



**TOWN OF DARIEN
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
JUNE 21, 2023
7:30 PM, WEED BEACH PADDLE HUT**

ATTENDANCE: Susan Daly, Mary Louise Morgan, Chris Taylor, Janet Cling, Jim Farrell, Kara Bohnsack
ABSENT: Lorene Bora, Chair, Cathy Mulrow-Peattie, Amy Doering
STAFF: Pam Gery, Director of Parks and Recreation
AUDIENCE: Kevin Marks, Ashley Feehan, Michael Burke, Valle Baker
RTM Parks and Recreation Committee Members:
Adele Conniff
Kim Kiner
Cheryl Russell
Susan Marks

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

APPROVAL OF THE COMMISSION MINUTES FROM MAY 17, 2023

**** MR. TAYLOR MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM MAY 17, 2023 WITH AMENDMENTS**
**** MS. MORGAN SECONDED**
**** THE MOTION PASSED – UNANIMOUS**

PUBLIC COMMENT

Susan Marks, 39 Fairfield Avenue
Ms. Marks spoke in opposition of the decision made at the May 17, 2023 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting to line the Cherry Lawn Park tennis courts with tennis lines only. She spoke in favor of lining the Cherry Lawn Park tennis courts with pickleball lines. She asked the commission to reconsider lining the Cherry Lawn Park tennis courts with pickleball lines.

Kevin Marks, 39 Fairfield Avenue

Mr. Marks spoke in opposition of the decision made at the May 17, 2023 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting to line the Cherry Lawn Park tennis courts with tennis lines only. He spoke in favor of lining the Cherry Lawn Park tennis courts with pickleball lines. He asked the commission to place on hold the covering of the existing pickleball lines at the Cherry Lawn Park tennis courts.

Ashley Feehan, 10 Buttonwood Lane

Ms. Feehan spoke her concerns regarding safety at Cherry Lawn Park, stating that children frequently cross the driveway to go to the fields and there is no visibility when cars park on the elbow nearest the pickleball courts. She requested that the commission consider placing a speedbump just before the Nature Center Drive to slow vehicles down and install a crosswalk at the elbow so that drivers see children crossing. She also asked the commission to reconsider lining the tennis courts with pickleball lines on at least one court.

Michael Burke, 15 Lake Drive

Mr. Burke spoke in opposition of the decision made at the May 17, 2023 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting to line the Cherry Lawn Park tennis courts with tennis lines only. He spoke in favor of lining the Cherry Lawn Park tennis courts with pickleball lines. He asked the commission to reconsider lining the Cherry Lawn Park tennis courts with pickleball lines.

Name not provided

A resident presented a picture depicting vehicles parked on the driveway elbow at Cherry Lawn Park and asked the commission to address this safety concern.

Patti Bumgardner, 64 Hanson Road

Ms. Bumgardner submitted written comment to the commission, read aloud by Ms. Daly. She asked when the Cherry Lawn tennis courts would be painted and sealed. She also asked why the Overtime Athletic Soccer Summer Camp and the Grit Ninja Camp are taking place at Cherry Lawn despite commission discussion regarding safety concerns over park congestion.

DISCUSSION ON KEY POINTS TO BE UPDATED IN PARK RULES

Ms. Daly reminded the commission of the handout provided by Ms. Bora. The commission discussed various key points including parking limitations. Ms. Morgan suggested implementing security similar to the beaches to allow access to residents only at all parks. There was discussion about updating the configuration at Cherry Lawn Park with regard to traffic and parking and potentially consider reducing programs held at Cherry Lawn Park.

The commission agreed that park hours should remain from dawn to dusk but the number of parking hours should be limited specific to each park. Ms. Cling agreed to identify the existing rules for each park and report back to the commission to determine if changes need to be made.

The commission discussed defining a “group event.”

Ms. Gery confirmed that the department currently reviews each private group-parking request individually and considers location, time of year, time of day, and potential conflicts when approving or denying each request.

There was discussion regarding food trucks and ice cream vendors operating on park property. Ms. Daly suggested that the vendors should work with the department for potential permitting to better control and oversee the individual vendors. Ms. Gery agreed to contact Planning and Zoning for specific peddler regulations with regard to parks.

The commission agreed that the rules should include regulations pertaining to the Community Gardens at Cherry Lawn Park. Ms. Morgan noted a specific situation where a gardener has placed six inches of stone over a portion of the garden plot, which requires remediation. She added that gardeners are also using raised beds. Ms. Morgan agreed to draft a set of rules for review by the commission.

The commission discussed implementing “no idling” signs at the parks and beaches.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Ms. Gery presented her report. She noted that there was negative discussion on social media regarding the timing of the fireworks – July 14. She clarified that for the last few years, the fireworks have fallen in mid-July. She explained that one bid was received for this year and a date closer to July 4 was not available.

Ms. Gery highlighted that the Park Monitor has started and she is already very pleased with his work.

Ms. Gery added that McGuane playground is closed for construction and is expected to open late July/August. She explained that Cherry Lawn Park playground planning is underway and is expected to be complete for Spring/Summer 2024. Baker playground is planned for completion in Fall 2024 or Winter 2025.

Ms. Gery provided an update on the Pear Tree landscaping project.

Ms. Gery highlighted Jim Coghlan’s comment in the report which suggests avoiding lining the Weed Beach tennis courts for pickleball due to the number of lessons on those courts.

Ms. Gery listed all the approved FY24 capital projects.

There was further discussion regarding painting pickleball lines on the Cherry Lawn Park tennis courts. Ms. Daly ended the discussion by reiterating that the full commission has already voted on the matter.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Ms. Daly highlighted items on behalf of Lori Bora, Chairman. Ms. Bora met with a resident regarding the ongoing Woodland Park foot-access issue. The neighbors are in discussion with a property representative who has determined that the small strip of land is actually an easement.

Ms. Bora noted that she attended the Advisory Commission on Coastal Waters meeting on June 12. The Marine Division officer noted that they are ramping up their efforts to bring awareness to the need and requirement for lifejackets. It was suggested that more impromptu onboard inspections be conducted. There was interest in implementing a lifejacket loan program.

NEW BUSINESS

**** MR. TAYLOR MOVED TO GO INTO NEW BUSINESS TO DISCUSS SCHEDULING A SPECIAL MEETING TO ADDRESS PAINTING/LINING THE CHERRY LAWN PARK TENNIS COURTS**

**** MR. FARRELL SECONDED**

**** THE MOTION DID NOT FORMALLY PASS**

Some discussion advanced regarding the subject and Ms. Daly requested that staff obtain more information prior to entering new business.

**** MR. TAYLOR MOVED TO GO INTO NEW BUSINESS TO DISCUSS ELECTING A VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION**

**** MR. FARRELL SECONDED**

**** THE MOTION PASSED – UNANIMOUSLY**

Ms. Daly provided brief background on the commission structure noting that the Parks and Recreation Commission has not had a vice-chairman in approximately ten years. Historically, the role of the vice-chair was to cover for the chairman should he or she be absent. The commission discussed the matter for a short time.

**** MR. TAYLOR MOVED TO GO INTO NEW BUSINESS TO ALLOW
ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENT**

**** MS. CLING SECONDED**

**** THE MOTION PASSED – UNANIMOUSLY**

Susan Marks, 39 Fairfield Avenue

Ms. Marks raised concern regarding the scheduled pickleball lessons at Cherry Lawn Park and how participants will be notified of the location change when the pickleball lines are painted/covered.

Michael Burke, 15 Lake Drive

Mr. Burke raised concern over the changed circumstance that the Weed Beach tennis courts may no longer be lined for pickleball, which were intended to replace the existing lined courts at Cherry Lawn Park, which will soon be painted/covered. He believes this is a proper basis for reconsideration.

Kevin Marks, 39 Fairfield Avenue

Mr. Marks stated that it is in the public interest to postpone the painting of the Cherry Lawn Park tennis courts until a point in time where the facts can be reestablished.

Valle Baker, 25 Hamilton Lane

Ms. Baker spoke in favor of lining the Cherry Lawn Park tennis courts for pickleball.

REGULAR MEETING ADJOURNMENT

**** MS. BOHNSACK MOVED TO ADJOURN**

**** MS. CLING SECONDED**

**** THE MOTION PASSED - UNANIMOUSLY**

The meeting adjourned at 8:59 PM.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Tamara Eberhardt

