

**TOWN OF MANCHESTER, CONNECTICUT
PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2009
MINUTES**

Meeting began at 7:01 p.m.

PRESENT: Chairman: Ron Conyers; Commissioners: Ken Miffitt, Frank Livingston, Tom Crockett, Dennis Cumberbatch, Bill Gochee; Parks and Recreation Staff- Scott Sprague, Ken Longo, Chris Silver

GUEST: Dr. Fred Spaulding

MINUTES:

The minutes for January 2009 were unanimously accepted.

COMMUNICATIONS:

A communication was received from resident and former Commission member Bill O'Neill concerning the Yellow Bike Program. The Yellow Bike project has been successful in college communities or in areas where it has strong volunteer management. This project could be implemented along greenways in other areas of the country. Pick up a bike, use it, return it to any station. If approved for Manchester, the program could start with pilot locations, such as Wickham Park, MCC or Charter Oak. Neither Public Works or Parks and Recreation want to be responsible for maintaining the program. Volunteers would need to retrieve bikes from brooks and ponds, etc. Ten bikes and two locations were proposed. The Commission recommended that Mr. O'Neill present his proposal to the Youth Commission. It was questioned who would maintain the program over the summer. Could the program only be done during the school-year? It was questioned if the Town would have any liability for injuries. Once people understand the Yellow Bike Program, participation should increase. Bill O'Neill will be invited to discuss this matter further. Bikes are a source of transportation. It was questioned if Glastonbury tried this plan. We have the bike trails to support this program.

RECREATION REPORT:

Recreation is working with Field Services to promote the Town's single stream recycling program. There would be a single barrel (the size of the existing barrels) for newspapers, cans and cardboard. With this change, there should be a 70% reduction in "garbage". The Town will receive a \$10.00 credit for every ton of recyclables. Recyclables would be picked up bi-weekly. Garbage would be picked up weekly. At the dump, transfer station, business will be conducted down below, not up the hill. It was suggested that East Hartford's dump should be looked at for ideas.

The Bennet Leisure Center reports a pick up in attendance. The loss of the small gym has caused a crowded situation in the Cone gym. There were 70 youths in the gym one night. An

independent consultant was hired regarding the roof fix. Insurance money can be used to fix the floor, but it should not be repaired until the cause of the leak is determined and the roof repaired.

The Board of Directors approved raising the camp fees. \$45.00 per week for the first child in a family, then \$35.00 for each additional. The “before” care (7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.) and the “after” care (3:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.) cost \$50.00 per week additional. If only before or only after care is needed, the cost is \$30.00 per week additional. The cost to attend is still very reasonable. It is anticipated that scholarship requests will go up. Will see how this summer goes and decide later in the year if changes to the fee waiver policy are necessary. A survey was done of surrounding towns to see how they handle scholarships. It is not unusual to have fee waivers for summer camp. There have already been inquiries about registration. Mail-in registration begins in March. The applications will be processed in April. The program may have higher demand than in the past. The summer camp program has been down sites due to elementary school renovations. Bowers and Keeney are unavailable this coming season due to construction projects. The town’s camps have changed from specialty camps (sports, crafts etc.) to traditional camp day programs. Originally fees were set low to reduce the need for fee waivers. As fees have increased, so have fee waiver requests. Families requesting scholarships are referred to Social Services.

Chris Silver discussed the Children, Youth and Family Master Plan Project. Chris is a liaison helping the consultant. He is spending a lot of hours on this project. The National League of Cities platform was adopted by the Town. “Onsite Insights” is the consultant. Phase 1 promotes the master plan process. 150 residents were recruited. They will meet two times per month for 5-6 months. Seven subcommittees are formed. Each subcommittee will be responsible to make one major recommendation. The seven recommendations will be condensed into one proposal. Phase 2 addresses sustainability and long-term resources. This is to make sure a master plan does not get created and then put aside, as it is not achievable and sustainable. In Phase 3 the proposal would be submitted to the Board of Directors. The intention is not to look at the bad, but to look at the community’s strengths. Determine what is needed for a child (to age 20) to thrive in a community and then determine what needs to be addressed by the subcommittees and the master plan. The Board of Education allowed the initial survey to be conducted. Manchester’s focus was to develop a Youth Commission for the Town. The goal was to have the Youth Commission as part of the Master Plan, not as a result of it. Each youth commissioner is assigned to a subcommittee. Programs and plans are currently based on the wants of a small number of people, not on the wants of the Town as a whole. The Youth Commission hears the ideas of the youth and will be consulted on youth involved plans for the youth perspective. The Town needs to support and listen to the youths. This is a system change for the greater good, not just the good of a few. There are 24 Youth Commission spots for Manchester, of which 19 have been filled. The term is for two years. The age limit for the Youth Commission is 21. It is anticipated that the proposal will be made public June/July 2009. There will not be an immediate change. The public needs to be educated about this process, as after one year of planning, the plan may take a couple of decades to fully implement. The program needs accountability or the Town will lose sight of the plan. The Town has invested \$100,000 plus Chris and Mary Roche Cronin’s time and the time of many volunteers from the community. We don’t want to just throw money at the problems. The recommendations and strategies will come from the subcommittees. Direction needs to come from the group. The Town Staff needs to be

careful not to influence the committees. The neighborhood approach is needed to carry out the strategic plan. There are resources that every neighborhood has. With the Youth Commission in place, it can be used as a guideline to set annual goals. Chris hopes the master plan will be developed in the neighborhood approach. Youth Commission members must be in high school, but not just Manchester High School. The neighborhood a youth lives in is not in consideration when filling Youth Commission spots. The Youth Commission could not be filled at this time if it were a requirement that the neighborhoods be represented. The socio-economic diversity of Manchester is represented on the current Youth Commission. The Youth Commission is separate from the master plan, but it will participate in it. The Town Staff does not have any sway on the outcome of the master plan. High School students and adults have different priorities. In Virginia, the youth are involved in all levels of government. The Youth Commission is also included in everything, including the budget process. The final document will go to the Board of Directors by early summer. The final recommendations from the subcommittees are due to the consultant by May. Eventually, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission could have a youth sit on the Commission, possibly with no voting rights. That would be a system change. The view of a 60 year-old is different than a current 16 year-old. Eventually, the Parks and Recreation Commission could make a recommendation pending the recommendation of the Youth Commission. The Youth Commission is a place youths can go and talk, feel like they have a stake in the community. It would be great if the Board of Directors deferred a decision until they had the opinion of the Youth Commission. Manchester is the only town in Connecticut involved in this project. There are only 5-6 communities in the United States involved in similar projects. Town of Manchester staff visited Hampton, Virginia. They have enacted this type of plan there already. They have been successful. Their community is military based and is smaller than Manchester. They have followed the program for 19 years. Their Youth Commission is 9 years-old. There is constant revision to their plan. The plan is under the Department of Civic Engagement in Virginia. Manchester has a home page for the project process to keep everyone up to date before the proposal comes out.

Scott Garman has been assigned to help supervise the new Youth Services building upgrades project. It is out for bid.

FIELD SERVICES REPORT:

The snow budget has dwindled.

There was either vandalism to or an accident with the press box hut at the Nike site. The press box was torn off its foundation by a vehicle. It will be disassembled and rebuilt in-house.

OLD BUSINESS:

NEW BUSINESS:

Dr. Fred Spaulding attended the meeting on this date to discuss the renaming of Center Park to "Center Memorial Park". He already made a presentation to the Board of Directors and the decision was tabled, as he had not yet brought the matter before the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission. Renaming proposals should come before the Parks and Recreation

Advisory Commission first. The Board should not have allowed the presentation to occur prior to being brought before the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission. Dr. Spaulding was a former chairman of the Conservation Commission, serving for 10 years. He stated his proposal is simple. Parks are a part of quality of life. This park is a central park of celebrations. He has letters from Veteran's groups who have heard his proposition and support it. He brought the proposal to the Mayor and the Mayor brought it to the Board of Directors. "Memorial" covers the full year, not just a day. The park's donor, Frank Cheney Sr., developed land for park purposes, acquiring land to make a park in three chunks. In 1890, the first park parcel purchased was located across from the Town Hall. After his death, Frank Cheney Sr.'s widow carried out her husband's plan to conclusion. Dr. Spaulding questioned how many parks are in Manchester. There are nine major parks in town including Case Mountain and the Hockanum River Linear Park. Dr. Spaulding has enjoyed Center Park for many years with his children. He would like to add the word "Memorial" to the name, as it represents all the town's people, as well as Veterans. Dr. Spaulding is not sure who originally named the park. It was questioned by the Commission if there are any deed restrictions, which would prevent the name from being changed. Was the current name part of the gift from Mr. Cheney? The Commission would like the proposal reviewed by the Town Attorney's Office to assure that there are no deed restrictions or other legal issues that would prohibit name change. Dr. Spaulding presented copies of old postcards printed for the Town, which referred to Center Park as "Memorial Park" and "Center Memorial Park". There is already a "Veteran's Memorial" soccer field in town. The Commissioners will review the proposal and respond to Dr. Spaulding next month. Dr. Spaulding stated the park was referred to as "Center Memorial" in the past. He would like to come back before the Commission and make further reports in the future. If the name is changed, the park sign would need to be replaced. The Town has a park identification program. There is a standard size and design across the Town for park signs. The signs are made of sign foam board, which looks like wood. It is a \$2,000 expense. A historical placard could be put near the new sign.

A motion was made to approve the name change from "Center Park" to "Center Memorial Park" subject to Town Staff review. The Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission would like the new park identification signage to be brought before the Commission. Motion unanimously approved.

Adjournment

Respectfully Submitted,