



**TOWN OF DARIEN  
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
MARCH 15, 2023  
7:30 PM, ROOM 119 OF THE DARIEN TOWN HALL**

**ATTENDANCE:** Susan Daly, Mary Louise Morgan, Cathy Mulrow-Peattie, Chris Taylor and Kara Bohnsack and Amy Doering  
**ABSENT:** Lorene Bora, Chair, Janet Cling  
**STAFF:** Pam Gery, Director of Parks and Recreation  
**AUDIENCE:** RTM Parks and Recreation Committee Members:  
Patti Bumgardner  
Kim Kiner  
Adele Conniff  
Michael Burke  
Ed Washecka  
Susan Marks  
Jan Selkowitz  
Sean Shay

Ms. Daly called the meeting to order at 7:36 PM.

**APPROVAL OF THE COMMISSION MINUTES FROM FEBRUARY 15, 2023**

**\*\* MS. MORGAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM FEBRUARY 15, 2023 WITH AMENDMENTS  
\*\* MS. MULROW-PEATTIE SECONDED  
\*\* THE MOTION PASSED – UNANIMOUS**

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Michael Burke, 15 Lake Drive

Mr. Burke provided his general comments on the proposed pickleball schedule that was uploaded to the Parks and Recreation website for review by the public. He stated that there is an abundance of slots blocked for reserved time. He added that there needs to be

Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting  
March 15, 2023

a greater balance between open-play and reserved slots. He highlighted that the nature of pickleball is that you get better at the game by playing with people you do not know which is found more in open-play scenarios. He stated that he understands there are limitations with the reservation software and suggested instead of charging per slot, to charge an annual membership fee to allow access into the reservation system to reserve slots. He also suggested starting at 7:30AM each morning versus 6AM each morning. He further suggested adding more hybrid times to the schedule during the week. This is when there are two courts dedicated to reservation slots and two courts dedicated to open play simultaneously. Mr. Burke concluded by thanking the individuals for their efforts and hard work in organizing the new system.

Ed Washecka, 7 Leeuwarden Lane

Mr. Washecka provided his comments around nonresident use of the pickleball courts. He added that as a Darien resident, he is frustrated that he will need to pay for a slot because of the demand, in part, by nonresidents and believes nonresidents should also be paying a fee if accessing the courts.

Susan Marks, 39 Fairfield Avenue

Ms. Marks started by agreeing with the preceding public comment. She added that an annual membership-based system would work well especially when considering cancellations and refund policy around weather conditions. She added that all lessons would be better at the tennis courts. She mentioned calling around to other towns to see how they are handling nonresidents and residents. Ms. Marks concluded by suggesting that the reserved time slots be reduced since pickleball is a social sport and reservations hinder that aspect of the game.

Jan Selkowitz, 7 Getner Trail, Norwalk

Mr. Selkowitz stated that he was a resident of Darien for over 40 years and recently moved to Norwalk. He stated that he still supports Darien in the majority of his activities and he is on the board of the Darien Men's Association. He proposed if an exception can be made for a handful of former long-time Darien residents – where they would be treated as residents in the system in order to have access to the reservation software for a fee. He added that he and many former residents donated money to help fund the pickleball courts. He also added that he and his wife are still on various boards in the town of Darien and contribute to the community.

Sean Shay, 135 Leroy Avenue

Mr. Shay began by agreeing with the preceding public comment highlighting that there is a need for more open play. He suggested installing signs at the courts that read something like, "Cherry Lawn Park – Pickleball Courts – Darien Resident and their Guests Only." He believes this will keep some but not all nonresidents from accessing the courts. He reiterated that there needs to be increased open play times and most people who visit the courts and look at the schedule are primarily interested in the open play times.

Jack Dearie, 37 Birch Road

Mr. Dearie stated that open play is important but he also believes that reservation times are important for those that want to get together with their friend for an organized game. He concluded by thanking the Commission.

### **DISCUSSION REGARDING RENOVATION COST AND LANDSCAPING AT PEAR TREE POINT BEACH**

Ms. Daly asked the Commission for their comments on the renovations and landscaping plans at Pear Tree Point Beach. Ms. Bohnsack stated that based on the survey extended to residents, the primary areas that need improvement are the two planter boxes near the outdoor shower, general exterior disrepair including rusted railings and missing grout, all interior hardware fixtures and outdoor furniture. There was discussion on differentiating renovation items and maintenance items for FEMA limit purposes.

Ms. Daly noted that Karen Hughan, Landscape Designer, has offered landscape services at Pear Tree Point Beach at her design cost. Ms. Bohnsack suggested reviewing the existing Weed Beach plant list.

There was discussion on removal techniques of trees of heaven.

### **UPDATE ON CHERRY LAWN GAZEBO PROJECT**

Ms. Gery provided an update on the gazebo project. She expects the contractor to be on site and finished within a week or so. The bronze memorial plaque will be ordered.

Ms. Morgan expressed concern over the delay in painting the gazebo with regard to weather elements. Ms. Gery stated the delay is so the pressure treated wood has time to season.

### **PRESENTATION AND FINAL REVIEW OF PROPOSED PICKLEBALL RESERVATION SYSTEM**

Ms. Gery explained that it can be a challenge to balance open play time and reservation time and after hearing the public comment from earlier in the meeting, she will revisit the pickleball schedule with Ms. Schull and adjust the schedule as feedback is received and as the reservation system progresses.

There was discussion regarding the morning start time of reservations and being mindful of neighboring properties and noise level early in the morning. Ms. Gery stated that there have been no complaints to the office regarding early morning noise levels. Mr. Taylor suggested implementing reservations early in the morning because we already know there are people playing during that time regardless if it is open play or reserved.

Ms. Gery read aloud public comment received via email.

The Commission and audience asked various questions. Ms. Gery reiterated that the system and procedures would evolve as feedback is received.

### **DISCUSSION OF LIMITING PICKLEBALL COURT USE TO DARIEN RESIDENTS AND THEIR GUESTS**

The Commission briefly discussed other towns' policies regarding nonresident use of pickleball courts. In addition to the reservation system, Mr. Taylor suggested signage to help prioritize resident use of the courts. The Commission agreed to have a sign posted to say "Darien Residents and their Guest(s) only," or something similar.

### **DISCUSSION OF FINAL COLOR SCHEME AND PICKLEBALL LINES ON CHERRY LAWN TENNIS COURTS**

Ms. Gery suggested remaining with the same color scheme for the tennis courts as the other courts – green and blue.

There was a lengthy discussion regarding the tennis courts being lined for pickleball. Ms. Gery stated that she has received one complaint from a tennis player over the last four years. Ms. Bohnsack expressed concern over permanently lining tennis courts for pickleball especially because they were just replaced.

Mr. Taylor suggested lining one or more of the Weed Beach tennis courts for pickleball especially given the increasing demand for parking at Cherry Lawn Park already. There was further discussion about using Weed Beach as an additional resource for pickleball.

Ms. Bohnsack suggested creating a survey to gather more data on pickleball and tennis demand.

The Commission concluded the discussion by informally agreeing that the tennis courts would be painted blue and green and not lined for pickleball until more data is obtained from a survey.

### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Ms. Gery provided the written report to the Commission and highlighted the invasive species removal work by the park crew at Weed Beach.

### **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Ms. Daly provided the Chairman's report on behalf of Ms. Bora. She provided several highlights. There was no meeting for the Coastal Commission and Bill Cavers stepped down as Chair. Harbor Master Keena has followed up with CT DEEP regarding floats that are larger than permitted as a part of the Pear Tree Point Beach application to the state. The Board of Finance will be soon be holding budget discussions. There was a complaint about off-leash dogs at Woodland Park. Because of a signed contract, no changes can be made to the Eversource planting plan at Selleck's Woods at this point. The drinking water fountain was stolen from the exterior wall of the Cherry Lawn Park restroom facility – a replacement has been installed.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

No new business.

### **REGULAR MEETING ADJOURNMENT**

**\*\* MS. MORGAN MOVED TO ADJOURN**

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

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED - UNANIMOUSLY**

The meeting adjourned at 8:58 PM.

Next Regular meeting: April 19, 2023, 7:30 pm at the Weed Beach Paddle Hut

Respectfully submitted,  
Tamara Eberhardt

**Parks and Recreation Commission**

**Meeting of: March 15, 2023**

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

**Motions:**

**1. Move:      MORGAN                              2<sup>nd</sup>:      MULROW-PEATTIE**  
Moved to approve February 15, 2023 minutes as presented.

**2. Move:      MORGAN                              2<sup>nd</sup>:      DOERING**

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