

MINUTES

**SUFFIELD PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
MONTHLY MEETING
APRIL 14, 2010**

The Suffield Parks & Recreation Commission held its regular meeting on Wednesday, April 14, 2010, at 230C Mountain Road, Conference Room

ATTENDANCE:Lou Casinghino, Chairman
.....Jane Smith, Vice Chairman
.....Leeayn Burke, Clerk
.....Brian Casinghino
.....Bill Clark
.....Gerry Crane
.....Cindy Nicholson
.....Michael Roccanti
.....David Rusnock

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:Wendy J. LaMontagne, Director
.....Tom Frenaye, 1st Selectman

Lou opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Lou thanked Tom Frenaye for his interest in our commission and what our problems and needs may be and what we are doing.

PUBLIC INPUT: None

MINUTES:

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

CORRESPONDENCE:

Wendy said that she received verbal correspondence from a Windsor resident who is interested in setting up a food vendor cart at Bruce Park and Sunrise Park. Wendy said that she spoke with Jim Taylor, Zoning Enforcement Officer, who said that Suffield does not allow vending carts on Suffield streets but that doesn't mean parking lots, school lots. Wendy also spoke with Art Christian, from the Conservation Commission. Art said that they do not allow this at Sunrise Park – that the restriction is in the deed. Wendy asked the commission if they wanted to discuss this and put this on next month's agenda.

The commission discussed the fact that this has come up before. Wendy said that we have a policy for non-profit organizations, i.e., girl scouts/boy scouts, athletic booster clubs, etc.

Wendy said that for our camps we don't want children bringing money and there is also the situation of food allergies. The commission discussed different aspects of allowing this, whether parents had requested this, the problem with litter, charging a fee, whether or not the commission is comfortable with this. The consensus was that this is not a good idea and we should follow Sunrise Park guidelines.

Wendy said that the Summer Brochure is done. The brochure is on the website and paper copies should be available by the end of the week. Wendy asked the commission to check out the brochure since we have some new and exciting programs along with our staple programs.

PROGRAM REPORTS:

Program participation numbers: Lou asked the commissioners to review the numbers. Wendy said that the format is a work in progress and it will be added to as the season programs come along. Jane asked for numbers for the adult programs because those are the ones that ebb and flow. Jane said that she would like to see the more difficult populations tracked. Wendy said she will add to the report. Wendy also said that email is helping to increase the adult registrations.

Brian asked about the girls' softball and the low enrollment. Wendy said that we are competing with Little League, Travel soccer and lacrosse which are also held in the spring. The question came up on whether or not the small athletic girls programs could be combined with other towns to make it more fun. Wendy said that it is something to consider.

Program brochure distribution: Lou said that he met with the school superintendant regarding the fact that we can no longer distribute hard paper copies of the brochure through the schools. All distribution is now on the digital backpack. Our numbers have gone down since the digital back became the only way to distribute. Lou said that the superintendant got back to him and said that Spaulding will allow paper distribution. At the other 2 schools we can put brochures in a designated area. Cindy suggested that the brochures be put in the cafeterias.

Wendy said that the skateboard park is scheduled to be open for the school vacation. The park is being prepared for opening. Wendy said that she met with a CIRMA representative and they reviewed the skatepark. Everything was o.k. except for a few items that we know have to be addressed. Our insurance carriers are aware that we will open same as last year, rules will be posted, and park will be open with no supervision.

Leeayn said that she asked children to leave the basketball courts since they were skateboarding on it. When Leeayn drove by again, they were on the courts so she asked the police department to do a drive by. Leeayn said that a police presence will be a good deterrent to the children skateboarding on the courts.

Lou brought up the bike path in West Suffield. Lou said that it is very nice and there was a police officer at the parking lot this weekend. Lou asked if the parking lot is going to be paved. Tom said that it would be – the property next to the lot is being bought by the State/Town and we will get an acre to use as a parking lot. There is a \$51,000.00 grant from the Coca Cola Company to use for paving, kiosk and signage.

Wendy passed out an invitation to a ribbon cutting, dedication for the trail. This will be a joint Suffield/Southwick event, Monday, May 3.

OLD BUSINESS:

A.C.C.E.: Wendy passed out a sheet showing the A.C.C.E. priorities. This list is the one which was presented to the Finance Department. Wendy said that these are recommendations and may not be the one voted on. Tom said that the request for tennis court repairs was discussed and will be made a definite priority at next Monday's meeting. Tom said that the feeling is that we should spend more on Capitol Spending than we have in the past since there are a lot of repairs to be done.

Subcommittee update Youth Basketball: Wendy thanked the subcommittee for attending the meeting with Cindy Fisher and herself. A review of the 7th and 8th grade boys program was done to enhance it. The decision is to keep this program in a "work in progress" format. Wendy reviewed the recommendations to enhance the program.

Field & Facilities: Wendy thanked Bill Clark and his team for volunteering to help get the baseball field at the High school cleaned up. Wendy also said that if anyone has a group that would like to volunteer please contact her to set up a time and place.

Wendy also said that with this nice weather the highway department has had a head start on getting the fields prepared for spring sports. We have also been able to schedule the different athletic groups to most of their requests.

Wendy said that Little League would like to donate screening for Bruce Park 1st base baseline of the softball field. They will purchase the product but ask that the highway department install the screening. Wendy has talked with the highway department and public works to see how much the posts cost for installation of the screening. When this cost is assessed then they will determine if we can accept the screening.

Bruce Park lights: Wendy introduced Tom who came to discuss the lighting situation at Bruce Park. Tom said that there is a problem with the lights at the field on Copperhill Road. The conditions placed on the property when it was deeded to the Town do not allow for the installation of lights. The lights were put up with a permit and with an expense in the thousands to the Soccer Club. The Town is working to resolve the issue by looking for a different location where the lights can be installed. A suggestion has been made to move the lights to Packard Field at Bruce Park. The Soccer Club along with other sports could then play night games at Packard Field and it would not be a problem with neighbors. Tom would like to know if there is another area that would accommodate these lights.

Lou agreed with Tom on moving them to Packard Field where not only the Soccer Club would use the lights but also other groups. The commission discussed how the oversight at Copperhill Road might have happened, the permit issued and the new landowner and the deed wording.

Cindy said that as a teacher at Spaulding, she would like to see the lights only put on the south side since she uses the small hill for sliding and it could be a safety issue. Wendy said that her understanding is that lights would be on both sides. Cindy asked that the school be contacted to discuss this issue for safety issues. The commission as a whole feels this is a good place to put them. Tom said that Zoning and Planning should have a hearing on this and it should be presented to the public before we do anything. The commission discussed the cost of electricity and who would pay for the operational costs.

Wendy said that this is something that would have to be put on the agenda for detailed discussion and approval if the lights go on Packard Field.

Brian discussed the quality of Packard Field and the fact that if it is overused it won't stand up. Wendy said that it comes to budget dollars and whether Public Works will have enough money to keep the field in good condition with a big amount of use.

Tom told the commission to think about what they want. Lou said that this will be put on the next agenda.

Jane brought up the parking situation at the High School – the grass along the road in front of the athletic fields. Wendy said that every year she contacts the high school and police department on this issue. Tom said that he would look into this.

Babbs: Gerry updated the commission on what is happening at the rink. Gerry said that there is an offer from a couple of people in town to make it into a sports complex with skating in the mix. One concern is the 20 year lease – 6 years of it have elapsed and the group is asking for lifetime unlimited use. The architect is studying the plans to see what can be changed within the parameters of the original approved drawings. Gerry said that to open the rink only as a roller skating rink would not generate the money needed to keep it going. Gerry said that they are at a transition point and have to make some decisions. The July fund raiser will be held again this year and Gerry thanked Mike for his help last year.

Lou asked about the group which is looking to put in a sports complex, if they would have complete use of the facility. Gerry said no. Gerry said that it would be sublet and his group doesn't need the building all the time.

Wendy said that if we were to open the park (beach area) it would take a lot of maintenance: fixing the parking lots, clearing the driveway, cleaning up beach, fencing, small storage building, raft, port-a-lets, safety equipment, etc. An approximate cost would be around \$32,700.00 and that doesn't include in-kind services. Wendy said that if we wanted lifeguards it would cost around \$7,500.00, for weekends and if you want 4 day weekends we could be looking at \$13,700.00. The question was asked about opening the beach without lifeguards. Wendy said that there would be exposure and we would have to have the right signage, etc.

The commission discussed the Southwick beach, the cost to enter, and the facility. The commission discussed the access to Babbs and the condition of the beach. Gerry discussed a grant that was rejected at a Town meeting several years ago. This grant would be for a bathhouse. This grant is still available but it would have to be brought up for a vote if the beach

is going to be re-opened. Tom said that if the money can get put together to open the beach and people start coming to Babbs for recreational purposes we will probably get the support. Cindy said that the lake has been cleaned up by Gerry's group and they have done a great job.

The commission discussed the possible uses of the property, what this other group will be doing, the items that need to be addressed to bring the property up to speed for use and the beach.

NEW BUSINESS:

Summer Camps: Wendy said that we are starting to take registrations for summer programs and we have a great line up with many new programs. We also have new adult programs.

Lou thanked Tom for his interest not only in our commission but also Babbs.

Gerry made a motion to adjourn and Jane seconded it. The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Leeayn Burke
Clerk