



**TOWN OF DARIEN  
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
MAY 17, 2023  
7:30 PM, WEED BEACH PADDLE HUT**

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

**ABSENT:** Kara Bohnsack

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

**AUDIENCE:** Annalise Brown, Mary Ann Wiley, Sima Farmer, Ainsley Glenday Tenley Reed, Sarah Williams, Laura Christian, Robyn Decastro, Kelly Scallon, Liza Smith, Tim Christian, Remy Sufrin, Holly Drake, Jenny Schwartz, Heather Tucker

RTM Parks and Recreation Committee Members:

Patti Bumgardner  
Adele Conniff  
Cheryl Russell  
Susan Marks  
Kim Kiner

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

**APPROVAL OF THE COMMISSION MINUTES FROM APRIL 19, 2023**

**\*\* MS. MORGAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM APRIL 19, 2023 WITH AMENDMENTS**  
**\*\* MS. DALY SECONDED**  
**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED – UNANIMOUS**

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Susan Marks, 39 Fairfield Avenue

Ms. Marks spoke in favor of the proposed pickleball lines on the tennis courts at Cherry Lawn Park. She also spoke in opposition of allowing private events in public parks.

Annalise Brown, 20 Academy Street - High School Girls Varsity Tennis Coach  
Ms. Brown spoke in opposition of the proposed pickleball lines on the tennis courts at Cherry Lawn Park. She also expressed concern regarding the improper storage of the portable pickleball nets when not in use.

Mary Ann Wiley, 39 Hazel Street  
Ms. Wiley spoke in opposition of the proposed pickleball lines on the tennis courts at Cherry Lawn Park.

Sima Farmer, 55 Phillips Lane  
Ms. Farmer spoke in opposition of the proposed pickleball lines on the tennis courts at Cherry Lawn Park.

Ainsley Glenday, 18 Overbrook Lane  
Ms. Glenday spoke in opposition of the proposed pickleball lines on the tennis courts at Cherry Lawn Park.

Cheryl Russell, 18 Fitch Avenue  
Ms. Russell requested signage at Pear Tree Point Beach and Weed Beach including “smoke-free beach” signs, “no dogs allowed” signs and “no idling” signs.

Tenley Reed, 6 Prospect Avenue  
Ms. Reed spoke in favor of the commission to agree to amend the agenda to discuss, review, and grant an appeal to allow the Windward School transportation bus to continue to operate out of Cherry Lawn Park for student pick up and drop off through June 16, 2023.

Sarah Williams, 37 Christie Hill Road  
Ms. Williams spoke in opposition of the proposed pickleball lines on the tennis courts at Cherry Lawn Park.

Laura Christian, 123 Brookside Road  
Ms. Christian spoke in favor of the commission to agree to amend the agenda to discuss, review, and grant an appeal to allow the Windward School transportation bus to continue to operate out of Cherry Lawn Park for student pick up and drop off through June 16, 2023.

Robyn Decastro, 20 Fox Hill Lane  
Ms. Decastro spoke in opposition of the proposed pickleball lines on the tennis courts at Cherry Lawn Park.

Kelly Scallon, 94 Fitch Avenue

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Ms. Scallon spoke in opposition of the proposed pickleball lines on the tennis courts at Cherry Lawn Park.

Liza Smith, 27 Arrowhead Lane

Ms. Smith spoke in opposition of the proposed pickleball lines on the tennis courts at Cherry Lawn Park.

Tim Christian, 123 Brookside Road

Mr. Christian spoke in favor of the commission to agree to amend the agenda to discuss, review, and grant an appeal to allow the Windward School transportation bus to continue to operate out of Cherry Lawn Park for student pick up and drop off through June 16, 2023.

Remy Sufrin, 473 Hollow Tree Ridge Road

Ms. Sufrin spoke in opposition of the proposed pickleball lines on the tennis courts at Cherry Lawn Park.

Holly Drake, 9 Tanglewood Trail

Ms. Drake spoke in opposition of the proposed pickleball lines on the tennis courts at Cherry Lawn Park.

Patti Bumgardner, 64 Hanson Road

Ms. Bumgardner spoke in opposition of the proposed pickleball lines on all of the tennis courts at Cherry Lawn Park and proposed temporarily lining one tennis court with pickleball lines on a trial basis at Weed Beach.

Jenny Schwartz, 8 Saddle Ridge Road

Ms. Schwartz spoke in opposition of the proposed pickleball lines on the tennis courts at Cherry Lawn Park.

Heather Tucker, 18 Driftway Lane

Ms. Tucker spoke in favor of the commission to agree to amend the agenda to discuss, review, and grant an appeal to allow the Windward School transportation bus to continue to operate out of Cherry Lawn Park for student pick up and drop off through June 16, 2023.

**DISCUSS AND VOTE ON PAINTING PICKLEBALL LINES ON NEW TENNIS  
COURTS AT CHERRY LAWN PARK**

Ms. Bora opened the discussion by highlighting that the shared concern coming from both topics of public comment are the capacity issues at Cherry Lawn Park. She emphasized the importance of the safety and well-being of the park visitors.

Ms. Gery confirmed that temporary lines cannot be painted on the tennis courts as it would cause damage to the painted surface.

Mr. Farrell suggested lining a portion of the tennis courts and stated his concerns regarding the FCIAC and CIAC regulations facing the tennis team. Mr. Taylor echoed Mr. Farrell and further suggested that the Commission create a working group to address paddle sport demand.

Ms. Morgan expressed concern over public safety and congestion at Cherry Lawn Park. She spoke in favor of lining the tennis courts at Cherry Lawn for tennis only and consider lining one of the courts at Weed Beach for pickleball. She also suggested exploring additional options for adding pickleball courts at alternate locations in the future.

Ms. Mulrow-Peattie agreed that there are safety concerns regarding the congestion at Cherry Lawn Park. She added that the parking should be studied further at Weed Beach prior to lining those courts for pickleball.

Ms. Doering stated that the decision comes down to capacity issues at Cherry Lawn Park. She agreed with the idea of lining one court at Weed Beach for pickleball.

Ms. Mulrow-Peattie asked Ms. Brown if lining one of the courts at Weed Beach would adversely affect the tennis team. Ms. Brown confirmed that the tennis team does not use the front courts where the children's lessons are held.

Ms. Daly and Ms. Cling agreed that there are capacity issues at Cherry Lawn Park and stated safety is the primary concern.

**\*\* MS. MORGAN MOVED TO PAINT AND SEAL THE TENNIS COURTS AT CHERRY LAWN PARK WITH TENNIS LINES ONLY**

**\*\* MS. MULROW-PEATTIE SECONDED**

**\*\*MR. TAYLOR OPPOSED**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED – MAJORITY**

### **UPDATE ON BEAUTIFICATION FUNDS BEING USED AT PEAR TREE BEACH**

Ms. Daly provided an update and a set of proposed landscaping plans for Pear Tree Point Beach emphasizing that it will help with the sand erosion and blow off. Mr. Taylor pointed out that there is nothing in the plans to separate the picnic area from the parking lot as previously discussed. Ms. Daly replied that it would likely be a phased project with this portion to be complete by June 30.

### **UPDATE ON CONSTRUCTION BID FOR THE WEED BEACH MEADOW & TRAIL PROJECT**

Ms. Bora stated that Dan Biggs is working on the bid package and it should be complete within four weeks.

### **PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION OF UPDATE TO PARKS RULES REGARDING PARKING**

Ms. Bora provided and reviewed a working document outlining several rules that require updates and clarification with regard to parking including general rules, time limits, group use, idling and food trucks. The topic will be discussed in more detail at a future meeting.

### **RECAP OF FY24 BUDGET AND PLANNING FOR COMMISSION ACTIVITIES**

Ms. Bora stated that most of the budget requests were approved with the exception of the new full-time position. Some approvals include funds for invasive remediation, beautification, Pear Tree Point bid package, and Pear Tree Point bathhouse improvements.

Ms. Bora added that the Commission will need to prioritize the above projects in the coming fiscal year.

### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Ms. Gery provided the report and highlighted the list of Park Facility Permits detailing group events and reservations at the parks and beaches. She added that the seasonal Park Monitor has been hired.

### **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Ms. Bora highlighted that there has been some discussion of a potential donation of a strip of land that abuts Woodland Park.

The Coastal Commission met and confirmed that the kayak safety signs have been installed at Pear Tree Point Beach, Weed Beach, Noroton Yacht Club and other private clubs. The harbor filling-in survey was completed about a month ago and the next step would be for that commission to make a recommendation to the Selectmen on whether or not to begin the dredging application process.

She added that there has been an increase in vandalism at the parks and beaches, noting an incident at Weed Beach on the night of prom.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

**\*\* MS. MULROW-PEATTIE MOVED TO GO INTO NEW BUSINESS**

**\*\* MR. FARRELL SECONDED**

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

Ms. Bora provided background on the Windward School transportation bus operating out of Cherry Lawn for student pick up and drop off for the last fifteen years, noting that the department was unaware of this operation until recently. A group of parents privately charter this bus from First Student. She added that the activity was not permitted and an application and insurance was not provided until recently. She added that the operation was presenting safety concerns over the last few weeks including the bus backing up, double parking, parking in the fire lane, parents driving too fast through the park and a child nearly being hit.

After receiving a Park Facility Application, Ms. Gery allowed the operation to temporarily continue through May 19, 2023 at which point the group would need to find an alternate location. She and Ms. Bora met with the transportation coordinator and one of the parents to discuss the operation, where it was requested that it be allowed to continue through the end of the school year on June 16, 2023. Ms. Gery denied this request, only allowing it to continue only through May 19, 2023. Ms. Gery emphasized the safety concerns stating that she is not comfortable allowing this to continue beyond May 19, 2023.

Several parents in the audience spoke again on their request, emphasizing the disruption this would cause to the families and children if the request is denied. The Commission discussed the operation and how it can be made safer in order to allow it to continue through June 16, 2023, including utilizing the overflow parking lot for parent parking to avoid double parking and implementing a zero tolerance for speeding within the park.

**\*\* MR. TAYLOR MOVED TO APPROVE THE EXTENSION REQUEST FOR THE WINDWARD SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION BUS TO CONTINUE TO OPERATE AT CHERRY LAWN PARK THROUGH JUNE 16, 2023; AND THAT ANY OPERATION OF THIS BUS ON PARK PROPERTY BEYOND JUNE 16, 2023 IS PROHIBITED; AND THAT THIS APPROVAL WILL BE REVOKED IF ANY SAFETY PROTOCOLS ARE VIOLATED OR ANY CONDUCT AT CHERRY LAWN PARK MADE BY PARENT DRIVERS OR BUS DRIVER IS DEEMED AS UNSAFE BY THE COMMISSION**

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

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

**REGULAR MEETING ADJOURNMENT**

**\*\* MS. MULROW-PEATIE MOVED TO ADJOURN**

**\*\* MS. DALY SECONDED**

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:42 PM.

Next Regular meeting: June 21, 2023, 7:30 pm at the Weed Beach Paddle Hut

Respectfully submitted,  
Tamara Eberhardt

