



**TOWN OF DARIEN
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
OCTOBER 18, 2023
7:30 PM, TOWN HALL - ROOM 119**

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

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

APPROVAL OF THE COMMISSION MINUTES FROM JULY 19, 2023

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

APPROVAL OF THE COMMISSION MINUTES FROM SEPTEMBER 20, 2023

**** MS. MORGAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM SEPTEMBER
20, 2023 WITH AMENDMENTS
** MR. FARRELL SECONDED
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUS**

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

**DISCUSS AND VOTE ON AN EAGLE SCOUT PROJECT PROPOSAL –
PRESENTATION BY JAMES HOFFMAN FOR RESTORATION OF WEED
BEACH DUNES INCLUDING REMOVAL OF INVASIVE PLANTS AND
REPLANTING PROJECT**

Ms. Daly introduced James Hoffman, Life Scout of Darien Troop 35 and sophomore at Darien High School.

Mr. Hoffman provided a presentation of his proposed project to remove the invasive species in the dune area between the parking lot and the beach at Weed Beach and to replace them with colorful and ecological native species including Bergamot, Goldenrod and Rudbeckia. He highlighted the benefits of introducing native species to the area and identified on a map where the work would take place. He explained that the existing dead plants could lead to erosion. He added that the existing Mugwort is a highly invasive species that suppresses other plants, is not beneficial to pollinators, and can actually trigger allergies and hay fever in humans. He also noted that there is currently Southern Sandbur and Creeping Thistle in certain areas and added that these species can cause physical harm. He noted that in addition to approval by the Eagle Board, he would also need to obtain funding - potentially through the Pollinator Pathway or the Garden Club. This process can take up to two weeks. He explained his timeline in detail, stating that because of the upcoming cold weather, the project would likely occur in two phases including removal and planting. Planting would take place in the spring.

Mr. Hoffman answered various questions from the Commission. There was brief discussion regarding the existing seagrass and Mugwort. The Commission expressed generally favorable comments regarding the project.

**** MS. DALY MOVED TO ACCEPT AND APPROVE JAMES HOFFMAN'S
EAGLE SCOUT PROJECT TO REMOVE INVASIVE PLANTINGS AND
REPLANT AT THE WEED BEACH SAND DUNES**

**** MS. BORA SECONDED**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUS**

**CONTINUE REVIEW OF PROPOSED UPDATES TO P&R RULES AND
REGULATIONS**

The Commission reviewed an updated version of the previous draft document noting various changes throughout the document. Some topics of discussion included consumption of alcoholic beverages and alcohol permits, noise and amplified music in parks, lawn signs, permits to use parks and application procedures for permits, permit standards for issuance and appeals procedure, beach permits, court rules and regulations, and other miscellaneous rules and regulations. Ms. Bora and Ms. Mulrow-Peattie will continue to review the document for finalization in the winter.

UPDATE ON CAPITAL & ARPA PROJECTS

Capital Projects

a. Pear Tree Bathhouse Improvement

Mr. Farrell provided an update on the project, noting that \$50,000 has been approved, \$10,000 of which will go towards updating the facility to ADA compliancy. The \$40,000 will cover costs including exterior work such as replacing and painting the doors. Interior work will include epoxying the floors and shower stalls, plumbing updates including battery operated faucets and flush meters, replacing the hot water heaters, replacing the urinals in the men's restroom and toilets in the women's restroom, repairing the block wall, replacing thermostats, showerheads and partitions in both restrooms, adding grab bars for ADA compliancy, and painting. Any potential concession area updates would fall under a different budget.

There was brief discussion regarding the battery operated faucets and increased maintenance and cost to replace batteries. There was also a discussion that due to the building being in a flood zone, that FEMA regulation limits how much can be spent in capital improvements on the building. The bathroom renovation could limit future ability to make substantive improvements following a storm event.

ARPA Projects

a. Playgrounds

Ms. Daly provided an update on the Cherry Lawn Park playground project, noting that the Committee is considering using the same vendor as used for the McGuane playground. Once a design is finalized and approved, the Working Group will bring that design to the Commission. She added that there may be a fundraising effort to help bring the two walkways from the 18month – 5 year old playground to the 5-12 year old playground together to make the area more ADA accessible. Ms. Gery added that an embankment slide may be donated by Ox Ridge School to Parks and Recreation.

c. Weed Beach Paddle Court

After application feedback was received from the Environmental Protection Commission, Ms. Gery explained that a virtual meeting is now scheduled with the vendor, engineer, Dan Biggs and Jim Coghlan to determine exactly what is needed to move forward with the project to address the EPC concerns. She noted that this is no longer a fall project and will likely move to a late winter or early spring project.

PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION ON THE DRAFT FY25 BUDGET

Ms. Gery opened the discussion by introducing the proposed Recreation Coordinator full-time position. She highlighted that the recent Community Needs Survey results showed residents wanting more community events. She briefly described the proposed position, noting that it will support community events and fill gaps in programming. She added that this would alleviate some duties from the existing Recreation Supervisor position and

allow for additional programming and events. Ms. Daly emphasized that the proposed position may also allow Ms. Gery to shift some effort from community events to many of these large upcoming capital projects and fully staff increased community events as requested through the Town survey.

Ms. Gery explained that the security services line item was reduced in the upcoming budget and the seasonal/temporary budget was increased by \$10,000. She also highlighted the \$17,000 reduction in revenue coming from Darien Arts Center facility rental of the Mather Center. There was brief discussion regarding the invasive species removal budget.

DISCUSSION ON FY 25 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

Ms. Gery explained that the Capital Improvement Project budget is a work in progress. She noted that the shade structures for Cherry Lawn Park and the fence structure surrounding the oil tank at Weed Beach were removed from the budget. There was brief discussion regarding the Cherry Lawn Park traffic study and paving. The Commission agreed to remove the paving line item from the budget until a traffic and parking study has been conducted at Cherry Lawn Park. The Commission discussed adding security cameras or motion lights to the beaches and parks especially in the areas where vandalism has occurred. Ms. Bora concluded the discussion by noting that the budget will be fine-tuned following the Parks Tour.

DISCUSSION AND VOTE ON MR. FRATE'S DOCKING OF HIS FISHING BOAT AT PEAR TREE BOAT LAUNCH FOR THE PERIOD OF NOVEMBER 1, 2023 THROUGH APRIL 30, 2024

Ms. Bora reminded the Commission that at this point, there are no other alternatives for Mr. Frate's boat than trailering it in and out of the water and that the topic will be revisited as improvements are made at Pear Tree Point Beach since the Commission may be unable to make accommodations in the future.

**** MS. MULROW-PEATIE MOVED TO APPROVE MR. FRATE'S DOCKING OF HIS FISHING BOAT AT PEAR TREE BOAT LAUNCH THROUGH APRIL 30, 2024**

**** MS. MORGAN SECONDED**

**** MS. DALY ABSTAINED**

**** THE MOTION PASSED**

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ms. Gery provided the Commission with her report. She also thanked the Commission members who volunteered at Rocktoberfest. She noted that the ARPA funds were approved for the brush cutter, water tank and three large storage trailers. She also highlighted brief results of the Community Needs Survey.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Ms. Bora reviewed the Parks Tour agenda and the associated survey/evaluation for Commissioners. She provided a brief Great Island Committee update. She added that different inquiries and suggestions have come from the Coastal Commission regarding the Pear Tree Point Beach improvement project. Ms. Bora thanked Ms. Gery for her effort in organizing the Cherry Lawn Park Gazebo restoration ribbon cutting.

NEW BUSINESS

No new business.

REGULAR MEETING ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:52PM.

Next Regular meeting: November 15, 2023, 7:30 pm in Room 119 of the Darien Town Hall

Respectfully submitted,
Tamara Eberhardt

