



**Darien Parks and Recreation Commission
Regular Meeting Agenda January 17, 2024
7:30 p.m. Town Hall Room 119 and Virtual****

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of the Minutes from December 13, 2023
3. Public Comment**
4. Discuss and vote on new Cherry Lawn walking path – Presentation by Chris Filmer
5. Cherry Lawn Gardeners
 - a) Presentation on the gardens
 - b) Review and discuss updated rules
6. Review and vote on brick fundraiser for Cherry Lawn playground
7. Approval of the 2024 Fee Schedule
8. Review and vote on 2024 Commission committees
9. Director's Report
10. Chairman's Report
11. New Business
12. Adjournment

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86041835361>

Meeting ID: 860 4183 5361

**Please note: You may email Pam Gery at pgery@darienct.gov before 12 pm on January 17, 2024 if you choose to speak during public comment at this hybrid meeting. During the meeting, you will also need to identify yourself and your address, whether you call in by phone or use the computer link provided.

NEXT MEETING:

Next Regular Meeting: February 28, 2024 at Darien Town Hall Room 119



**TOWN OF DARIEN
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
DECEMBER 13, 2023
7:30 PM, TOWN HALL - ROOM 119**

ATTENDANCE: Lorene Bora, Chair, Susan Daly, Mary Louise Morgan, Jim Farrell,
Cathy Mulrow-Peattie, Amy Doering, Chris Taylor
ABSENT: Kara Bohnsack, Janet Cling
STAFF: Pam Gery, Director of Parks and Recreation
AUDIENCE: RTM Parks and Recreation Committee Members:
Adele Conniff
Kim Kiner

Ms. Bora called the meeting to order at 7:38 PM.

APPROVAL OF THE COMMISSION MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 15, 2023

**** MS. DALY MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 15,
2023 WITH AMENDMENTS
** MR. FARRELL SECONDED
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUS**

APPROVAL OF THE COMMISSION MINUTES FROM DECEMBER 6, 2023

**** MR. TAYLOR MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM DECEMBER
6, 2023 WITH AMENDMENTS
** MR. FARRELL SECONDED
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUS**

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

DISCUSS AND VOTE ON THE REVISED P&R RULES AND REGULATIONS

Ms. Bora provided a brief summary of the changes, noting that more revisions will be made over the winter but a vote is needed now to have the current revisions approved.

**** MR. FARRELL MOVED TO APPROVE THE DARIEN PARKS AND RECREATION RULES AND REGULATIONS AS UPDATED**

**** MS. DOERING SECONDED**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUS**

Ms. Mulrow-Peattie joined the meeting virtually at 7:47PM.

REVIEW THE SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENTS AGAINST THE PARK STANDARDS OF CARE

Ms. Bora explained that Ms. Bohnsack put together the summary of assessments against the park standards of care on behalf of the commission. In total, fourteen individuals contributed to the assessment including nine commissioners and five RTM Parks and Recreation members.

Some areas discussed included:

Baker Park: Rated well overall with the exception of the playground equipment and accessibility. Fencing surrounding park needs replacement. Playground equipment is scheduled for replacement.

Cherry Lawn Park: Rated well overall with the exception of the playground equipment which is scheduled for replacement.

Holahan Field: Areas of improvement include fencing/dugouts.

McGuane Park: Rated well overall. Athletic fields are budgeted for improvements.

Weed Beach: Rated well overall, assuming scheduled work is completed.

Pear Tree Point Beach: Areas of improvement include accessibility. Work for bathhouse improvements are underway.

Stony Brook Park: Areas of improvement include signage and trails.

Tilley Pond Park: Areas of improvement include cleaning up the graffiti in the stone hut.

Woodland Park: Rated well overall. Need to identify invasive species and add parking lot signage.

The commission then discussed priorities as stated through the survey. Priorities include completion of projects already started, maintenance of existing parks and facilities, invasive management and more native plantings, address pickleball demand, manage congestion at Cherry Lawn Park, and beautification of parks.

The commission discussed various other comments as reported in the survey. Ms. Bora suggested revisiting the parks master plan to determine what is next. There was discussion regarding tree canopies within the parks and potentially conducting a tree canopy study and devising a thorough plan with regard to plantings and invasive species.

DISCUSS THE 2024 FEE SCHEDULE

Ms. Gery provided the current fee schedule, explaining that no increases are necessary this year. She pointed out the restructuring of the Cherry Community Garden fee, noting that the full \$30 will now be paid to Parks and Recreation; whereas in previous years, \$20 was paid to Parks and Recreation and \$10 was paid to the Community Gardens Committee. Ms. Gery confirmed that staff will look into what other towns are charging for community garden fees.

There was discussion regarding increasing the non-resident daily beach parking fee.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ms. Gery provided her report to the commission. She highlighted the success of the Old Fashioned Holiday event held at Tilley Pond Park.

She noted that a brand new replacement whirl unit has been ordered for McGuane Park playground.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Ms. Bora noted that official approvals from Planning and Zoning for the Weed Beach Meadow and Trail project will be at the January 9, 2024 Planning and Zoning Commission meeting.

There was discussion regarding the disposal of abandoned kayaks.

There was discussion regarding the formation of a new working group, the Pickleball Committee of the Darien Parks and Recreation Commission. Mr. Farrell confirmed that committee meetings will be held on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month. He anticipates that the committee will meet for approximately 3-4 months before determining a way to satisfy the needs of the pickleball community. The committee will report to the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Ms. Bora added that she and Ms. Gery met with the Cherry Lawn Community Gardens Committee to discuss some minor restructuring of the program. Practically speaking, the committee will continue as they have been operating, but the department will gain more oversight and rebuild connectivity to the program. The rules concerning the gardens will be revisited and new ideas will be drafted for the January Parks and Recreation Commission meeting. Ms. Bora would like to officially designate a Cherry Lawn Community Committee at the next meeting and name a commission member as chair to the committee.

Ms. Bora provided an update from the Great Island Advisory Committee meeting, noting the acquisition of the driveway circle. Outside consultants have been retained to determine steps to widen the roadways within Great Island.

The Coastal Commission continues to update the town waterways ordinances.

NEW BUSINESS

No new business.

REGULAR MEETING ADJOURNMENT

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

**** MS. DOERING SECONDED**

**** THE MOTION PASSED - UNANIMOUS**

The meeting adjourned at 9:01PM.

Next Regular meeting: January 17, 2024, 7:30 pm in Room 119 of the Darien Town Hall

Respectfully submitted,
Tamara Eberhardt

**Parks and Recreation Commission
Meeting of: December 13, 2023**

Y - yes N - no A - abstain Ab - absent

Motions:

**1. Move: DALY 2nd: FARRELL
MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 15, 2023 WITH
AMENDMENTS**

**2. Move: TAYLOR 2nd: FARRELL
MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM DECEMBER 6, 2023 WITH
AMENDMENTS**

**3. Move: FARRELL 2nd: DOERING
MOVED TO APPROVE THE DARIEN PARKS AND RECREATION RULES
AND REGULATIONS AS UPDATED**

**4. Move: DALY 2nd: DOERING
MOVED TO ADJOURN**

Y	Bohnsack	Bora	Cling	Daly	Doering	Morgan	Mulrow-Peattie	Taylor	Farrell
1.	Ab	Y	Ab	Y	Y	Y	Ab	Y	Y
2.	Ab	Y	Ab	Y	Y	Y	Ab	Y	Y
3.	Ab	Y	Ab	Y	Y	Y	Ab	Y	Y
4.	Ab	Y	Ab	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
5.									



Director's Report
January 17, 2023
Parks & Recreation Department
Respectfully submitted by Director, Pamela Gery

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. Weed Beach Meadow and Trail Update:** The Meadow and Trail project received the initial approval during the November 28 Planning & Zoning Commission meeting. The final authorization was postponed from January 9 to January 16, 2024 meeting, due to a winter storm. Following this approval, we will proceed to solicit construction bids from vendors, enabling us to evaluate the lowest bid for the project. With this information, we still have the commitment from the Darien Foundation to give \$350,000 to the project and will seek the additional funding approval by the Board of Selectmen, the Board of Finance and the RTM.

- 2. Pear Tree Beach Construction Bid Update:** The Probable Cost Estimate came in at \$6.6 million. Constructing the boat ramp would be approximately \$280,000 but need to confirm with Weston & Sampson if project can be separated without an updated standalone design.

- 3. Pear Tree Beach Bathroom Improvement Project:** BMP Construction has commenced bathroom upgrades, initiating the demolition of plumbing fixtures and installing new toilets, sinks, and partitions. Additionally, ADA-compliant entry doors have been successfully replaced. The application of epoxy floors and wall paint will be deferred until spring.

- 4. Updates on ARPA Funding for Parks & Recreation:**
 - **PLAYGROUNDS** – The Parks & Recreation Commission has voted and given approval to the playground design for Cherry Lawn Park. The playground equipment order has been placed with Creative Recreation, and the equipment is expected to arrive in March 2024. Our goal is to have the playground open to the public by Memorial Day. Additionally, The Parks & Recreation Commission will discuss the next steps in the decision-making process for the new playground design for Baker Park.
 - **PADDLE TENNIS COURT** – We have obtained approvals from Planning & Zoning and the Building Department to start construction on the sixth paddle tennis

court. Due to Planning and Zoning's request for larger specialized piers in the flood zone, the project cost has increased. The Board of Selectman and Board of Finance have both granted approval for the additional \$33,000 required for the project. If the winter remains mild, we aim to start construction in January and February 2024.

- **500 GALLON WATER TANK** – Funding was approved for this and we will be going out to bid for this in January 2024.
- **THREE TRAILERS** – Funding was approved. DPW will be placing orders for these alongside their existing orders.
- **BRUSH CUTTER** – We have received the brush cutter, and our park crew has efficiently used the new equipment to eliminate invasive trees, shrubs and bushes at both Cherry Lawn Park and Weed Beach.