

Wallingford Parks & Recreation Department
Parks & Recreation Commission
Meeting Minutes for Wednesday, October 9, 2019
8:00 a.m. at Parks and Recreation Department

Commissioners in Attendance:

Don Crouch, Dave Gelo, Jason Michael, Steve Rossacci, and Mike Savenelli Sr

Recreation Commission Members Absent:

Recreation Department Staff Present: Kenny Michaels, Director of Recreation Parks & Recreation

Special Guests: Lauren Takores, Reporter for Record Journal taped meeting

Opening Remarks: Chairperson Dave Gelo called the meeting to order @ 8:00 a.m.

Minutes:

A motion made by Mike Savenelli and seconded by Jason Michael to approved minutes from the August and September meeting.

Special Guests: Allotted time per guest 15 minutes per Article 4 of By-Laws

Kenny asked Dave to send the agenda to Lynn in Program Programming in a Word or PDF format. Dave said Lynn also requested that the agenda be sent to Scott Hanley. Dave said he was not familiar with Word and asked if he could send the email to Shirley to format into a Word document and send it to Lynn and Scott. Kenny agreed to have Shirley create the Word document and sent the document to Lynn and Scott going forward.

1. Grand St. Park Updates

a. Urban Oasis – Mary Heffernon request

Kenny said he provided Sal Amadeo, Purchasing Dept, with detailed specifications for the equipment. Purchasing Dept is currently backlogged due to staff shortages. The equipment bid should be open within the next month.

Mary Heffernon informed us about an Urban Oasis project grant and suggested Grant Street Park. The Urban Oasis program is to increase green space in areas where there are fewer opportunities to interact with the natural worlds, which is not only of great benefit to youth and their families, developmentally, emotionally, socially, and intellectually, but is also of great importance to the declining bird population. Grand Street Park is located in an area that would be a great location for a pollinator garden.

Kenny said when the design for playground equipment was done extra care was given to ensure Dept of Public Works had enough space to maneuver equipment and mow around the playground. The only potential area for the Urban Oasis garden would be up against the building. Concern about more bees being in the area was raised.

An alternative site, Westside Field might be an excellent location and also beautify the area. Westside has more options for placing the Urban Oasis and it would dress up that park. One location was to the right of the main entrance. A suggestion was made to cut back the over grown area behind the fence. After discussing each location, the consensus was to wait until the project is done at Grand Street Park and see if there was an area that would accommodate the Urban Oasis.

2. Improvements to the following Parks: On Hold

Pire Park - Richard Sheehan Park – Doolittle Park Building Ice Skating at Doolittle Lufbery Park

Kenny said he will be working on a 3-5-10 year plan for the Park & Rec. Pires Park will be part of the plan to have work done at the park.

Lufbery Park - discussion on either moving the pavilion or building a new pavilion. The initial thought was to move the pavilion to where the fence was, but another option might be to put the pavilion near the restrooms and have the parking area be where the fence was.

Years ago, there was Ice Skating at Doolittle Park in the winter. There is a metal bridge that the Fire Dept and Public Works would stick two planks by the bridge to hold the water back. Each year DPW would cut down the weeds before the planks were put in place and the water would back up to make a skating area a few inches deep. The building needs to be renovated. Jason said it would be good to have an area to change into skates, get out of the wind, and a bathroom. Currently, Galko Pond is the only place to skate when it's cold enough. Galko Pond has a deep end around 18-20 ft. This pond is spring fed.

3. New Trees at Wallace Park

Kenny spoke with Steve Palermo, Public Works, about Dave Gelo's agenda item replacing two trees in the Legacy Gardens taken down earlier this year. In speaking with Steve, they both thought the area looks open and more inviting. Jason said it really is personal if you like it open or to have some trees there to provide some shade. Mike said they were looking to get two 15ft maple trees or another kind that Steve felt was a good fit. The design for the Legacy Garden was to use the triangle area around the fence and the two trees, so it looked very semantical.

Mike made a motion to put two trees in Legacy Gardens. Dave seconded. No vote was taken. Kenny said that he appreciates input from the Rec Commission but they are an advisory role. They do not set policy or give directives.

4. Wallingford Jubilee 350 - P&R Involvement- Up-Date

Michelle Bjorkman, Park & Rec, is point of contact for the 350 Jubilee. The snowmobile will be in Simpson Court on Friday of the Jubilee. We have Steve Maxx who performs Simon Says as an event for Youth Day.

The leagues have not come forward with suggestions for this event. A lot of leagues are in full swing of their game schedule and might not have time to host an event.

5. Advertising Signs on Town Property – Jason Michael

Jason said the next step would be to determine what Park & Rec account the funds would go into. The account would need to roll over each year and not go back into the General Fund. This account would be used for park improvements.

Kenny will meet with Jim Bowes, Comptroller, to discuss the best way to accomplish having funds roll over year to year.

Once the account is setup Kenny and the Rec Commission will need to meet with the Ordinance Committee seeking approval. After it is approved it will go before the Mayor for his signature. If the Mayor does not sign/approve the ordinance change it will go before the Town Council for a vote.

Other towns have approved advertising for the leagues. Some towns control the advertising and funds through the town and others allow the leagues to handle the advertising and funds.

6. New Nominations (2) Legacy Garden at Wallace Park 2020

The two organizations nominated:

Wallingford Community Women – Don will reach out

Wallingford Historical Society - Jason will reach out

The Rec Commission and Kenny agreed on the two organization above. Don and Jason will reach out to their respective group to inform them they were nominated by Rec Commission to have a plaque for their work with the community. They will also ask each group to fill out the information sheet about their group asking what their accomplishments were for the past 5 years. This would be helpful for the acknowledge ceremony.

Each organization will need to determine the wording they would like on the plaque.

7. No weapons allowed – Sign on Entrances – Steve Rossacci

Kenny reached out to the Emergency Response Team, Officer Cadet and Officer Bower; they do the training at the public schools. They walked through the Park & Rec facility to provide information on safety. In looking at the Preschool area, the officers said we are doing a lot of things correctly. The doors are locked at all times, there are blinds on the windows, with the exception of one which will be corrected. They also said there is a change in having people hide in large groups. They suggested hiding in small groups or behind furniture or fixtures. The concrete planters in front of the building deter cars from driving up to the entrance doors. Our updated phone system is excellent in communicating emergencies and allow them to call 911 from the classroom. The Officers also suggest cameras around the outside of the building that would send footage to a server to review if there was an issue. Kenny will bring the findings to the Mayor. Steve offered to go with Kenny to the Mayor. Steve's background is developing evacuation plans. Kenny also would like to train the daytime and night/weekend office staff on Alice Training – Run, Hide, Fight. Officer Cadet will get Kenny a copy of the schools' evacuation plan that covers all types of emergencies.

Dave wanted signs posted on the doors that No Weapons Allowed. There are no signs on any town buildings except the Police Dept. Posting signs can cause concern or panic for our clients and unfortunately, the sign will not prevent something bad from happening.

7. Community Lake – Shoreline clearing of growth / brush – Maintenance item

Dave would like to have the Shoreline cleared before winter. He would like the clearing done twice a year. One clearing in the fall and the other around July 4th. Doing the clearing at these two times will keep it cleared in the spring and then the rest of the summer when people use the park the most.

Kenny will walk the area Tuesday morning Oct 15th 9:30am. Jason and Dave will meet Kenny.

8. Community Pool Up-Date Mike Savenelli

Michael Fortuna told Mike that all the areas are coming together. The company did pool environmental testing this past Monday by drilling and taking 6 samples every 2ft from 2 to 14ft. The company came back on Tuesday to do testing at the bathhouse and the pump house. Hopefully, the results of the testing will be good and they can attend the November Town Council meeting. Once the results are back and everything tested negative work can move forward.

9. Open Discussion:

Dave asked what happened to Westside Field swings. Kenny said it was part of John’s plan to remove them as they were within the area where a ball could fall. There was protective netting over the swings. The microburst mangled another net that was removed by DPW to see if it is salvable. Kenny is looking into potentially revitalize the sport court. Jason suggested looking into YALP from Finland as having interactive games and sport court.

Park & Rec Director’s Report:

Kenny met with Jim Hutt, HR Dept, and the Mayor on changes to the job description for Kenny’s old position. The changes were approved and a posting will be going out next week.

Kenny and Kurt Treiber, Risk Manager, went to all the parks to review the status of the equipment and whether maintenance is required.

Kenny is looking to replace the sand with mulch under the swing sets. He is also looking into having a wooden border around the area.

Lowe’s is doing a volunteer project for Yalesville Little League. A roof needs to be repaired.

There was an inquiry asking if a private person could donate a bench to a park. The Rec Commission said they have had inquiries over the years, but the consensus was it would be too difficult to manage if you allowed one resident to purchase a bench. In the past, a suggestion was to plant a tree.

Fall programs are in full swing we had 3,161 people register for classes.

With fall projects underway Public Works will be getting wood chips for the Dog Park and Community Gardens.

Next Commission Meeting: Wednesday, November 13, 2019
8:00 a.m. Park and Recreation Department

Meeting Adjourned at: 9:55 a.m. by Dave Gelo seconded by Mike Savenelli

Respectfully submitted,

Shirley Barillaro, Sr Clerk
Wallingford Parks and Recreation