

Minutes from the Parks and Recreation Committee Meeting

February 16, 2023

The virtual meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m. with 11 of 14 members in attendance. The following Parks and Recreation Committee members in attendance were: Sarah Baldwin; Patti Bumgardner; Diane Conologue; Adele Conniff; Kim Kiner; Tony Larino; Alyssa Mahoney; Andy Millar; Sue-Ellen Mitchell; Cheryl Russell and Shannon Silsby. Those absent were; Alicia Johnson; Sandy Savage and Bill Van Loan. Also in attendance was Barry Baldwin from F&B.

The first order of business was to approve the minutes from 12/5/22 and 1/4/23. The motion to accept the minutes of 12/5/22 was made by Diane Conologue seconded by Patti Bumgardner and the minutes were unanimously approved. The motion to accept the minutes from 1/4/23 was made by Diane Conologue and seconded by Alyssa Mahoney and the minutes were unanimously approved.

The next order of business was the discussion and vote for the appropriation of the gift of \$20,000 for the renovation of the Cherry Lawn Gazebo. It was mentioned that \$15,000 from the capital budget had been allocated to fix the roof, which was completed in December of 2022. The gift of \$20,000 is to renovate the gazebo (ramp, railing and replacing some boards) estimated to cost \$17,500 with the remaining monies to cover the cost of the dedication plaque. The motion to vote for the: Acceptance and Appropriation of a Gift of \$20,000 for the Renovation of the Cherry Lawn Gazebo was made by Diane Conologue and seconded by Patti Bumgardner. The vote passed unanimously with 11 of 14 members present.

The next item discussed was a budget update. There was a motion by Kim Kiner to move the budget update ahead of the Discussion and Vote on Acceptance and Appropriation of a Grant of \$25,000 by the Darien Foundation for the Weed Beach Meadow and Trail construction bid package, which was seconded by Alyssa Mahoney, and passed unanimously.

The Chairman noted that the Operating Budget process goes from the Park and Recreation Commission to the BOS to the BOF. Several items did not receive support from the Town Administrator such as a full time P&R employee. Part time employees were reinstated. The budget for invasives was reduced.

The Capital budget was then discussed. The Town Administrator initially deferred a few things such as the aerator for the Cherry Lawn pond. The BOS put the aerator back in the budget after an outcry from residents and water samples taken from the pond by Nature Center staff indicated a real need. The \$50,000 for the paving of the Cherry Lawn driveway was deferred. The evaluation for the renovation of three Little League Fields at McGuane for \$15,000 was not supported however the Little

League will finance the evaluation. The restoration of the cement patio for \$250,000 at McGuane , was supported by the Town Administrator and the BOS. The irrigation valve for Houlihan Field was included in the budget. The Weed Beach Meadow and Trail construction project (\$1,000,000) and bid package (\$25,000) was removed. This bid package would include the evaluation of the Short Lane property, enlarging the beach and getting rid of invasives. The Darien Foundation offered to provide a grant for the \$25,000 to cover the bid package expense. The gatehouse at Weed Beach was deferred until next year. The stripping of the paint on one Weed Beach paddle court did receive support from the Town Administrator, as did the commercial freezer for the concession stand. Site work at Pear Tree Beach received support as well. Park and Recreation equipment received support (mower, paint machine and stump grinder). The BOS will present the budget to the BOF on 3/7/23.

The Committee then moved to the vote on Acceptance and Appropriation of a Grant of \$25,000 by the Darien Foundation for the Weed Beach Meadow and Trail construction bid package. A motion was made by Toni Larino, seconded by Cheryl Russell. The vote was unanimous with 11 of 14 members present.

Next on the agenda was the Chairman's report. It was suggested that perhaps some P&R Committee members could volunteer to help the committee stay informed by watching the following committees: Beautification; Monuments and Ceremonies; Coastal Waters Advisory Commission; Harbormaster; Five Mile River Commission; Pear Tree Beach Building Committee and the Bicentennial Committee.

The Park and Recreation Commission has allocated \$18,000 to plantings at Pear Tree Beach.

Park and Rec is working on a new reservation and fee system for reserving Pickle ball courts. The slots will be for 90 minutes and the fee will be \$5 per person with availability to reserve one week in advance.

It was noted that there had been some vandalism at the Cherry Lawn Pickle Ball court. Also noted were future rules and regulations regarding music in the parks. There have been some incidents of commuter parking at Baker Field. The Darien shellfish beds are now open. The state legislators are meeting to discuss parking at CT beaches.

In Other Business the P&R Commission working groups had some updates. The Playground Group's meeting was postponed due to the President's Day holiday. The color of McGuane playground flooring was decided (tan). The group may start meeting twice a month and Cherry Lawn will probably be the next playground addressed. The playground improvements are funded by ARPA.

The Invasives Group will meet on 2/21/23. It was noted the P&R maintenance staff have been working hard at clearing out the invasives in the park as well as where the new paddle court will be installed at Weed Beach.

Motion to adjourn was made by Patti Bumgardner and seconded by Kim Kiner. The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 P.M.

Respectfully submitted by Sue-Ellen Mitchell