

**TOWN OF MANCHESTER, CONNECTICUT
PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION
THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 2009
MINUTES**

Meeting began at 7:05 p.m.

PRESENT: Chairman: Ron Conyers; Commissioners: Ken Miffitt, Frank Livingston, Bill Gochee, Tom Crocket; Parks and Recreation Staff- Scott Sprague, Ken Longo

GUEST: Nate Agostinelli, Molly Devanney, Regina Ricci

MINUTES:

The minutes for March 2009 were unanimously accepted.

COMMUNICATIONS:

None

RECREATION REPORT:

Summer Camp mail-in registration is complete. All who mailed in by the March deadline were given slots, however it may not have been at their first choice. Campers that attend Verplanck and Waddell will have the opportunity to swim. They will be bused to Salters, Swanson, West Side or Globe.

Rebuilding Together is this weekend.

The Children's Fishing Derby will be held at Center Spring Park and the Senior Derby will be at Salters. Both are scheduled for May 9th from 7:00 – 10:00 a.m..

FIELD SERVICES REPORT:

The Center Springs tree project bid was awarded contingent on starting two weeks from the award. Two residents have objected to trees being taken down. There will be a hearing to address their concerns.

There has been a lot of graffiti during the past week, especially at Northwest Park. It will be expensive to rectify. It could be as much as \$7,000 to remove graffiti at recreation facilities town wide. Northwest Park's dugout at the big field, concession stand, Little League press box, new restrooms at the playground and Bagshaw third base dugout were all hit. Painting over does not work. The graffiti will be chemically removed and the buildings steam cleaned. Anti-graffiti preparation has been done in some locations. The work will be completed in time for Rebuilding Together, which is this weekend. The Little League opening day has already occurred. It was questioned if security cameras should be installed at Recreation facilities and if they are truly a deterrent. Are they too expensive? There are so many areas in town that attract graffiti. The

staff had to drop everything and bring in a contractor to make sure the graffiti was cleaned up for this weekend.

Mowing has started. Over 20 fields per day are prepared. This is the first year with no chemicals on the elementary school fields. This will involve a lot of manpower and cost. State law does not allow pesticides and chemicals on K-8 grade fields. They will do all they can do with the fields.

Courts are being crack sealed.

Verplanck and Waddell pools will be mothballed/shut down for this summer. The pools will need to be proactively mothballed and it will need to be determined if it will be permanent or semi-permanent. Pipes will need to be pumped of water. Ken is not prepared to give a full report yet. It was questioned if the pools should be covered and whether there will be a problem with bikers, skaters and skateboarders.

A lot of work was done in Center Spring Park. It looks great.

OLD BUSINESS:

Joel Janenda submitted his resignation letter. He has been on the Commission for 30+ years. A letter of appreciation will be drafted. Ron Conyers will do it. It was questioned what the letter should include. Is the Democratic Party doing something? The Parks and Recreation Staff already sent a card. The Board of Directors should be asked to give Joel a plaque. Bill O'Neill was not on the Commission as long as Joel. Bill was and is very involved with development of bikeways. Joel was chairman for most, if not all, of the 30+ years he was on the Commission. Joel would need to be invited to the Board of Directors meeting, similar to what was done for Robbie Rickert. Scott Sprague will find out exactly how long Joel served.

A motion was made and passed to recommend that the Board of Directors honor Joel Janenda at an upcoming meeting for his 30+ years of service on the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission.

A letter will also be sent to Bill O'Neill thanking him for his service. Scott Sprague will also find out how long Bill O'Neill served.

Anyone from the Commission who leaves should receive a letter. However, commissioners do not leave in an organized manner. Every commission member is appointed by a political party. The political parties should also be honoring their appointees. Dennis Cumberbatch may be re-appointed to the commission. All the commissioners can sign the letters Ron Conyers writes. He will leave them at the Parks and Recreation office for signing.

A presentation was made by Wally Irish and Mike Orloski last month regarding naming New State Road softball field after Randy Smith. Letters of recommendation were presented at that time. It was proposed that there was possibly a better field to recommend than New State Road. Robertson may be more fitting. This discussion was postponed until as many commissioners as

possible could attend. Some valid points were made at the last meeting by the guests. The naming criteria that was previously adopted by the commission is fine. Randy Smith meets the criteria listed at the top of the sheet. He was the best sports writer he could be in his profession and was well known. Robertson is strictly a men's adult field. Mr. Smith did not have much involvement with youth sports or with Town Recreation Programs. Robertson is appropriate for naming after Mr. Smith. Some Commission members feel that he is worthy of having a field named after him. He was a great writer. Generally, he didn't write about local sports. He was a state, regional and national writer. Charter Oak is where Mr. Smith played most of his games. Mr. Irish and Mr. Orłowski asked that the field sign be visible from Oakland and North Main Street. However, this would be a problem as that is state property. It was questioned who would pay for the sign. In some past cases, Parks and Recreation ordered the sign, but the Little League paid for it. The Town does not have funds designated for a sign. However, the Board could appropriate money for the sign. As a standard, signs at fields are typically right at the site of the field. Additionally, a flagpole was requested. Currently, there is no pole at Robertson. It was questioned who would put it up and take it down daily, as there is no light there.

A motion was made and seconded to recommend that the softball field in Robertson Park be named in honor of Randy Smith and be called: Randy Smith Memorial Field. The motion passed by a vote of 3-2.

The Commission recommended that the Town staff recommend a location for the field identification sign.

NEW BUSINESS:

Nate Agostinelli, Molly Devanney and Regina Ricci are in attendance this evening on behalf of the MARC, Inc. of Manchester's Building Committee. They would like to hold a fundraiser for their Building Project. It would be similar to Relay for Life and would be held in Northwest Park. The entire park is reserved for the Relay for Life event. It is the only event in town that closes the entire park for public use. Relay for Life started at the high school and then moved to Northwest Park. Direct costs to the Town are reimbursed by the Cancer Society. Usually there are no costs that need to be recouped, as the park is prepared during the normal workday hours and the event is supervised by volunteers. MARC's event will be smaller and will not last 24 hours. They will pay the pavilion rental fee and use other areas of the park for fundraiser. However, the park will be open to the public during the event. September 26th is the planned date. There are no other scheduled events/games/tournaments that will conflict with MARC's event. The usage has been penciled in the schedule pending approval. MARC was asked to come before the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission for a recommendation. The park will be reserved from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and the event will run from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. There will be a cookout at the pavilion and the restrooms will be open. Participants can walk and hangout. It is a family event. MARC is trying to find unique ways to get as many people involved as possible. They have bought and paid for the land next to the Post Office on Shelton Road for their new building. The cost to construct the building is estimated to be at least 4 million dollars. MARC has donation collection canisters around town in 60 locations. They have already raised several thousand dollars. MARC serves Manchester and the greater Manchester area. Another group in town had planned a Chili Fest. They were offered a similar

agreement. However, the Chili Fest never occurred. MARC's event schedule works, as it is a little later in the fall. The one concern is if this agreement were made with MARC, would other organizations expect the same agreement? The deciding factor is that MARC is a local non-profit with a long history of community service and their event will not disrupt public use of the park or other scheduled activities in the park. The event will be held rain or shine. MARC has a core group of 300 who attend events. They expect as much as double that amount for this event. This is the first year for the event. They will learn lessons for the future. They will utilize publications, mailing list and their marketing network to publicize the event. They also have a fundraising committee. MARC's clients have a strong family structure. It was questioned if there will be an UConn home game on that date? MARC may make a request through the Town Hall to hang a banner on Main Street. MARC did not want to put too much in motion until they received approval for the use of the park. They are very willing to pay the pavilion usage fee. MARC is a non-profit group, this will be a non-peak usage and the public will still have access to the park.

A motion was made to allow MARC, Inc. of Manchester to use Northwest Park for a fundraising walk-a-thon. Motion was approved. 5-0 They will pay the pavilion usage fee; with the understanding the event does not disrupt regularly scheduled activities in the park and does not obstruct usage by the public.

Scott Sprague will give MARC a permit to fill out. Scott will inform the General Manager of the Commission's recommendation and discuss the issue with him before final approval of the application/agreement.

It was questioned if the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commissioners would be willing to have their contact information listed on the department's website. Do other committees list their member's contact information? Scott Sprague will find out and get back to the Commission. Currently, anyone can call the Town Hall and get the names of the Commission members.

Scott Sprague reported that he had received a request from Curt Vicente, Director of Parks & Recreation in Mansfield to hold the Hershey's Eastern Regional Track Meet at Manchester High School. Curt is requesting waiver of the facility use charge. The meet is co-sponsored by the Connecticut Recreation and Park Association (CRPA) and is for youth 9-14 who are the top competitors at their local meets. Curt serves as volunteer meet director. The meet was originally scheduled for Eastern Connecticut State University. CRPA was recently notified that due to emergency repairs, Eastern is not available. CRPA used Manchester's track in 2005 for this same event. CRPA anticipates 400+ participants. The facility use charge for the track is \$500 plus the direct cost of town services (staff required both BOE and Town) on meet day. Mr. Sprague is asking that the Commission endorse his recommendation that CRPA pay the Town \$500 or the direct cost of staff, whichever is greater. Mr. Sprague stated that there is no fee for participants. He also stated that winners at this meet would qualify for the State meet to be held at Willowbrook Park in New Britain.

Mr. Sprague reports that on May 13 he has scheduled a meeting with Town staff, BOE staff and CRPA representatives to discuss meet planning including staffing requirements.

By a vote of 5-0 the Commission passed a motion recommending that CRPA's application/agreement for use of the track be approved and that CRPA be charged \$500 or the direct cost of town services, whichever is greater.

John Connelly, the manager of LL Bean's Outdoor Discovery Schools met with Recreation Department staff. He would like to do Kayaking classes this summer at Union Pond. Manchester Parks and Recreation holds a cooperative program with LL Bean. Last year over 100 people registered for Recreation Department classes co-sponsored with LL Bean. They would like to access the pond from Northwest Park. They are requesting that they be allowed to clear some brush to create a walk-in access to the water. They are also requesting that LL Bean be allowed to clear a 30' x 10' area of brush adjacent to the Hockanum Trail in close proximity to the proposed water access. They are proposing placing a 28' x 8' trailer in this space to store their kayaks and other equipment. Scott Sprague has spoken to Doug Smith about this and he has no problem. Scott will meet with Planning, Zoning, Building and Wetlands Officials to discuss. LL Bean will provide insurance and be responsible for any vandalism/damage done to their trailer, kayaks or other property.

The consensus of the Commission was that Mr. Sprague should move forward with his discussions and that it is desirable for the Town to continue cooperative programming with LL Bean and that there is no objection to providing pond access from the Northwest Park property. There is also no objection to LL Bean placing a storage trailer near the water access, providing all required approvals are received.

Manchester Residents will have access to three free days of golf at Manchester Country Club via a lottery. There was not enough publicity for this Sunday's free day. Notice could have been put in the summer brochure, but the information was received too late from the Country Club. An e-mail blast will be done. Information will be placed on the website. An article will go in the paper. A temporary sign was recommended to be placed in front of the country club. The capacity is eight foursomes per hour. All the slots will fill for Sunday. The next two dates will be better publicized.

Ron Conyers requested a presentation from the Youth Service Building at the next meeting. Could they show plans? Scott Sprague will arrange this. There is a lot of history in this building.

Adjournment

Respectfully Submitted,