



**TOWN OF DARIEN  
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
JANUARY 18, 2023  
7:30 PM, ROOM 119 OF THE DARIEN TOWN HALL**

**ATTENDANCE:** Lorene Bora, Chair, Susan Daly, Amy Doering, Janet Cling, Chris Taylor, Mary Louise Morgan, Kara Bohnsack and Cathy Mulrow-Peattie

**ABSENT:**

**STAFF:** Pam Gery, Director of Parks and Recreation

**AUDIENCE:** RTM Parks and Recreation Committee Members:

Patti Bumgardner

Kim Kiner

Diane Conologue

Ms. Bora called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

**APPROVAL OF THE COMMISSION MINUTES FROM DECEMBER 14, 2022**

**\*\* MS. MORGAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM DECEMBER 14, 2022 WITH AMENDMENTS**

**\*\* MS. DOERING SECONDED**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED – UNANIMOUS**

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Ms. Doering stated that she received a phone call from a resident complaining of the noise level at the pickleball courts created by the ball hitting the paddles. The commission briefly discussed potential solutions including fencing or the addition of trees around the courts to reduce the sound from traveling.

## **VOTE ON P&R FEE SCHEDULE FOR 2023 CALENDAR YEAR**

Ms. Bora began the discussion by reviewing the proposed pickleball court reservation fees. She stated that the proposed reservation fees would run from April through October. Some portion of the week would be reservations while a portion would be left for open play and lessons. Ms. Gery explained that staff is now trying to determine if the current Parks and Recreation Department software will allow the reservation system to operate as intended. There was further discussion as to the technical aspects of the reservation system. Ms. Bumgardner suggested looking into a software called ForeTees.

Ms. Bora followed up on the possibility of offering free beach permits to active military residents and/or veterans. She explained that staff was able to obtain the number of veteran residents in Darien – 600 veterans. She added that staff was unable to find the number of active duty residents. She added that there may be an overlap between veterans, seniors and volunteer fire department members, which could reduce this number; however it is still a notable number of free beach passes which may result in loss of revenue. She emphasized that the commission would need to be mindful of how this affects the budget. Ms. Daly mentioned that many groups donate their time and added that other groups may also request free stickers and the commission must be mindful of the precedent being set. She stated that the commission needs to first determine the basis on which free stickers are offered and to which groups the offer should be limited to, noting that even commission members pay for beach passes. She expressed concern over implementing an overly complicated fee structure. Mr. Taylor stated that he believes the number of active military in Darien is likely not very high and these individuals may not be living in Darien for the entire length of the summer due to deployments.

Ms. Bora then addressed the previously discussed matter of offering beach stickers to nonresident town employees for a fee. She explained that staff obtained information on the number of nonresident town employees – 846 nonresident employees. This number includes town, school, library, police, etc. The bulk of the number comes from Board of Education employees. Ms. Bora expressed her concern in offering stickers to nonresident employees in part because of the addition of approximately 400 new apartments coming online and the potential strain on parking at the beaches, especially if under construction in the near future. Ms. Bora reminded the commission that they submitted a letter to the state one year ago rejecting the concept that Darien's beaches should be open to nonresidents because of the limited parking capacity and this is something to keep in mind. Ms. Gery pointed out that offering residents a beach sticker for a fee would increase revenue. Ms. Bora emphasized that this is a volume issue with the increased number of residents moving to town. Alternatives were discussed such as limited weekday passes or an employee sticker lottery. By way of information provided by Jeremy Ginsberg, Ms. Bora broke down an estimate of when the new apartments would be coming online: 81 units in 2023, 48 units in 2024 and 164 units in 2025. Ms. Daly pointed out that the proposed improvements made to each beach may also increase usage and the demand for parking. Ms. Bora confirmed that the commission cannot vote on this matter prior to a change in rules and regulations allowing nonresident employees access

to the beach. Mr. Taylor suggested forming a subcommittee to further research the matter and potential alternatives.

Ms. Bora concluded the discussion by supporting the idea of creating an informal subcommittee to further study nonresident town employee beach access. Ms. Gery will research the frequency of military discount requests.

**\*\* MS. DALY MOVED TO APPROVE THE 2023 FEE SCHEDULE WITH AMENDMENTS TO REMOVE THE PROPOSED MILITARY DISCOUNT LINE  
\*\* MS. MORGAN SECONDED  
\*\* THE MOTION PASSED – UNANIMOUS**

**VOTE ON \$20K DONATION FROM DORDELMAN FAMILY FOR GAZEBO RESTORATION AT CHERRY LAWN PARK**

Ms. Bora provided brief background on the donation. There was discussion regarding the total cost of the project and whether it can be completed without exceeding the \$20,000 donation, and if not, how the remaining cost would be funded.

**\*\* MR. TAYLOR MOVED TO APPROVE THE \$20,000 DONATION FROM THE DORDELMAN FAMILY FOR GAZEBO RESTORATION AT CHERRY LAWN PARK  
\*\* MS. DOERING SECONDED  
\*\* THE MOTION PASSED – UNANIMOUS**

**DISCUSSION ON BEAUTIFICATION FUNDS**

Ms. Bora reminded the commission that there are \$18,000 in Beautification funds that must be spent prior to July 2023. She emphasized that the commission first needs to prioritize as a group in order to obtain estimates.

In reaction to an email received from a resident, Mr. Taylor suggested planting grasses at Pear Tree Point Beach to prevent the sand from blowing into the roadway. Ms. Bora confirmed with Mr. Biggs that the addition of berms was not included in the initial plan but parks staff could construct one. From a consistency standpoint, the commission suggested asking Mr. Biggs to tie this piece into the existing plan. Ms. Gery asked the commission the maximum dollar amount to be spent on this additional service from Mr. Biggs, to which the commission responded no more than \$2,000.

There was some discussion about watering plantings at various locations. Ms. Bumgardner requested that Ms. Gery confirm with the Town Administrator that the

watering of plantings at Highland Farm be funded through the Board of Selectmen's budget and not the Parks and Recreation budget. Ms. Daly mentioned the need for watering is much less now and that the majority of plantings throughout the parks will likely not need watering since they are already established. She added that watering will not be needed in the spring. Ms. Cling mentioned that she was in contact with a vendor for watering plantings and would go back to him for a cost on watering the hanging baskets at the beaches.

### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Ms. Gery highlighted that she, Ms. Daly, Mr. Filmer and a member of the Darien Land Trust met with Eversource regarding the tree cutting on Littlebrook Road and potential planting plans. The Darien Land Trust chose to have more of a meadow look. Ms. Daly noted that when entering parkland from Littlebrook Road, there is a highly visible tower with transmission lines and it creates a very stark aesthetic. The current planting design from Eversource consists of a pollinator garden and other herbaceous native materials. Ms. Daly suggested adding more native evergreen trees so as to draw the eye away from the large tower and transmission lights. Ms. Daly confirmed that she would research more information on Evergreens, American Holly and other plantings of varying heights. She also emphasized that she does not want the plantings to become a maintenance burden for the town.

Ms. Daly commented on the new park inventory list, adding that it will be a very useful tool. She asked that the kayak rack quantities be added to the inventory list. Ms. Bora suggested putting the information into a spreadsheet with a comments section.

### **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Ms. Bora notified the commission that Sarah Demark officially resigned from her position on the commission effective immediately.

Ms. Bora noted that the Pear Tree Point Beach Building Committee presented the CT DEEP project to the Selectman on December 19.

She added that the Selectmen are starting their budgeting process beginning later in January and that she and Ms. Gery would attend one of those meetings on January 31, 2023 to answer questions relevant to the Parks and Recreation Department budget.

Finally, Ms. Bora highlighted that after a presentation given by she and Ms. Gery, the Darien Foundation has approved the grant request for the Weed Beach Meadow and Trail project for an amount not to exceed \$350,000. She mentioned that this offer is contingent upon the town funding the remainder of the project in coming fiscal year 2024. If the remaining costs are not funded in fiscal year 2024, the approval would lapse and

approvals would need to be sought again in the future. Ms. Gery confirmed that the language of the approval continues to evolve, depending on if the town chooses to bond the remaining cost of the project.

**NEW BUSINESS**

No new business.

**REGULAR MEETING ADJOURNMENT**

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:04 PM.  
Next Regular meeting: February 15, 2023, 7:30 pm in Room 119 of the Darien Town Hall

Respectfully submitted,  
Tamara Eberhardt

**Parks and Recreation Commission**

**Meeting of: January 18, 2023**

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

**Motions:**

- 1. Move: MORGAN                      2<sup>nd</sup>: DOERING**  
Moved to approve December 14, 2022 minutes as presented.
  
- 2. Move: DALY                              2<sup>nd</sup>: MORGAN**  
Moved to approve the 2023 P&R Fee Schedule with amendments to remove the proposed military discount line.
  
- 3. Move: TAYLOR                      2<sup>nd</sup>: DOERING**  
Motion to approve the \$20,000 donation from the Dordelman Family for the gazebo at Cherry Lawn Park.
  
- 4. Move: DALY                              2<sup>nd</sup>: MORGAN**  
Adjourn.

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