



**TOWN OF DARIEN
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
SEPTEMBER 20, 2023
7:30 PM, WEED BEACH PADDLE HUT**

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

ABSENT: Kara Bohnsack

STAFF: Pam Gery, Director of Parks and Recreation

AUDIENCE: RTM Parks and Recreation Committee Members:
Adele Conniff
Kim Kiner
Cheryl Russell

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

APPROVAL OF THE COMMISSION MINUTES FROM JULY 19, 2023

The Commission reviewed the July minutes. A formal motion was not made to approve the minutes.

**** MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM JULY 19, 2023 WITH
AMENDMENTS**

**** SECONDED**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUS**

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Conniff, on behalf of the RTM Parks and Recreation Committee, stated that the backdrop fencing at Holahan Field has holes in it, allowing balls to pass through. She recommended adding a new backstop to the capital budget. She also recommended a traffic study be conducted at Cherry Lawn Park.

UPDATE ON CAPITAL & ARPA PROJECTS

Capital Projects

a. Weed Beach Meadow & Trail

Ms. Gery provided an update, explaining that she and Dan Biggs are working with Planning and Zoning to address various questions and alterations including changing the asphalt parking lot to a permeable gravel surface. Planning and Zoning approvals are expected after the October 30th meeting. Once approved, the construction bid process can begin.

b. Cherry Lawn Aerator

Ms. Gery provided an update, explaining that the park crew ran into ledge while digging the grounding hole and have chosen an alternate location, eight feet from the original location, to dig. The crew is confident that the project will be complete prior to the gazebo ribbon cutting on October 7.

c. Cherry Lawn Tennis Court Repairs

Ms. Gery provided an update, explaining that the painting of the courts will be finished within a week depending on weather.

d. Toro Mower, Stump Grinder and Paint Machine

Ms. Gery stated that she attended the Board of Finance meeting last night for final approval on funding of the mower, which increases as time passes. The funding was approved by BOF. The stump grinder has been ordered and received. Parks crew is already using this at various parks. The paint machine has been ordered and received and is already being using at various park parking lots.

e. Weed Beach and Pear Tree Construction Bids

Ms. Gery provided an update on the Pear Tree Construction Bid, stating that she is seeking an estimate of probable cost from Weston & Sampson. The estimate will cost \$8,000. Once the estimate of probable cost is received, there will be additional conversations with the Board of Finance and the Selectmen to determine if the process will move forward with obtaining construction bids.

f. Pear Tree Bathhouse Improvement

Ms. Gery stated that she and Mr. Farrell have been working together with BMP Construction to obtain an itemized list of costs associated with the improvements to the bathhouse, which will be shared with the Commission at the October meeting. Mr. Farrell provided a brief description of the general design. Ms. Gery emphasized that per FEMA regulations, only 50% of the value of the building over a three-year period can be spent on improvements (repair or maintenance) to the structure. In the event that these voluntary improvements cost \$50,000, that means there is only approximately \$57,000 remaining to spend on improving the facility over three years, even in the event of an emergency caused by catastrophic damage from winds or flooding. There was brief

discussion on painting the exterior wall of the facility with a mural and soliciting high school and town volunteer artists for this project.

g. Stripping of Paddle Court

Ms. Gery stated that this project is finished.

ARPA Projects

a. Playgrounds

Ms. Gery states that the playground equipment installation at McGuane Park is nearly finished and the split-rail fence donated by the Lion’s Club has been installed. A ribbon cutting ceremony will be held to thank the Lion’s Club, Rings End, and Federal Realty for their contributions to the project. The Playground Working Group is focusing on the Cherry Lawn Playground, with presentations by vendors in late September. The goal is to place the order for equipment in November and complete installation sometime in the spring. The next playground that the working group will be focusing on is the Baker Park playground with a goal of a fall 2024 installation.

b. Water Fountains

Ms. Gery provided an update, explaining that water fountains have been installed and are functional at Cherry Lawn Park, Baker Park, Tilley Pond, and McGuane Park.

c. Weed Beach Paddle Court

Ms. Gery explained that this project is delayed due to Planning and Zoning flood zone regulations which require a redesign from the vendor. The vendor submitted a plan, which is awaiting approvals.

Ms. Gery added that approval has been received from the RTM to accept the \$200,000 gift from Darien Little League to renovate the three fields at McGuane Park. The bid opening for this project is on October 12. She added that the McGuane patio is being repaired. While undergoing repairs, there was an issue with the retaining wall, which is being addressed.

**DISCUSS AND VOTE ON DATE AND AGENDA FOR P&R COMMISSION
FALL PARKS TOUR**

Ms. Bora provided a brief background of the parks tour. The Commission discussed options for scheduling and specific park locations for the fall parks tour agenda.

****MS. DALY MOVED TO SCHEDULE THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE
DARIEN PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION FALL PARKS TOUR ON
NOVEMBER 11, 2023 AT 9AM**

**** MR. TAYLOR SECONDED**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUS**

PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION ON THE FY25 BUDGET AND CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

Ms. Gery first noted the projects at Cherry Lawn Park stating that Sandy Rich, Parks Supervisor would be gathering an updated estimate to dredge the Cherry Lawn Park pond. Ms. Mulrow-Peattie expressed concerns that the dredging may upset the ecosystem of the pond. There was brief discussion regarding the project to treat Tilley Pond and Cherry Lawn Park for the algae. Ms. Gery added that she is awaiting the water test results. Ms. Gery noted the line item to repave the Darien Nature Center driveway. She added that there is question as to whether or not the Darien Nature Center is responsible for the cost of repaving and is awaiting more information from Town Administration. She pointed out the capital improvement projects to fix the retaining wall along the overflow parking and to pave the overflow parking lot. Ms. Bora suggested adding a line to conduct a traffic and safety study at Cherry Lawn Park. As a part of that study, Ms. Gery suggested looking into adding an additional exit from the park. Ms. Doering expressed concern with paving more park area at Cherry Lawn Park.

Ms. Gery moved on to Baker Park projects, noting the replacement of the fence at Baker Park.

There was discussion regarding potential capital improvement projects at Weed Beach include adding security cameras to prevent vandalism, stripping a paddle court, replacing the gatehouse, repairing the tennis wall and court, replacing the fence around the oil tank. Mr. Taylor suggested exploring the option of adding more pickleball courts to locations other than Cherry Lawn Park and Weed Beach. Ms. Gery agreed to look into the costs of adding security cameras at other highly traffic parks.

Ms. Gery briefly noted the placeholders in the capital improvement plan for the Pear Tree Point parking lot improvements and concession facility improvements.

Ms. Gery explained the park maintenance equipment in the improvement plan, including replacing six AED's, purchasing a large mower, replacing the hook truck and purchasing a stand-on blower.

REVIEW PROPOSED UPDATED TO P&R RULES AND REGULATIONS

Ms. Bora opened the discussion by stating that the Park and Recreation Rules and Regulations need a thorough review to update the rules and simplify them for residents. The Commission reviewed a redlined draft form of the existing document noting various changes throughout the document. Some topics of discussion included parking, park permitting, Cherry Lawn Community Gardens, food trucks on park property, and other miscellaneous regulations. Ms. Bora stated that the discussion would be continued at the next regular meeting and that finalized rules would be completed this Winter.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ms. Gery presented her report, highlighting an emergency repainting of the pickleball courts at Cherry Lawn to address the graffiti vandalism. She added that the Beautification funds have been spent on plantings at Pear Tree Point Beach in addition to a newly installed irrigation line to water those plantings. She also highlighted the upcoming Cherry Lawn Park gazebo ribbon cutting ceremony to be held on October 7, 2023 and upcoming Rocktoberfest event to also be held on October 7, 2023 at Highland Farm.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Ms. Bora stated that the Pear Tree Point Building Committee has been decommissioned by the Selectmen. She also highlighted updates from the Advisory Commission on Coastal Waters meeting regarding the Darien channel depth study. She noted that the Great Island Committee met. The primary focus of work at Great Island is currently remediation work and maintenance to the property.

Ms. Kiner commented on the new McGuane Playground, stating that one of the slides is very high and some parents are afraid a child will jump or fall from the top.

NEW BUSINESS

No new business.

REGULAR MEETING ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. FARRELL MOVED TO ADJOURN**
**** MS. MORGAN SECONDED**
**** THE MOTION PASSED - UNANIMOUS**

The meeting adjourned at 10:01PM.

Next Regular meeting: October 18, 2023, 7:30 pm in Room 119 of the Darien Town Hall

Respectfully submitted,
Tamara Eberhardt

