

**TOWN OF DARIEN
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
DECEMBER 17, 2008**

ATTENDANCE: Jane Branigan, Chair; Charles Goodyear, Merrie Hawley,
Susan Daly, Andrew Hunter

STAFF: Susan Swiatek, Parks and Recreation Director;
Jim Coghlan, Parks and Recreation Assistant Director

OTHERS: Peter Hovell, Weed Beach Building Committee Chair

CALL TO ORDER

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

Approval of Special Meeting of November 19, 2008

Weed Beach Master Plan Project Status

Guest: Peter Hovell, Weed Beach Building Committee Chairman

Mr. Hovell presented his report to the Committee.

Darien Soccer Association – Field Use and Park Permitting

Representative, Nick Kamillatos, from the Darien Soccer Association said that it was important to his organization that the use of the fields be tracked so that they are appropriately utilized. Ms. Swiatek said that the condition of the fields was due to the various sports being cycled through. She then gave the example of having soccer played on a field in the fall and baseball played there in the spring, which would result in less impact on the field. She reviewed the different conditions at Casey Field and the field adjacent to Town Hall. Ms. Swiatek added that the Board of Education decides whether or not a field is playable, but the Town does not do that. Ms. Swiatek said that there were some steps that the Town takes to give the field rest, such as fencing with fence posts to keep people off.

The discussion then moved to pick up games, the role of permits and enforcement. Mr. Goodyear asked why there was a difference between the Board of Education requiring permits for games while the Town does not require a permit for games.

Ms. Branigan pointed out that Casey Field was originally designated as a multiple use field for everyone. Mr. Goodyear commented that perhaps the soccer teams were squeezed out because the other sports lobbying group were so strong. Ms. Swiatek said that currently Darien was built out and that the fields were overused, but there was nowhere else to go. Discussion followed.

It was noted that there were 1,500 soccer players in Darien. Mr. Goodyear pointed out that the DSA wanted some kind of posted schedule that would clarify when the soccer teams would be playing on the field. It was also stated that there were people who would drive around the area looking for fields that did not have games currently on them. Mr. Kamillatos said that signage does work. The most pressing problem occurs between the end of Thanksgiving to the end of March when the fields are not yet growing, but get chopped up. Fencing and covering helps with that.

Another problem happened last spring when the Darien youth teams would finish up at 6 p.m. The teams that were assigned to Stamford were playing on the weekends but had no place to practice during the week and would frequently come and use the fields for their practices as soon as the youth teams leave. Baker, Casey and Town Hall are the key practice fields. Mr. Kamillatos then reviewed the times when the soccer teams use the turf fields.

Mr. Kamillatos said access was not the problem but then asked how the Town would prevent teams from Norwalk or Stamford for using the Darien fields without permits starting in April. Ms. Branigan asked if there was a way to prove that the soccer players were not from Darien. Mr. Kamillatos said that he would provide the Commission with photographs. Ms. Swiatek said that the soccer permits were until dusk but that the games were stopping at 6 p.m., which leaves the field vacant. When the out of town groups realize that the field is vacant at a regular time, they come and utilize it.

If a permit is required, Ms. Swiatek said that this could become an issue, because all the use of the fields would have to be by permit. She pointed out that at the beaches, people can take out a permit for the picnic area or just take their chances that the area will not be in use. Ms. Branigan pointed out that these were public parks and that people should be allowed to use them if there was not a permit reserving a particular time frame.

**DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION ON OPERATING, CAPITAL BUDGETS FOR
FISCAL 2010**

It was stated that the Capital budget had been reviewed at the last meeting. Ms. Swiatek said that there was a problem with the print out and that this was being worked on. The discussion then moved to the Diller property and the details of budget for it.

Ms. Swiatek said that all the departments had received a directive to keep the budgets to 3% or less. She then reviewed the budget form and explained that the column with the current budget did not reflect the wages and salaries. Ms. Swiatek said that some changes were being made by Finance and in another week the next report will show that the percentages are below 3%.

Ms. Swiatek then reviewed some of the changes in the budget. She explained that some of the efficiencies that have been enacted in the last year allowed her to cover some of the wage increases because the Department was able to pick up some of the outside contractual work. Discussion about the details then followed.

The discussion then turned to security at Weed Beach and the possibility of accepting cash at the gate in order to allow non-residents access.

**** MR. GOODYEAR MOVED TO APPROVE THE OPERATING, CAPITAL BUDGETS FOR FISCAL 2010**

**** MR. HUNTER SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

REPORTS

a) Director

Ms. Swiatek said that the tennis courts at Weed Beach had been finished and the trees are down. Ms. Branigan said that there should be some kind of low hedge planted.

The Tilley Park lights have been ordered and will be paid for from the Tilley Park Seed Grant funding.

The funds for the Cherry Lawn Fencing has been transferred into the account.

The interior of the Weed Beach Bathhouse has been painted.

b) Assistant Director

Mr. Coghlan then presented his report to the Commission. The paddle court repairs have been completed. There are two ways to reserve paddle court time, which Mr. Coghlan reviewed with the Commission. The use of the courts has increased. Discussion then followed about the procedure for using the courts.

c) Chairman

Ms. Branigan then presented her report to the Committee.

d) Playground by the Sound

No report

e) Weed Beach Building Committee

Presented earlier in the meeting.

Any other business (two thirds vote required)

Mr. Goodyear expressed concerns about the use of the soccer fields and suggested that someone be there to verify the situation.

Mr. Goodyear then mentioned that the members of the committee had received copies of a petition regarding dogs in the parks that contained 176 names. He then asked if the Friends of Woodland Park should be invited to attend a meeting to discuss this matter. Ms. Swiatek said that she had forwarded a copy of the letter to the President of Woodlawn Park to discuss this. She added that she had not heard back from the group. Ms. Branigan said that she had met Ms. Burnham, who was one of the organizers of the group and was planning on calling Ms. Burnham about this. Discussion followed.

Ms. Swiatek pointed out that after a year of hearings in 1997-98, the Commission had stated that Woodland was a Nature Preserve and not a dog park. The Commission at that time, decided not to change the designation of the park.

PUBLIC COMMENT.

There was no one from the public who wished to comment.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. GOODYEAR MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** MS. HAWLEY SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, January 21, 2009; Room 119

