

MINUTES

**SUFFIELD PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
MONTHLY MEETING
MARCH 11, 2009**

The Suffield Parks & Recreation Commission held its regular meeting on Wednesday, March 11, 2009, in the meeting room, 230 C Mountain Road.

ATTENDANCE:Lou Casinghino, Chairman
.....Jane Smith, Clerk
.....Joseph Bombard
:Leeayn Burke
.....Brian Casinghino
.....Bill Clark
.....Gerry Crane
.....Michael Roccanti

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:Wendy J. LaMontagne, Director

Lou opened the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

PUBLIC INPUT: None

MINUTES:

Mike made a motion to accept the minutes. Bill seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

CORRESPONDENCE:

Wendy passed out the Spring Brochure and complimented Cindy and Donna on the new programs trying to keep up with the new trends. The Tee-Ball and Girls Softball was sent to the schools a few weeks ago. Wendy also said that the information is available online at our website.

Leeyan asked about the gymnastic program and why it wasn't in the Spring program. An acquaintance told Leeyan that she was hoping that the gymnastic program would be year round and also make a comment that there didn't seem to be many kindergarten through 2nd grade programs.

Wendy said that she wanted to make everyone aware that the paper brochure is not sent to the schools anymore – the schools have gone digital. Wendy said that we have seen a decrease in registration and think it might be due to the brochure being on the digital backpack. Wendy showed the commission a copy of the pages that a parent has to through to get to their child's digital backpack. Lou asked Wendy to go to the schools and see if they have a bulletin board and ask the school if they would or we could put up our flyers. Wendy said that the schools want

to go 'green' and digital. The commission discussed the cooperation between the schools and Parks & Recreation regarding the distribution of our information. Leeyan said that the PTO is thinking of doing a mass emailing to try and get information out to the parents.

Jane asked about the notifications sign-ups. Wendy said that we have 20 people signed up and Wendy said she put an article in the Observer and hopefully we get more. Wendy said we have sent out 2 informational emails so far – we only send out emails intermittently.

Brian brought up the gymnastics program and asked where the program was held. Wendy said that the program was through Whip City Gymnastics in Southwick, MA. Brian said that he thought this is a great program for children.

Lou said that Bob Ravens-Seger has resigned since he has moved to East Granby. Bob was a very valuable member of the commission and will be missed. Bob is now a member of the East Granby Parks & Recreation Commission. Lou said that we will need to elect a vice-chairman at the next meeting.

Officer Terry Antrum has contacted our department and requested the use of the softball field at Bruce Park on May 30 by the Police Explorers. The Explorers are going to hold a game against Red Sox alumni players. Wendy said that it is not a fundraiser at the event – it is done before the event is held.

Wendy said the Town Planner has contacted all department heads and commissions for an update of the plan of conservation and development. It is a State of Connecticut statute that this done every 10 years. If not done it could affect discretionary funding from the state. Wendy said that this is something that the planning subcommittee, or any member of the commission, could give input. The plan is available on-line in the Zoning and Planning section.

PROGRAM REPORTS: Mike said that he called parents for evaluations of classes. On the adult Cake Decorating class the participant was very happy with the class and would like to attend another one. The same with the Balloon Sculpturing class for children. The same with a participant in the Soccer Skills and Drills. Mike said that all the comments were positive.

Leeayn spoke to a First Steps Ballet class parent who was very happy with the class but suggested that the facility be smaller. On the pre-school Valentine class, again very positive but did suggest a longer class – from an hour to 1-1/2 hours – program was rushed at the end. On the Rainforest program the comments were again positive. Leeayn said she did have a negative on the 2nd grade Soccer program. Both coaches were very inexperienced and suggested that if an inexperienced coach could be paired with an experienced coach. Wendy said that we have training sessions and information for soccer coaches and Wendy said to remind parents that if they have a concern to call right away and maybe we can correct the situation.

Jane asked if there were any basketball evaluations. Mike said that he did not have any names on the list. Leeayn said that she had a very nice comment on Coleman's summer camp.

Wendy said that she is again working with the leadership group from Suffield Academy. The students will be doing community service work at the canal and parks in town.

Jane said that Donna does a nice report but she would like to see the number of participants.

OLD BUSINESS:

Bridge Street School Update: Wendy asked if any commission members had any comments or had attended any meetings. The committee has a new charge and Wendy has been working with Janet Banks and Jack Muska (Public Works Director) on space needs. Wendy said that she has requested activity rooms for programs. We are limited at times because we are using rooms at the library, or school. The commission discussed the use of the property in regard to the building, field and costs.

Budget/A.C.C.E.: Wendy said that Scott (1st Selectman) sent an email indicating that our budget has been cut (along with other departments). The concert line item was listed at \$4,000.00 and it has been cut. In previous years we had donations from Six Flags through their promotional program. That is no longer happening. Wendy said she is concerned about funding the concerts and that is why she put in the request from the budget. Wendy said that private donations are very hard to come by and to get the money needed may not be viable.

Wendy said that the location of the concerts may no longer be a good place – there is a lot of traffic and noise. The Hatheway House location is o.k. for parking but the acoustics were not good. The locations of Babbs and Bruce Park are off the beaten path. Wendy said that we need to evaluate the program, where to get money, location, etc. Brian said that having the concerts on the green show that the town is alive, the arts are alive. It's a nice place to have a public activity.

Jane asked about getting the high school or middle school band to play or are there any bands that are looking for exposure and would play for free or a karaoke night. Leeyan suggested asking Tracy Mnych who has done free concerts for Friends of Suffield and Relay for Life.

Jane suggested advertising through the Observer for an open mike night or jam session night. Brian suggested Burt T Band and he might play for free – very good music. Gerry said that there will be a concert at Babbs on the 4th of July. Wendy asked the commission to email or make calls to performers.

Lou asked if we can ask the Arts Council and other groups for funding. Wendy said that she just found out about the cut so she has not as yet started to send out letters. The Soccer Club donation was brought up and Wendy said that she has not received a 2008 donation as yet.

Wendy reviewed the other cuts she found were in our payroll line item and summer camps. Wendy said that she is waiting for a response from Scott as to exactly what the cuts are.

Wendy reminded the commission that the budget hearing with the Finance Board is next Monday, March 16, 7:00 p.m. at the Police Station. Wendy asked that members come to support the department.

Wendy read an email from Scott (1st Selectman) regarding a department head meeting on the budget which is scheduled for Friday.

Wendy reviewed the A.C.C.E. meeting and said that she has not heard anything from them.

Jet's Youth Football: Lou reviewed the meeting with the Jet's requests and our meetings with them and the fact that they asked for extra consideration if the field is wet. Lou said that we told them that we would take it into consideration but that our rules need to be adhered to.

Jane said that they have 3 ages groups and was wondering how they would only be playing 3 or 4 games with 3 sets of teams. Lou said that they said only 4 or 5 games. Bill said that it is dates, not games so they may be playing 3 games on one date. Jane said that should be documented.

Basketball: Wendy said the program is finished and everything seemed to go well. If there was a problem it was taken care of. Leeayn said that she heard many positive comments. Jay said the refs were good but the suggestion he would make is that the referees be more consistent – they were inconsistent and it made it difficult for teams. Jay suggested that a few key rules be stressed and Bill suggested that they be taught to keep the whistle in their mouth so they can blow it when they see something happening. Brian suggested using bigger basketballs for the younger children (1st and 2nd grade) – it was easier for them to use than the little balls. Brian said the women's size ball worked much better.

Bill said that the gym monitors did a great job.

Email subscription: Wendy said that the article in the Observer helped. Wendy asked the commission members to encourage their groups and friends to sign-up. Wendy said that our department is the only one using it.

NEW BUSINESS:

Spring Fields Meeting: Wendy said that last Tuesday was the annual spring fields meeting at which the fields use is reviewed. The new athletic director for the high school attended so he is aware of the fields use. Lou said the meeting went well and Wendy is very well organized. Lou asked about the soccer club and Wendy said that they have their own fields that they lease from the Town so they don't use our fields.

Lou commented on the 2 baseball programs that needed to be compromised. The programs are Little League for the younger children and the Babe Ruth League which is for older children. Lou feels the priority should be given to Little League. The Babe Ruth League only has 1 team

Soccer Club Tournament Request: Wendy said that the soccer club has sent a letter requesting use of the fields at Bruce Park, the high school, Sullivan Field, McAlister and Middle school for their annual tournament which is going to be held June 27 and June 28.

Jay made a motion to grant the request of the Suffield Travel Soccer Club to use our fields on June 27 and June 28. Jane seconded and the vote was unanimous.

AED – Ambulance Project: Wendy said that she emailed everyone regarding the Ambulance project to have AED units on each of our athletic fields. Mike said that he attended the meeting on Saturday, and that there were representatives from the different athletic clubs. Don Miner, Ambulance, said the units are easy to use and they are planning to put the units at Bruce Park first as a trial. You are required to be CPR trained to use the units. Don said he does not have any funds at present. The liability is with the people responsible for maintenance of the equipment which will be the Ambulance. Don also wants the schools to screen for rare genetic disorder that causes children to have heart attacks. Mike said that he asked about vandalism. Don said that the units will be housed in an alarmed cabinet because it can't be in a locked cabinet.

Wendy said that she has been talking with Don on this project. Wendy has emailed other Parks & Recreation Departments to see if anyone else has these located at parks and the response has been no. One problem may be vandalism.

Mike said that Don is looking for permission from us to put these units at our parks. Lou said that a possible solution for the vandalism is to have the police department pick them up at night and then put them back in the morning since it is less likely that they will be stolen during the day.

Wendy said that she has contacted our insurance company to let them know that this might be happening and to see what the exposure might be.

Lou said that as long as the town attorney is o.k. then we would not have a problem with this. Gerry said there are a lot of details that have to be answered.

The commission discussed, funding, location and vandalism of the units.

ADJOURNMENT

Gerry made a motion to adjourn and Leeayn seconded it. The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane Smith, Clerk