke on behalf of the Commemorative Committee, currently working with Kate Buch, Town of Darien Finance Director, on what fundraising strategies are possible because of the bonding on this project."

On page 2, under UPDATE ON WEED BEACH MASTER PLAN PROJECT, eliminate the last sentence.

On page 4, under PUBLIC COMMENTS, 6th paragraph, 4th sentence, change "citer" to "cited".

On page 6, 6th paragraph, the 3rd sentence should read: "She mentioned that the Parks & Rec Department has had a plan, and requested money in the budget, for fences and trail work."

**** MR. MARCHESI MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF MARCH 16, 2011.**

**** MS. DALY SECONDED.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION ON DEPARTMENT PROGRAM SCHOLARSHIP POLICY

Mr. Coghlan distributed copies of the proposed Program Scholarship Policy. He said that they currently don't have a policy for accepting scholarships. The proposal came about after an adult town resident requested a scholarship towards a program. He felt that this would be a good time to have a policy in place, as they have seen an increase in requests recently.

Ms. Gutierrez arrived at 7:40 p.m.

Mr. Goodyear felt that no one should be turned away, and that people should be encouraged to come forward with requests for scholarships. The vendors take a reduction in their fee in order to provide the scholarship. Mr. Coghlan said that horseback riding is not an eligible program for a scholarship.

**** MR. GOODYEAR MOVED TO APPROVE THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE DEPARTMENT PROGRAM SCHOLARSHIP POLICY AS SUBMITTED.**

**** MS. FLYNN SECONDED.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION ON ACCEPTANCE OF GIFT – EQUIPMENT AND INSTALLATION OF HEALTH BEAT EQUIPMENT FOR FIT TRAIL AT WEED BEACH; GIFT FROM PIONEERING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE, DARIEN YMCA

Ms. Swiatek explained that this is the gift they had talked about previously. She has been working with Pioneering Healthy Communities, and it was put together by the YMCA to have fit trails installed at Weed Beach. She provided pictures of the equipment in her report. This is the same company that provided the Weed Beach playground equipment. Pioneering Healthy Communities is an initiative to create fit communities in order to combat childhood obesity. The YMCA put together a group of town leaders to come up with a way to make Darien a more fit community, to get people and children outside and active in exercise. A grant from the Robert Woods Johnson Foundation was applied for to deliver initiatives. The Darien YMCA was one of 16 YMCA's in three states to receive the grant funding. Ms. Swiatek suggested that the Commission accept the gift up to \$50,000. The fitness equipment is for adults and teenage children. It is not designed for pre-school or K-4 aged children. It could be installed as early as this summer. The ongoing maintenance would be the same as the playground equipment. The equipment is made of powder-coated aluminum.

**** MR. GOODYEAR MOVED TO ACCEPT THE GIFT OF EQUIPMENT AND INSTALLATION OF HEALTH BEAT EQUIPMENT FOR FIT TRAIL AT WEED BEACH, FROM PIONEERING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE AND THE DARIEN YMCA, UP TO \$50,000.**

**** MS. GUTIERREZ SECONDED.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

UPDATE ON WEED BEACH MASTER PLAN PROJECT

Ms. Swiatek said the Weed Beach Master Plan Project is moving forward. She has been meeting weekly with the architect and owner's rep. Contracts have been signed. She anticipates getting a

plan to the print house at the end of April, and she is anticipating a May 5th bid notice in the paper. Bids would then open around June 14.

Mr. Goodyear said he has agreed to be the liaison for the Weed Beach Committee and the Parks & Rec Commission. He said that they have already carved out the gate area at the entrance from the rest of the plan. That landscaping work will be the work of the Garden Club of Darien. The project will cover up to \$45,000 and will beautify the gate area with easy maintenance, native plants. The fence on the left hand side near the entrance will be taken down. This separates Garden Club of Darien's gift from the bonded project. The Garden Club is using the same landscape architect as the one for the Weed Beach project.

BUDGET FY 2012 REQUEST STATUS

Ms. Swiatek said the budget had gone before the Board of Finance last week for a final vote. The vehicle replacement line item stayed in, and the Weed Beach bath house will get an additional cleaning on a daily basis. It was suggested that the first cleaning take place between 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. and then again in the evening.

REPORTS

a) Director

Ms. Swiatek reported that the crews have gotten the fields ready. They are in great shape and teams have been playing. She mentioned that operational bids are now out for refuse pick-up, cleaning, and security services.

b) Assistant Director

Mr. Coghlan said interviews with summer staff are on-going. There is a new security company for the beach, which has some personnel that are familiar with the beach area. Weed Beach security staff start on Monday, April 18, 2011, so beach stickers will be needed. Beach stickers from last year are good through May 31, 2011. Pear Tree Point security staff start on Memorial Day weekend. The annual paddle tennis report was included in Mr. Coghlan's report and it showed it was the best revenue to date; however, the expenses outweighed the revenues. It is expected that there will be an increase in usage and revenue when the building is built.

Mr. Hunter arrived at 8:00 p.m.

c) Chairman

Ms. Branigan said she worked with the Friends of Woodland Park recently, and also with the Police Chief and six other people to discuss the Dogs in Parks Rules and Regulations. She said the Chief of Police seemed positive about whatever the Parks & Rec Commission passes, it will be able to be enforced. The town Dog Warden's hours will be based on the enforcement hours.

d) Sub-Committee

Ms. Susan Graham included her Sub-Committee report as part of Dogs in Parks Rules and Regulations below.

DISCUSSION ON DOGS IN PARKS RULES AND REGULATIONS

Ms. Branigan explained that they will be reviewing what is in effect today regarding rules and regulations for the town.

At Cherry Lawn Park, a rule was passed in 2007 that does not allow any dogs on playing fields.

At Woodland Park and Selleck's Woods, dogs are to be on-leash at all times.

At Weed Beach and Pear Tree Point, no dogs are allowed at all.

At other parks, there are no rules in effect, except for the State rules.

Ms. Branigan explained that the RTM wants to pass an ordinance for a leash law to include any school property, sidewalks, and municipal property. She said the Parks & Recreation Commission only controls the parks, and their rules and regulations listed above are in effect right now. The change would take place on October 1, 2011. The Commission will not be voting tonight. They will be creating a draft for a Public Hearing to be held on May 18, 2011, to be followed by a discussion and then a vote in June. She thanked everyone for all their emails and letters to her and the Commission.

Ms. Graham distributed copies of her draft of rules and regulations, which the Commission members discussed. It is summarized as follows:

Parks & Rec Commission Leash Laws for Cherry Lawn, Woodland Park and Sellecks Woods:

Cherry Lawn Park:

Peak Season March 16th – December 14th

Suggested off-leash hours: Dawn – 10:00 a.m. Mon-Fri and Dawn – 8:00 a.m. Sat & Sun*

* Dogs must be leashed in parking lots, around playgrounds, and around playing fields. No dogs allowed on any playing fields i.e. soccer and baseball fields and on playgrounds.

Off Peak Season December 15th – March 15th

Suggested off-leash hours: Dawn – 11:30 a.m. Mon-Fri and Dawn – 10 a.m. Sat & Sun*

* Dogs must be leashed in parking lots, around playgrounds, and around playing fields. No dogs allowed on any playing fields i.e. soccer and baseball fields and on playgrounds.

Woodland Park:

Peak season April 1st – October 31st

Off leash Dawn – 10 a.m. Mon – Sun *

Off Peak Season November 1st – March 31st

Off leash Dawn – 11:30 Mon–Fri and Dawn – 10 a.m. Sat & Sun*

* Off leash on select trails. Signage would be placed throughout park designating rules and leash instruction on specific trails.

Sellecks Woods:

Peak Season April 1st – October 31st

Off leash Dawn – 10 a.m. Mon-Sun *

Off Peak Season November 1st – March 31st

Off leash Dawn – 11:30 Mon-Fri and Dawn – 10 a.m. Sat & Sun

* Off leash on select trails. Signage would be placed throughout park designating rules and leash instruction on specific trails.

Stony Brook:

Off leash Dawn – Dusk

Diller Property:

Off leash Dawn – Dusk

Ms. Swiatek confirmed that permits are issued for Monday-Friday from 3:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m., Saturdays from 8:30 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. and Sundays from 8:30 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. at Casey Field, and Sundays 8:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. at Gallagher Field.

It was confirmed that enforcement should be in effect after the off-leash hours are over.

Mr. Goodyear discussed some concerns regarding Selleck's Woods, as it abuts a designated land trust property. Ms. Daly, Ms. Flynn and Mr. Goodyear were not in favor of having off leash hours at Selleck's Woods.

After much discussion regarding permit times/hours, peak usage, seasonality, enforcement, etc., changes were made to the initial draft, and the following information reflects the **amended** draft:

Parks & Rec Commission Leash Laws for Cherry Lawn, Woodland Park and Sellecks Woods:

Cherry Lawn Park:

Peak Season March 1st – December 15th

Suggested off-leash hours: Dawn – 10:30 a.m. Mon-Fri and Dawn – 8:00 a.m. Sat & Sun*

- * Dogs must be leashed in parking lots, around playgrounds, and around playing fields. No dogs allowed on any playing fields i.e. soccer and baseball fields and on playgrounds.

Off Peak Season December 16th – February 28th

Suggested off-leash hours: Dawn – 11:30 a.m. Mon-Sun*

- * Dogs must be leashed in parking lots, around playgrounds, and around playing fields. No dogs allowed on any playing fields i.e. soccer and baseball fields and on playgrounds.

Woodland Park:

Year Round Dawn – 10:30 a.m. Mon-Sun*

- * Off leash on select trails. Signage would be placed throughout park designating rules and leash instruction on specific trails.

Sellecks Woods:

Year Round Dawn – 10:30 a.m. Mon-Sun *

- * Off leash on select trails. Signage would be placed throughout park designating rules and leash instruction on specific trails.

Stony Brook:

Off leash All Day Year Round Mon-Sun

Diller Property:

Off leash All Day Year Round Mon-Sun

Additions:

Tilley Pond

Off leash Dawn – 10:30 a.m. Year Round Mon-Sun (except during previously scheduled events)

Houlahan Field, McGuane Field

On leash at all times

Weed Beach, Pear Tree Point

Off limits at all times

ANY OTHER BUSINESS (TWO-THIRDS VOTE REQUIRED)

There was no new business to discuss.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Rick Pfeiffer suggested that the Commission members use name tents for easy identification. He said that with beach access by permit only, usage of playground equipment and fit trail exercise equipment could be excluding to those that don't have permits. He said that in the potential case of needing extra police officers to enforce the proposed dog leash laws, it could become expensive for the taxpayers.

Cecelia Moundt asked how the Commission planned to distribute the notice of the public hearing. Ms. Swiatek said that it will be published in the newspaper.

Danny Frank apologized for his animated comments at the previous meeting. He's been involved in the leash law process for about a year, and he felt that it is taking too long to get resolved.

Ted Hawkins asked the Commission to consider dogs on leash at Pear Tree Point during the winter months.

Holly Kelly said she felt that great progress has been made to get to a reasonable compromise.

Sean Shay asked the Commission to consider afternoon hours at Woodland Park.

Mark Daly said he is a neighbor of the Diller property and feels that great progress has been made to reach a middle ground. There has been money in the budget for the Diller property but nothing has been done with it.

**NEXT MEETING: Public Hearing/Regular Meeting Wednesday, May 18, 2011 7:30 p.m.
Darrien Town Hall, Room 119**

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

The meeting ended at 9:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Marr
Telesco Secretarial Services