

RTM P&R Committee Regular Meeting
5/3/2023
7:30pm Town Hall Room 206

In Attendance:

Sarah Baldwin
Patti Bumgardner
Adele Conniff
Diane Conologue
Alicia Johnson
Kim Kiner
Tony Larino
Alyssa Mahoney
Susan Marks
Andrew Millar
Cheryl Russell
Sandy Savage
Bill Van Loan

Absent:

Sue-Ellen Mitchell
Shannon Silsby

Quorum achieved; Meeting called to order

Approval of Minutes: 4/6/23

- Patti firsts, Kim seconds
- Unanimous

Discussion & Vote: Board of Finance approved 2023-2024 P&R Operating, Capital Improvements, and Program Fund

- Specific approvals in the Capital Budget on town properties and equipment
 - Cherry Lawn
 - Solar pond aerator
 - a member reports that this is a very cost-effective way to power an aerator to prevent the die off of aquatic wildlife in the pond
 - McGuane Park
 - Renovate cement patio (to extend the life of the building)
 - Members express concern regarding trees coming down for this project, replacing trees, and perhaps planting more trees. Note: tree planting is not part of this budget item
 - Weed Beach
 - Stripping the paint of the paddle court
 - Members ask if repainting is also included in this budget item. We are assuming that it is

- Parks & Rec Equipment
 - Toro 4500 D Large mower
 - Members expressing concern about the cost of this item. However, there are several members that affirm based on information received at previous meetings how vital this expense and investment is at this time.
- Brief Recap of the 2023-2024 Parks & Recreation Commission Operating Budget
 - Chair gives a brief recap of the items discussed at the meeting on 1/4/23 with guest Pam Gery, Director of Darien Parks & Rec
 - One change since the 1/4/23 meeting is that the plan to hire a new full-time employee to do the work of several part-time employees was not approved
 - A member suggests that we might propose this new hire again next year particularly if the town successfully closes the Great Island purchase
- Recreation Programs Fund for 2023-2024
 - Chair provides brief recap of the purpose of this fund

Vote: to approve the 2023-2024 P&R Operating, Capital Improvements, & Program Fund

Motion to vote: Patti Bumgardner

Second: Tony Larino

Vote is unanimous in favor to approve

Working Groups & Other Reports

- Parks & Rec Commission on Playgrounds
 - Patti Bumgardner reports that the committee members have been assessing what could be improved at the playgrounds
 - Six playground companies have been requested to submit designs for the two playgrounds at Cherry Lawn
 - New work on the playground at McGuane Park is due to begin soon after collaboration with many in the community
 - A separate member encourages communication to the community to create buzz and buy in (and to help explain any lack of access due to construction)
- Monuments & Ceremonies Commission
 - Diane Conologue reports that the current chair of this committee is looking for someone to take this over
 - June 14th is flag day, and she wants to encourage the Committee to spread the word about the service provided by town to properly dispose of used American flags
 - July 4th will again see the Push-Pull parade and more robust ceremony at the high school
- Advisory Commission on Coastal Waters

- Susan Marks reports that the advisory group met recently, developed subgroups, and has engaged more robustly on the issue of the potential town development of Great Island
- May 20th or 21st will be the next meeting

Chairman's report

- Per the last Parks & Rec Commission meeting
 - Susan Daly's daughter has developed a plan for cleaning up garbage at the Weed Beach for an Eagle Scout project, details to be confirmed
- The Harbor Channel depth survey is complete
- Darien Junior Sailing is looking to continue to attract new children to their program
- The issue of lining the new tennis courts at Cherry Lawn with pickle ball lines in addition to tennis lines continues to be discussed
- There will be a Pickle Ball event at Cherry Lawn on May 23rd as part of an attempt at a world record of some kind
- Summer vacation camp registration is up and running
- Chairman shares an email from Lorene Bora, Chair of the Parks & Rec Commission, regarding how we communicate with the Parks & Rec Commission and Parks & Rec staff at meetings and outside of meetings. Her request is that we collectively channel our questions and comments through our committee Chair, Adele, rather than speaking individually
 - A member voices concerns that it is not always logistically possible for our Chair to collect the various opinions of our Committee prior to every meeting with the Commission
 - Chair agrees, and suggests that we try our best to organize ourselves and our opinions in advance of Commission meetings knowing that this is not always 100% possible
 - A member suggests that, as elected RTM members, we as Committee members should be given latitude to speak and ask questions at Commission meetings. This member also contends that as taxpayers, we have a right to speak at will
 - Chair agrees that anyone may speak during "Public Comment" at a Commission meeting and asks that if we were to email the Commission, we'd CC her on that email so that she is aware
 - A member suggests that there be a more formal agenda item in Commission meetings where Committee issues might be raised even if they are not on the agenda of the Commission meeting
 - A member questions how much the Commission values the input of the Committee
 - A member expresses that there should be a very clear designation between taxpayers and RTM member comments at Commission meetings
 - A member suggests that it is our duty as elected members of the RTM to question and challenge the executive leadership in town, including the Parks & Rec Commission
 - Chair iterates that comment during the meeting is not the only way to make our voices heard. She requests that when possible we pass questions

through her as an effective way to get comment through to the Commission

Other business?

- None

Motion to adjourn

Alicia Johnson moves

Alyssa Mahoney seconds

Motion unanimously approved

Alicia Johnson
Co-Clerk