

**TOWN OF DARIEN
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING
THURSDAY, JUNE 16, 2011**

ATTENDANCE: Jane Branigan; Charlie Goodyear; Susan Daly; Bob Marchesi;
Mary Flynn; Susan Graham; Marianne Gutierrez; Andy Hunter;
Erika Morris

STAFF: Susan Swiatek, Director

OTHER: John Sini, Darien Junior Football League

CALL TO ORDER

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

**APPROVE MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING/PUBLIC HEARING
MAY 18, 2011**

The correction(s) to the regular meeting/public hearing of May 18, 2011 are as follows:

On page 1, under ATTENDANCE, change “Ericka Morris” to “Erika Morris”.

On page 6, 3rd paragraph, 2nd sentence, change “parimeters” to “perimeters”.

On page 7, 1st paragraph, 4th sentence, change “complemented” to “complimented”.

On page 7, 4th paragraph, 4th sentence, change “at any time in the park” to “all the time in the park”.

On page 8, 1st paragraph, 4th sentence, change “actins” to “actions”.

**** MS. DALY MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR
MEETING/PUBLIC HEARING OF MAY 18, 2011.**

**** MS. GUTIERREZ SECONDED.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION ON DARIEN JUNIOR FOOTBALL LEAGUE,
LIGHTS ON HOLAHAN FIELD**

Mr. John Sini, 36 Birch Road, Board Member of the Darien Junior Football League, spoke about the request for the DJFL to obtain permission from the Parks & Recreation

Commission to pursue a special permit with the Planning & Zoning Commission for the use of temporary lighting at Holahan Field for the Fall 2011 and 2012 seasons. The DJFL is proposing to use three portable diesel powered lighting units for weekday practices until 7 p.m. for a maximum of 30 days from mid-October to mid-November in 2011 and 2012. He said they will be seeking approval for two seasons of use, which is in line with the special permit that was most recently approved for the DFJL at Darien High School. He said they are working with one homeowner to address the concerns that he raised.

**** MR. GOODYEAR MOVED TO APPROVE THE DARIEN JUNIOR FOOTBALL LEAGUE USING LIGHTS ON HOLAHAN FIELD.**

**** MS. GUTIERREZ SECONDED.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION ON DOGS IN PARKS REGULATIONS

Ms. Erika Morris read the following statement into the record: “I vetted my voting tonight with Town Counsel, who agrees that I do not need to recuse myself. But in full disclosure, while a Commissioner, I have never held an office or board member position in DDOG, Darien Land Trust, or Friends of Selleck’s Woods. But in full disclosure, I currently am a member of Friends of Selleck’s. I had also been a member of DDOG, but discontinued membership prior to becoming a commissioner.”

Ms. Branigan then read the following statement into the record: “As we go into the discussion and vote whether to have on or off-leash for dogs in our parks there are a few points that need to be said. The Public Hearing brought out many thoughts and ideas on both sides of the subject.

To start with, the Town of Darien is 12.5 square miles and sits between Norwalk and Stamford – a small town between two cities with 11 parks totaling approximately 197 acres, which are divided into active and passive parkland. The acreage includes our beaches, ballparks, playfields and nature centers. People referred to Aspetuck, Cranberry Park in Norwalk and Lake Mohegan in Fairfield as areas that allow dogs to run off leash. Aspetuck Land Trust manages 1,723 acres of open space, which includes 113 pieces of property across Westport, Easton, Fairfield and Weston. In talking to David Brant, the Executive Director of Aspetuck, their Board is considering a change to their policy at Troutbrook Valley, which has 1,009 acres to on-leash from March 1 to November 1 due to baby foxes being killed by a German Shepherd. Cranberry Park has 190 acres of public parkland, an estate which has a public golf course and trails. Lake Mohegan and surrounding areas comprise a total of 170.4 acres, which the Conservation Commission administers with hiking trails and open space. The Park and Rec. manages the swimming area. Unfortunately, Darien does not have such land. We are a town that is over 90% developed and our zoning goes from 1/5 acre to two acres. We are the only town in

lower Fairfield County that does not have a dog park, and we are the smallest town with the smallest land area.

As Fairfield County has become more populated and with more dogs, towns have been passing leash ordinances and thus we see dog parks in Rowayton, New Canaan, Stamford. It is time that Darien set aside areas that allow dogs off-leash and leashed in other areas. The police and the Police Commission have asked us to have rules that are uniform and enforceable for the safety of all our citizens and for everyone's enjoyment."

Ms. Branigan said they will be voting on the concepts, and then will have them written up in legal form for the rules and regulations to take place October 1, 2011. Until then, they will be operating under the current rules and regulations. They are: No dogs on the playfields of Cherry Lawn; dogs on leash at the two nature preserves, Selleck's Woods and Woodland Park; and no dogs are allowed at Weed Beach except where necessary; and no dogs are allowed at Pear Tree Point Beach except where medically necessary and they are permitted for the express purpose of access to the Darien Boat Club, where they would have to be on-leash.

Mr. Goodyear, Ms. Morris and Ms. Flynn then presented options for Cherry Lawn Park and Tilley Pond Park, to be implemented 10/1/11 with a P&R Commission review 4/18/12. It was finalized as follows:

Cherry Lawn Park

- Dogs are not permitted on playing fields or inside the playground areas at any time, or in the community garden with their owners.
- Clearly marked off designated area between Nature Center and Brookside Road –
 - Open to off leash dogs at all times
 - Dogs must be on leash from and to the parking lot(s)
- Dogs allowed off leash during September 1 – May 31 in all areas of the park (excluding playing fields and the playground enclosure) from dawn until 10:30 a.m. Monday-Friday only. No other off leash hours.
- No off leash hours on any Saturday or Sunday except in designated area (see above).
- No off leash hours from June 1 to August 31 except in designated area (see above).

**** MR. GOODYEAR MOVED TO APPROVE DOGS OFF LEASH DURING SEPTEMBER 1-MAY 31 IN ALL AREAS OF THE PARK (EXCLUDING PLAYING FIELDS AND THE PLAYGROUND ENCLOSURE) FROM DAWN**

UNTIL 10:30 A.M. MONDAY-FRIDAY ONLY. THERE WILL BE NO OFF LEASH HOURS ON ANY SATURDAY OR SUNDAY EXCEPT IN DESIGNATED AREA BETWEEN NATURE CENTER AND BROOKSIDE ROAD, AND NO OFF LEASH HOURS DURING JUNE 1-AUGUST 31 EXCEPT IN DESIGNATED AREA BETWEEN NATURE CENTER AND BROOKSIDE ROAD. REVIEW TO TAKE PLACE IN 6 MONTHS (APRIL 2012). THERE ARE NO DOGS PERMITTED ON PLAYING FIELDS OR INSIDE THE PLAYGROUND AREAS AT ANY TIME, OR IN THE COMMUNITY GARDEN WITH THEIR OWNERS.

- ** MS. FLYNN SECONDED.**
- ** MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Stony Brook Park

- 11.3 acres and is off leash at all times.
- ** MR. HUNTER MOVED TO APPROVE THAT STONY BROOK PARK REMAIN OFF LEASH AT ALL TIMES.**
- ** MR. MARCHESI SECONDED.**
- ** MOTION PASSED WITH EIGHT (8) VOTES IN FAVOR (BRANIGAN, GOODYEAR, HUNTER, GUTIERREZ, MORRIS, FLYNN, MARCHESI, GRAHAM) AND ONE (1) VOTE ABSTAINED (DALY).**

The Diller property

- 5 acres and is off leash at all times.
- ** MS. GUTIERREZ MOVED TO APPROVE THAT THE DILLER PROPERTY REMAIN OFF LEASH AT ALL TIMES.**
- ** MS. DALY SECONDED.**
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Woodland Park Nature Preserve and Selleck's Wood Nature Preserve

Mr. Goodyear said he felt it was appropriate if he recused himself from voting on the nature preserves, as he is a Trustee of the Darien Land Trust. He left the meeting at 8:30 p.m.

Selleck's Woods Nature Preserve

- On leash at all times

- ** MS. DALY MOVED TO APPROVE THAT SELLECK'S WOODS NATURE PRESERVE REMAIN ON LEASH AT ALL TIMES.**
- ** MS. MORRIS SECONDED.**
- ** MOTION PASSED WITH EIGHT (8) VOTES IN FAVOR (BRANIGAN, DALY, HUNTER, GUTIERREZ, MORRIS, FLYNN, MARCHESI, GRAHAM) AND ONE (1) VOTE ABSTAINED (GOODYEAR).**

Woodland Park Nature Preserve

- On leash at all times

- ** MR. MARCHESI MOVED TO APPROVE THAT WOODLAND PARK NATURE PRESERVE REMAIN ON LEASH AT ALL TIMES.**
- ** MS. GUTIERREZ SECONDED.**
- ** MOTION PASSED WITH SIX (6) VOTES IN FAVOR (BRANIGAN, DALY, HUNTER, GUTIERREZ, FLYNN, MARCHESI), TWO (2) VOTES OPPOSED (GRAHAM, MORRIS) AND ONE (1) VOTE ABSTAINED (GOODYEAR).**

Mr. Goodyear returned to the meeting at 8:45 p.m.

Tilley Pond Park

- Off leash Monday-Friday from dawn to 10:30 a.m. year-round except during special events.
- ** MR. GOODYEAR MOVED TO APPROVE OFF LEASH HOURS AT TILLEY POND PARK MONDAY-FRIDAY FROM DAWN TO 10:30 A.M. YEAR-ROUND, EXCEPT DURING SPECIAL EVENTS AND SUBJECT TO REVIEW.**
- ** MS. FLYNN SECONDED.**
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Holahan Field at Town Hall; Baker Park and McGuane Park

- On leash at all times
- ** MR. MARCHESI MOVED TO APPROVE THAT HOLAHAN FIELD, BAKER PARK AND MCGUANE PARK REMAIN ON LEASH AT ALL TIMES.**
- ** MR. HUNTER SECONDED.**
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Weed Beach, Pear Tree Point Beach

- No dogs allowed except for medical reasons, or to access the Darien Boat Club.

**** MS. FLYNN MOVED TO APPROVE THAT WEED BEACH AND PEAR TREE POINT BEACH HAVE NO DOGS ALLOWED, EXCEPT FOR MEDICAL REASONS OR TO ACCESS THE DARIEN BOAT CLUB.**

**** MS. DALY SECONDED.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Ms. Branigan explained that the rules and regulations will go into effect October 1, 2011. The rules and regulations will be voted on again in July after a review by Town Counsel.

UPDATE ON WEED BEACH MASTER PLAN PROJECT

Ms. Swiatek said the Weed Beach Master Plan Project has received 6 bids. The bids are in review at this time. She expects to have a recommendation from the Project Manager in a few days to bring to the Administrative Officer and the First Selectman.

Ms. Swiatek said she has received approval for the trail at Weed Beach. A letter and an application have been submitted to P&Z and she is waiting to hear back from them.

BUDGET FY 2012 REQUEST STATUS

Ms. Swiatek said the budget has gone through. There are no changes since the last meeting.

REPORTS

a) Director

Ms. Swiatek reported that the department is in full operation. The staff is handling the volume very well. They are also handling the Senior Center and the Youth Commission. The large scale events are in permit review. The ITP Triathlon has been scaled down to a smaller event in August. The company selected to clean the Weed Beach bathhouse twice a day did not work out and it has now gone to the second bidder. That company has been in place for 1 ½ weeks now and appears to be working fine. The Darien Little League wants to do a renovation project at Gallagher Field. Some of the preliminary work has begun.

b) Assistant Director

Mr. Coghlan was not present. Ms. Swiatek reported that registration numbers are up and are surpassing the original projection by 45%. Summer staff is in place, and once school lets out, the beaches will be staffed 7 days a week.

c) Chairman

d) Sub-Committee

**NEXT MEETING: Regular Meeting Wednesday, July 20, 2011 7:30 p.m.
Darien Town Hall, Room 119**

**** MS. DALY MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** MR. MARCHESI SECONDED.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting ended at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Marr
Telesco Secretarial Services