



**TOWN OF DARIEN  
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
JULY 19, 2023  
7:30 PM, WEED BEACH PADDLE HUT**

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

**ABSENT:** Chris Taylor

**STAFF:** Pam Gery, Director of Parks and Recreation  
Jim Coghlan, Assistant Director of Parks and Recreation  
Cassie Schull, Recreation Program Supervisor

**AUDIENCE:** Luke Raymond, Ms. Gray, Kevin Marks, Kevin Gray, Annalise  
Brown, John DeFillippo, Val Baron, Sarah Sealy, Ed Washecka,  
Michael Burke, Jim Palen, Jack Davis, Melissa O'Brien, Jamie  
Fitzpatrick, Sydney Fitzpatrick, Kristen Masterson, Jenny  
Schwartz, Bruce Failing, Sean Shay, Carol Donnelly, Cynthia  
Rogers, Frances DeSouza  
RTM Parks and Recreation Committee Members:  
Adele Conniff  
Kim Kiner  
Patti Bumgardner  
Susan Marks

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

**APPROVAL OF THE COMMISSION MINUTES FROM JUNE 21, 2023**

**\*\* MS. MORGAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM JUNE 21, 2023  
WITH AMENDMENTS  
\*\* MS. MULROW-PEATTIE SECONDED  
\*\* THE MOTION PASSED – UNANIMOUS**

**UPDATE ON CAPITAL & ARPA PROJECTS – PRESENTATION BY DAN  
BIGGS FROM WESTON & SAMPSON**

Ms. Bora introduced Dan Biggs of Weston and Sampson. Mr. Sampson presented the following items:

**A. New paddle tennis court project at Weed Beach**

Mr. Biggs provided brief history of the project, stating that the Town contracted with CourtPro in January 2023 to construct a sixth paddle tennis court adjacent to the existing paddle courts. Planning and Zoning approvals were obtained in June and are subject to conditions. CourtPro will apply for a building permit with the Town and construction will begin this fall or sooner.

**B. Construction bid package for Weed Beach Meadow and Trail project**

Mr. Biggs provided brief history, stating that the Town acquired the parcel of land abutting Short Lane in 2014 and project design planning was initiated in 2018. Environmental Protection Commission approvals were obtained in January 2020. The project was stalled due to COVID-19 pandemic. Utility coordination began in June 2023 and the application package will be submitted for Planning and Zoning review in July 2023 with potential approvals in September 2023. The bidding phase is anticipated for October 2023 and construction phase will begin sometime in the fall of 2023 – spring 2024.

Ms. Bohnsack asked a question regarding tree removal. Mr. Biggs replied that some trees will be removed to accommodate the ADA compliant pathways, many of which are not thriving because of invasive species entanglement. The goal is to save as many noninvasive trees as possible. Mr. Biggs also added that native plantings will be handpicked and planted to create a buffer zone once some existing invasive species are removed.

Mr. Biggs answered various other questions from the Commission regarding utilities, sand dunes and invasive species.

**C. Construction bid package for Pear Tree Point Beach improvement project**

Mr. Biggs provided a brief history of the project, stating that the project began in 2018 when the Pear Tree Point Beach Building Committee was formed. The permitting process began in 2020 for parking lot reconstruction, reconstruction of the boat ramp, dredging of the channel and bottom of boat ramp, and restoration of the wetland area. Certificate of Permission for these improvements were issued by the State in 2022. The COP is valid for five years. The next steps will be to complete the design package, update the probable cost estimate, submit to Planning and Zoning Commission for approvals and initiate the bidding phase.

Mr. Biggs answered various questions from the Commission regarding parking, costs, and permitting. He added that the project should be completed in its entirety versus attempting to phase the project into segments.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Luke Raymond, 178 Nearwater Lane

The Weed Beach neighbor expressed concerns with the Weed Beach Meadow and Trail project regarding the number, type and size of trees that will be planted and questioned what the budget is for plantings. He emphasized the importance of maintaining the rustic and serene nature of the park versus creating a yard/open space.

Goody Gray, 1 Brush Island Road

Ms. Gray commented on the larger walking path, which was a part of the original plan of the Weed Beach Meadow and Trail Project. Ms. Bora replied that the walking path size was reduced due to budgetary limitations.

Kevin Marks, 39 Fairfield Avenue

Mr. Marks spoke in favor of the Commission to reconsider painting the Cherry Lawn Park tennis courts with pickleball lines.

Kevin Gray, 5 Old Stone Road

Mr. Gray spoke on behalf of the Cherry Lawn Gardeners regarding parking challenges and easy access to the garden plots with equipment – specifically non-gardeners parking in the designated gardener parking spaces.

Annalise Brown, 20 Academy Street - High School Girls Varsity Tennis Coach

Ms. Brown spoke in favor of upholding the decision to paint only tennis lines on the tennis courts at Cherry Lawn Park.

John DeFillippo, Varsity Tennis Coach, nonresident

Mr. DeFillippo spoke in favor of upholding the decision to paint only tennis lines on the tennis courts at Cherry Lawn Park.

Val Baron, 176 Nearwater Lane

Ms. Baron spoke in favor of upholding the decision to paint only tennis lines on the tennis courts at Cherry Lawn Park.

Sarah Sealy, JV Girls Tennis Coach

Ms. Sealy spoke in favor of upholding the decision to paint only tennis lines on the tennis courts at Cherry Lawn Park.

Ed Washecka, 7 Leeuwarden Lane

Mr. Washecka spoke in favor of the Commission to reconsider painting the Cherry Lawn Park tennis courts with pickleball lines.

Michael Burke, 15 Lake Drive

Mr. Burke spoke in favor of the Commission to reconsider painting the Cherry Lawn Park tennis courts with pickleball lines or adding pickleball lines to the tennis courts at Weed Beach. He also spoke in favor of allowing pickleball play during park hours – dawn until dusk versus prohibiting play from dawn until 7:30AM.

Jim Palen, 5 Hickory Lane

Mr. Palen spoke in favor of the Commission to reconsider painting the Cherry Lawn Park tennis courts with pickleball lines and suggested having multiple uses from the Town's limited resources.

Jack Davis, Chair of the RTM Finance Committee, 197 Hoyt Street

Mr. Davis spoke in favor of upholding the decision to paint only tennis lines on the tennis courts at Cherry Lawn Park.

Melissa O'Brien, 262 Old Kings Highway South

Ms. O'Brien spoke in favor of the Commission to reconsider painting the Cherry Lawn Park tennis courts with pickleball lines and to add pickleball lines to the tennis courts at Weed Beach.

Jamie Fitzpatrick, 75 Nearwater Lane

Ms. Fitzpatrick spoke in favor of upholding the decision to paint only tennis lines on the tennis courts at Cherry Lawn Park.

Luke Raymond, 178 Nearwater Lane

Mr. Raymond spoke in opposition of painting pickleball lines at the Weed Beach tennis courts due to the noise created during play.

Sydney Fitzpatrick, 15 Tulip Tree Lane

Ms. Fitzpatrick spoke in favor of upholding the decision to paint only tennis lines on the tennis courts at Cherry Lawn Park.

Kristen Masterson, 9 Plymouth Road

Ms. Masterson suggested creating an indoor venue for pickleball.

Jenny Schwartz, 8 Settlers Road

Ms. Schwartz spoke in favor of upholding the decision to paint only tennis lines on the tennis courts at Cherry Lawn Park suggesting it is important to follow through with capital projects as presented during the funding approval process.

Bruce Failing, 1 Baywater Drive

Mr. Failing suggested constructing pickleball courts on Great Island and expressed concerns over the noise level produced by pickleball if painted at the Weed Beach tennis courts.

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Sean Shay, 135 Leroy Avenue

Mr. Shay spoke in favor of the Commission to reconsider painting the Cherry Lawn Park tennis courts or Weed Beach tennis courts with pickleball lines.

Carol Donnelly, 49 Phillips Lane

Ms. Donnelly spoke in favor of upholding the decision to paint only tennis lines on the tennis courts at Cherry Lawn Park.

Cynthia Rogers, 45 Fairfield Avenue

Ms. Rogers spoke in favor of the Commission to reconsider painting the Cherry Lawn Park tennis courts with pickleball lines.

Frances DeSouza, 58 St. Nicholas Road

Ms. DeSouza spoke in favor of upholding the decision to paint only tennis lines on the tennis courts at Cherry Lawn Park.

**DARIEN LITTLE LEAGUE TO GIVE RESULTS OF THE FIELD  
EVALUATION AND VOTE ON ACCEPTING ADDITIONAL DONATION FOR  
MCGUANE PARK BASEBALL FIELD IMPROVEMENTS**

Sean Ryan, representing Darien Little League, explained that DLL contracted with Tom Irwin to evaluate the fields' playability. The results indicated that the fields are not meeting standards. The estimated cost to bring the fields up to standards is approximately \$150,000. Mr. Ryan requested approval from the Commission to go to bid through the Town for the proposed improvements.

Mr. Ryan presented a second project at the baseball field at Cherry Lawn Park. He emphasized that the fields do not drain properly and are not playable after any significant rain event. Mr. Ryan is requesting approval from the Commission to have Tom Irwin evaluate the field and obtain an estimate for improvements.

Mr. Ryan answered various questions from the Commission. Ms. Bora suggested having Town drainage experts review the improvement plan prior to performing any work.

**\*\* MS. DALY MOVED TO ACCEPT THE DONATION OF UP TO \$200,000 FROM THE DARIEN LITTLE LEAGUE FOR THE RENOVATION OF MCGUANE FIELDS WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT ALL APPROPRIATE APPROVALS AND TECHNICAL INPUT WILL BE OBTAINED**

**\*\* MS. MORGAN SECONDED**

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

**\*\* MS. MULROW-PEATIE MOVED TO ACCEPT THE DONATION OF UP TO \$12,000 FROM THE DARIEN LITTLE LEAGUE TO CONDUCT A FIELD EVALUATION OF THE BASEBALL FIELD AT CHERRY LAWN PARK**

**\*\* MS. CLING SECONDED**

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

### **PRESENTATION OF PICKLEBALL AND TENNIS COURT USAGE**

Ms. Bora clarified that the reason this subject is being revisited, is that since the May 17 decision, there has been a tremendous amount of public comment and pushback regarding the decision not to line the Cherry Lawn Park tennis courts with pickleball lines. She added that the discussion was effectively reopened at the June meeting. For this reason, she would like to publicly reaffirm the May 17 decision and/or review information that may not have been presented correctly to determine if the decision should be revisited.

Ms. Bora introduced Ms. Schull, Mr. Coghlan and Ms. Gery to present the following information:

#### **A. Results of two and one-half months of the pickleball reservation system**

Ms. Schull stated that since its implementation, the reservation system has taken over 500 pickleball reservations made by 198 individuals. Over the ten weeks, the reservation system has generated \$10,100 in revenue.

Ms. Schull answered various questions from the Commission regarding cancellation policy, regulations, etc.

#### **B. Review of tennis and pickleball calendar**

Mr. Coghlan provided an overview of tennis court activity at Weed Beach and Cherry Lawn Park adding that the great majority of the time all three front courts at Weed Beach are being used for tennis lessons. He emphasized the high demand for tennis lessons.

#### **C. Review of current Park and Recreation programming that can potentially move to a different location**

Ms. Gery, Mr. Coghlan and the Commission discussed the potential of moving various programs from Cherry Lawn Park to other parks, noting that restroom access has been a challenge for some time.

### **VOTE ON WHETHER THE P&R COMMISSION WANTS TO REVISIT THE MAY 17 DECISION NOT TO LINE THE REFURBISHED TENNIS COURTS WITH PICKLEBALL LINES**

Mr. Farrell stated that he is in favor of revisiting the May 17 decision, adding that obtaining further research, FCIAC documentation and supporting facts would be helpful.

He also suggested forming a subcommittee of tennis and pickleball players, which would help in finding a solution to satisfy each side.

Ms. Mulrow-Peattie stated she prefers not to revisit the issue based on the park congestion, parking limitations and potential safety issues at Cherry Lawn Park. She agreed with Mr. Farrell on forming a subcommittee to help find a long-term solution to satisfy the demand for pickleball.

Ms. Bohnsack echoed Ms. Mulrow-Peattie's points and added that Darien has the same number of pickleball courts per capita when comparing with other local towns.

Ms. Morgan stated that her main concern is the congestion at Cherry Lawn Park and is not in favor of revisiting the May 17 decision.

Ms. Daly added that a traffic study should be conducted at Cherry Lawn Park and is not in favor of revisiting the May 17 decision.

Ms. Cling agreed and stated that she is not in favor of revisiting the May 17 decision especially in light of the information regarding the budget approval process of the capital project to resurface the tennis courts.

Ms. Doering stated that she is not in favor of revisiting the May 17 decision primarily due to the congestion of Cherry Lawn Park.

Ms. Bora concluded the discussion by stating years ago, the multiuse tennis/pickleball courts at Cherry Lawn were converted to single use pickleball courts. She added that a formal decision was not made by the Commission to add the temporary pickleball lines to the tennis courts at Cherry Lawn Park.

**\*\* MS. MULROW-PEATIE MOVED TO AFFIRM THE MAY 17, 2023  
DECISION REGARDING FINISHING THE CHERRY LAWN PARK TENNIS  
COURTS AS APPROVED FOR TENNIS ONLY**

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

**\*\*MR. FARREL OPPOSED THE MOTION**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED – MAJORITY**

### **VOTE ON PICKLEBALL LINES ON CHERRY LAWN TENNIS COURTS**

Based on the above discussion and vote not to revisit the May 17 decision, there was no vote on pickleball lines on Cherry Lawn Tennis courts.

There was lengthy discussion regarding the formation of a subcommittee to address long-term pickleball demand. There was also brief discussion regarding potential locations including Weed Beach, Great Island and Edgerton Street.

**DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION ON THE NEED FOR HAVING A VICE CHAIR  
FOR THE P&R COMMISSION**

Ms. Bora provided some background stating that at the last meeting, Mr. Taylor (absent) suggested appointing a Vice Chair of the Parks and Recreation Commission. She briefly provided information on other boards and commissions with respect to this subject and noted that there is nothing solid in the Town Code requiring the Parks and Recreation Commission to elect a Vice Chair, however, Town Code does indicate that the Commission should elect a Secretary. This was confirmed by the Town Administrator. The Commission deliberated the subject for some time.

**\*\* MS. CLING MOVED TO ELECT MS. DALY AS VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE  
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION**

**\*\* MS. MORGAN SECONDED**

**\*\*MS. BORA ABSTAINED**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED – MAJORITY**

**DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION ON APPOINTING A SECRETARY FOR THE  
P&R COMMISSION**

Ms. Bora noted that the primary responsibility of the Secretary would be to review the meeting minutes prior to their distribution to the rest of the Commission.

**\*\* MS. DALY MOVED TO ELECT MS. MULROW-PEATTIE AS SECRETARY  
OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION**

**\*\* MS. BOHNSACK SECONDED**

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

**DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

Ms. Gery provided an update on the McGuane Park playground project, noting that one part is backordered for four weeks. She noted that the construction of the playground will continue without the part, which will be added once available.

**CHAIRMAN’S REPORT**

Ms. Bora highlighted that the Great Island Advisory Committee held its first meeting on July 19, 2023 and elected its officials.

She also noted that Mike Sgroe has agreed to continue to work with and oversee Weston and Sampson as they prepare the bid package for Pear Tree Point improvement project.

There was discussion on the progression of the invasive species remediation work.



Ms. Bora highlighted the Darien Times story featuring Kateri Daly and the Weed Beach cleanup station.

**NEW BUSINESS**

No new business.

**REGULAR MEETING ADJOURNMENT**

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

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

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED - UNANIMOUS**

The meeting adjourned at 10:31PM.

Next Regular meeting: September 13, 2023, 7:30 pm at the Weed Beach Paddle Hut

Respectfully submitted,

Tamara Eberhardt

**Parks and Recreation Commission  
Meeting of: July 19, 2023**

**Y - yes**

**N - no**

**A - abstain**

**Ab - absent**

**Motions:**

**1. Move: MORGAN 2<sup>nd</sup>: MULROW-PEATTIE  
 MOVE TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM JUNE 21, 2023 WITH  
 AMENDMENTS**

**2. Move: DALY 2<sup>nd</sup>: MORGAN  
 MOVED TO ACCEPT THE DONATION OF UP TO \$200,000 FROM THE  
 DARIEN LITTLE LEAGUE FOR THE RENOVATION OF MCGUANE FIELDS  
 WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT ALL APPROPRIATE APPROVALS AND  
 TECHNICAL INPUT WILL BE OBTAINED**

**3. Move: MULROW-PEATTIE 2<sup>nd</sup>: CLING  
 MOVED TO ACCEPT THE DONATION OF UP TO \$12,000 FROM THE  
 DARIEN LITTLE LEAGUE TO CONDUCT A FIELD EVALUATION OF THE  
 BASEBALL FIELD AT CHERRY LAWN PARK**

**4. Move: MULROW-PEATTIE 2<sup>nd</sup>: DALY  
 MOVED TO AFFIRM THE MAY 17, 2023 MEETING REGARDING FINISHING  
 THE CHERRY LAWN PARK TENNIS COURTS AS APPROVED FOR TENNIS  
 ONLY**

**5. Move: CLING 2<sup>nd</sup>: MORGAN  
 MOVED TO ELECT MS. DALY AS VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARKS AND  
 RECREATION COMMISSION**

**6. Move: DALY 2<sup>nd</sup>: BOHNSACK  
 MOVED TO ELECT MS. MULROW-PEATTIE AS SECRETARY OF THE  
 PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION**

**7. Move: MURLOW-PEATTIE 2<sup>nd</sup>: DOERING  
 MOVED TO ADJOURN**

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

6.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Ab	Y
7.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Ab	Y