

**Wallingford Parks & Recreation Department  
Parks & Recreation Commission Agenda  
Special Meeting  
Minutes for Wednesday, April 21, 2021  
8:00 a.m. at Parks and Recreation Department**

**Due to a posting error, this meeting did not comply with the FOIA and the agenda will be redone at a future meeting.**

**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:** Jason Zandri, Town Council; Pickleball Players: Bob Danielson, Jean Danielson, Sally Tremaine

**Opening Remarks:** Chairperson Dave Gelo called the meeting to order @ 8:03 a.m.

**Minutes:**

A motion made by Mike Savenelli Sr seconded by Steve Rossacci. to approved minutes from the March 10<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**Public Question/Answering:**

Bob Danielson, Pickleball speaker for the group, spoke about the number of tennis courts in the town verses the pickleball courts. There are far more tennis courts than pickleball, even though the number of pickleball players far exceed tennis players.

Nov 20, 2019, Bob presented a recommendation to turn Harrison Park into all pickleball court with one tennis court that would be dual lined.

Questions have been asked if the number of players are residents or not. Bob said he used two different forums to determine around 2/3-3/4 residents using the courts verses non-residents.

Pickleball really started growing in 2014 and has just kept growing in popularity.

In 2018, the tennis courts at Doolittle and Harrison were dual lined courts.

Bob submitted a proposal in 2019, but it was rejected.

In May 2020, Kenny Michaels (Park & Rec) supplied nets, a storage locker and dual lined the courts at Harrison Park.

With the game being so popular, in July 2020 the scheduling for court time has moved to an online app "Scheduler". This has helped reduce the large number of people waiting to play. In the summertime the number of players can be as high as 20.

A lot of neighboring towns are building pickleball courts for the demand of the sport.

The Doolittle Park renovation will not allow dual use it will be a single use for tennis only.

Kenny Michaels said no, that is incorrect they will still be dual lined courts.

If Harrison courts were turned into pickleball court only there could be more people playing. A game takes about 15-20 minutes. Having a windscreen will reduce the impact of the wind when playing.

Kenny Michaels said he does not support installing windscreens as they can rip up the fence, if there are gala force winds and the windscreen becomes like a sail in the wind. This has happened at Doolittle courts when the high wind storms went through the last few years.

Bob presented some figures for materials that he feels would need to be purchase to turn it into a pickleball court. He also suggested created a waiting area where the next players could warm up and benches inside the fence.

Kenny Michaels said last summer the Park & Rec did a short-term fix providing 4 portable nets for each court and a lockbox at Harrison Park. This was to be a 1-2 year fix, we are only in month 10<sup>th</sup>. Park facilities are reaching their life expectiously. Kenny said he did include in his cover letter of future items and pickleball courts was part of that. Kenny asked Jason Zandri if he had anything to add.

Jason Zandri, Town Councilor, said the Council can always specify extra money to go to/withdraw from a department. Last year they withdrew money from a lot of departments so the Wallingford taxes would not increase. This year alone there is a \$2 million that will go back into the budget. Once the money is in a department's budget, they can use the money as they see fit.

Kenny Michaels said Chris Shortell asked him what his wish list would be if he had a blank check. Kenny said pickleball courts was on that list. Kenny said he does have to be fiscally responsible and this year with the increase in minimum wage over the last several years really impacted his budget this year. Kenny also said the Lufbery pavilion is in really bad shape and needs to be replaced, which is included in Capital and Non-Reoccurring in the 2021-2022 budget.

The Wallingford Schools take the nets down and Sheehan locks their courts. Community Lake tennis courts are also bad and need to be redone.

Question was raised if Kenny could request the schools leave their equipment out? Kenny said he could, but he has no authority over them. Kenny suggested Jason might want to ask them.

Jason Michael raised the question that Harrison is a central park that is used a lot. It has a lot of baseball activities. Will there be any parking issues with increasing the number of players for pickleball? Chuck Maynard talked with Kenny about putting pickleball courts at the back of Doolittle Park where the basketball courts are located. That area just didn't seem like a viable location.

Mike Savenelli cautioned the group as the Rec Commission needs to do their due diligence to ensure there aren't any potential issues that was not identified. Mike said over the weekend he went by Harrison Park and saw a lot of cars parking on the grass. He thought they might have been for the baseball game and not pickleball. Kenny Michaels said it was for baseball and he has already spoken with Wallingford Cardinals who requested No Parking signs.

With having activities at the parks, it is a deterrent for people from dumping or other illegal actions. Jason Zandri said the Ordinance Committee is looking at raising the dumping fine to \$500.00.

## **Agenda Items:**

### **1. Discussion and review of parks and facilities waiver packet and requirements to be presented to the Town Council.**

Kenny met with Janis Small, town Attorney, on April 1<sup>st</sup> to review various facility waiver packets from around the country as to what can be applicable to new fee waiver packet. Kenny created a 4-page waiver packet that had specific language to alleviate confusion. Kenny has requested to be

put on the Town Council agenda to seek approval. Kenny replace page 3 in the facility packet with a revised version. These changes clearly outline what category a group falls in. The next Town Council Meeting is Tuesday, April 27<sup>th</sup>.

**2. Advertising signs in parks – Jason Michael & Don Crouch**

Kenny will send a letter to the Planning & Zoning Chairman for review and meeting at a Planning & Zoning workshop.

**3. Wallace Park – Legacy Gardens – May 15, 2021 Dedication at 10:00am**

The May 15<sup>th</sup> dedication will be for the two organizations that were nominated in 2020. The Wallingford Community Women and Wallingford Historical Society will be recognized. This event will be held rain or shine. Dom will get in touch with the Rotary Club as the 2021 nomination. (Ceremony to be held at a later date.)

**4. Bench honoring Chuck Burghardt @ Pat Wall – Don Crouch**

A memorial service is scheduled for the summer at Pat Wall park. Kenny will measure the bench slats and let Don know the size for the wording.

**5. Community Pool Update - Mike Savenelli - Kenny Michaels**

Mike said he and Kenny have a meeting scheduled with the Mayor on Monday, April 26<sup>th</sup> at 11:00am. Mike said they really want to go out to bid as contractors are looking for work. Kenny wants to be cautious on going out to bid, but then not able to move forward with the project.

**6. Open Discussion: (2/3 votes required to discuss item)**

Jason made a motion to discuss Harrison Park. Steve seconded and all members were in favor of allowing this topic to be discussed.

Concerns over parking on the grass at Harrison Park was raised. The concern was the grass area will be damaged. They are parking on the grass to watch games. Kenny said he will get no parking signs and Chris Bishop, Wallingford Cardinal President, will install them.

Kenny said there were parking issues at Vietnam Vets with soccer. Dave Rodriguez said the numbers for soccer are the highest they have been in 5 years. Dave said he will reassign teams so there is no parking issues.

**Directors Report: Ken Michaels**

**Current Parks and Recreation Projections/Maintenance/Facilities**

- Phase 2 of the Parks and Recreation Gym HVAC System replacement began on April 19, with the installation of a new heating and cooling unit on court one of the gymnasium. Phase 1 was completed last summer with the new HVAC unit installed in gym 2. Once completed it will give the gym AC as the original unit only provided heat in the gym. All day time gym programs were moved to gym 2 and there is no impact to evening usage of the gym. Project time frame for completion is about 6 weeks per the contractor.
- Doolittle Park Tennis Court project began on April 15, with the removal of the fence, posts, post for tennis nets. The contractor, RS Site and Sports estimated a two-month completion time on the project weather permitting. Alison Kapushinski, Town Engineer is the lead on this project and has been extremely helpful and great to work with on this project. I have been in contact with Steve

Baker, Athletic Director at Lyman Hall since last summer in coordination with this project as well so he can plan accordingly for the Lyman Hall Tennis Season.

- Worked with Rob Baltramaitis, Director of Public Works and I have recently put together the bid specifications for Community Lake Baseball Field Fence Replacement. Anticipating the bid to go out in early May for the project. This project increases the height of the current back stop, replace the fencing fabric in front of the current dugouts and increase the height of the fencing down the right field line. This will alleviate many of the foul balls currently heading over the existing fencing and hitting cars in the parking lot and would alleviate the amount of fall balls bouncing close into the new on ramp on the merit parkway.
- Recent Park inspections with Kurt Treiber, Risk Manager the end of March at all town Parks. Some items of note: Doolittle Park needs some replacement parts due to wear and tear. Plastic parts cracked in need of repair. Pictures have been taken and will be sent to Kompan the playground manufacturer to get cost on replacement parts.
- Vandalism of the playscape at Doolittle is present and was recently reported again to the Wallingford PD for graffiti of the Doolittle Building. Rocks from the back were also thrown through the windows of the front of the building. Vandalism was also found at the new Grand St. Park Playscape with black sharpie marker writing profanities on the posts of the swing sets and on some playscape planks. Those have been covered with the touch up paint provided by the playground provider during the install last summer.
- Playground border for Wallace Park was delivered this past winter. Need to coordinate with Public Works to have the current play sand removed and install border and schedule the playground surfacing to be delivered. This project will be completed using facility rental money.

### **Programs**

- March 27th the Department wrapped up a successful Weber and Gannon youth Basketball Season with “Championship Saturday”. This season although only at 50% of enrollment, was well received by parents and coaches adapting the game to the guidance provided by the State of CT Return to Play plan.
- In lieu of April Vacation Camp “Spring Stingers” due to travel restrictions on transportation and amusement venues, the Parks and Recreation Department offered a variety of local April Vacation Programs. The programs provided where Skyhawks Multi Sports held at the Parks and Recreation gymnasium instructed by Skyhawks Sports (12 Participants), Fit By Nature half day program hosted by Mary Cole taking kids on outdoor nature adventures at our local parks (12 participants) and Arts instructor Kim Larkin hosted a half day craft program for the week with (8 participants).
- Parks and Recreation Men’s and Women’s Softball 2021 season kicked off Monday April 19 after no spring/summer 2020 season due to COVID.
- Summer Camp Registration began in March with very promising numbers currently as we prepare for camp numbers back to where we were pre-Covid. Our Tiny Bubbles & Pop Shots Pre-School Programs Monday/Wednesday and Tuesday/Thursday are both full with 18 participants in each program. I am currently working with Michelle on opening an additional camp to accommodate

the 18 participants on the waitlist. Summer playgrounds taking place at the following elementary schools have seen a significant increase in registrations from summer of 2020.

Yalesville/Mary Fritz	Session 1:	Session 2:
Moses Y Beach	Session 1:	Session 2:
Stevens	Session 1:	Session 2:

- Due to travel and transportation guidelines, the potential for quarantines and cohorts being sent home for 10 days and missing 33% of the program, we made the difficult decision to cancel the Summer Sizzlers Travel Program for 2021. Other factors came into play with the decision to cancel. The cost of the camp in 2021 would be near to the cost of the camp in 2019 while taking 6 less trips. This was due to the same amount of buses needed due to social distancing while reducing the number of kids in the camp to 60. Based on the state guidance, if a group/cohort is deemed in close contact with a positive case, the entire group/cohort would have to quarantine for 10 days. This could mean 10 kids in the group or 20 kids on the bus could be quarantined for 10 days and miss two weeks of camp. In speaking with our colleagues in other towns who run similar programs, the trend from all was traveling camps pose too much of a risk currently. The risk, was more than the reward and due to planning purposes, we needed to make the decision and the difficult one was to cancel again for 2021.
- Awaiting on the official document of the recent announcement from Governor Lamont's office that as of May 1 all out door guidance will be dropped and who this pertains to Parks and Recreation Programs and Local Youth and Adult Leagues.
- Shawn is in current production of the Parks and Recreation Departments Summer Brochure which is scheduled to be online in mid-May.

### **Budget 2021-2022**

- The opening of community pool was not included in the 2021-2022 Parks and Recreation Budget. After the council meeting in February discussing the pool and cost to re-open and my discussion with the mayor, I did not think it was fiscally responsible to pay \$40-\$50k of dry costs to open the pool when are intensions and hope is to get the pool project out to bid end of Spring/Summer. COVID guidance for aquatics operations caused some concern on operating the pool and the potential for quarantining life guards due to positive cases or close contacts caused concern for potential pool closures. As noted on the agenda item, Mike Savenelli and I are meeting with the Mayor on Monday, April 26 to discuss getting the pool project out to bid again.
- Budget items at Parks included in the Public Works Capital and Non-Re-Occurring Line:
  1. Replacement of the Gazebo at Manfreda Fishbein Park
  2. Replacement and potential relocation of the pavilion at Lufbery Park
  3. Replacement of the Outfield Fence West Side Field Softball
  4. Repainting of the gymnasium floor Parks and Recreation Department
  5. Redo the basketball court at Grand Street Park
- Budget Items included in the Parks and Recreation Budget
  1. Begin the transition to purchase and replace picnic tables at town parks/pavilions
  2. New Fabric cover for the Doolittle Shade Structure
  3. Purchase of second ID Card Printer for office as we transition to ID cards for programs and away from laminating card stock IDs

**Next Commission Meeting – Wednesday, May 12, 2021 @ 8:00 AM**

**Meeting Adjourned at:** 10:02 a.m. by Mike Savenelli seconded by Steve Rossacci

Respectfully submitted,

Shirley Barillaro, Sr Clerk  
Wallingford Parks and Recreation