

**TOWN OF MANCHESTER, CONNECTICUT
PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION
THURSDAY, JUNE 18, 2009
MINUTES**

Meeting began at 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Chairman: Ron Conyers; Commissioners: Tom Tierney, Dennis Cumberbatch, Tom Crockett; Parks and Recreation Staff- Scott Sprague

GUESTS: Tyler Driscoll, Patrick Byrne

MINUTES:

The minutes for May 2009 were unanimously accepted.

COMMUNICATIONS:

There was an email from Merrill Kidd regarding the skate park. Merrill Kidd has an 8 year-old and feels there is a lack of supervision. She stated that the Parks and Recreation staff monitor does not enforce the rules/safety regulations. This park has different supervision when an event is held. Many youths go there without their parents. There have been injuries, but no lawsuits. Bicycles have not been allowed on the course. The group that met with the Commission last year to request a rule change allowing bikers did not follow up. The Recreation Department will do the best they can to address this; full time staff spoke to the part time supervisors as soon as they became aware of the complaint. 16 to 17 year-old staff members supervise the skate park.

RECREATION REPORT:

More people are becoming aware of the Waddell pool closure. Signs need to be put up at both Waddell and Verplanck pools.

The summer camps are full to capacity with a waitlist at individual sites for individual weeks. Those who were on time for mail in registration all received a camp slot in one of their top three choices.

Weather has prevented the completion of pool painting at Swanson. They may not be able to paint lines, as they will need to begin filling the pool over the weekend in order to have it ready on time. If it rains on wet paint, the paint needs to be acid washed and re-painted. The town must comply with the Federal Virginia Grame Bake Act. The act requires the installation of drain covers and in some cases other safety measures to prevent entrapment. The two indoor pools have been brought into compliance and the outdoor pools will all comply before they open for the 2009 summer season.

Softball is in full session. Little League will host the tournament for the eastern section of the state. There will be 16 teams and the tournament will produce the eastern regional champion. The event will be in July. Little League will reimburse the Town for the direct cost of Town services required to support this event.

FIELD SERVICES REPORT:

The tree harvest in Center Springs Park is ongoing. The pines in front of the sliding hill pavilion have been thinned.

They have been waiting until the last minute to decide whether or not to cancel softball/baseball games due to weather. There has been a lot more play on Sunday mornings as well as a lot of "pick-up" games.

There have not been many field use requests by private groups, and a concern was expressed about over use of fields. The fee structure reflects resident and non-resident use and they must present insurance. Summertime is usually downtime for the soccer fields, but there have been use requests. We have always let the Catholic schools and Cheney use Manchester fields for free and just provide insurance. Should this continue? It has to be considered that these schools help us with auditorium space, etc. The Town has fewer resources to devote to field preparation and maintenance. Surrounding towns use all their fields plus ask to use some of ours, and then they reciprocate when we need theirs. We need to do what is good for the town. We would like to keep as positive a community as possible and let volunteers help do lines, etc. At a future meeting, this can be reviewed with Ken. It was questioned if the union will allow volunteers to work on fields. Maybe there could be a compromise policy.

OLD BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

Patrick Byrne, Assistant Track Coach at Manchester High School and Tyler Driscoll, a 2001 graduate of Manchester High School representing the Manchester Running Company would like to run all age group evening track and field meets during the summer at the High School track. Originally, they had requested to hold the events one time per week. However, it would be difficult to hold meets every week and still keep it special. The track would be closed to other community users during the events. The fee for use of the track is \$500 plus \$50 for use of the press box as well as a custodian if bathrooms in the building are used. If the fees were waived, the group would still need to pay any direct costs to the Town. Parks and Recreation is supportive of the program, as there is no other like it in town. The Running Company would need to provide insurance. The events would be open to all, but marketed towards youths and High School aged participants. The event, Thursday Night's Under the Lights, would have the spirit of track and field, "compete against yourself." The fees would be \$5 per night or \$35 for the whole summer for an out of town participant and \$2 to \$3 for residents. There would be 12 events per night, a combination of traditional and specialty events. Participants would need to provide their own equipment. There would be events for men, women, boys and girls. Two paid athletic trainers would be available. Six paid officials would monitor the jump, throwing and timing. The events would run five to six weeks in the summer from approximately July 9th to the first week of August. The events would be held in light rain, but cancelled for heavy rain or lightening. The Running Company will provide personnel, but they will take volunteers. They will cover the cost for extra trash removal, and portable toilets. They don't foresee large numbers of people participating. They expect a maximum of 32-40 entrants per event. Competition will be separated by age 18+, High School age and youth or they will match where

most appropriate for safety. There is already a track agreement that users are out by 10:00 p.m. The recent Hershey track and field regional competition held at the High School was well organized. Competitors can also volunteer to help run the events. No one will be allowed on the in-field, track or inside the fence unless competing. Lane 8 could be left open to the public to continue to accommodate walkers. They will use their website for publicity and participants can register online. They will also put up a sign at the track. Twitter and facebook social networking sites will also be used. They could also advertise at the recreation centers. It would have been best to start advertising before school got out. Potential participants could already be involved in baseball or soccer now. They are trying to build a feeder program to interest kids in and prepare them for competing on the High School track teams. Next year they will be able to advertise in the spring/summer brochure. There are 1,300 youths in summer campsites that are between the ages of 5 and 15. The Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission needs to make a recommendation. This is a business, but it is cooperating with the High School track program and Parks and Recreation. With a recommendation from the Commission, the Town could authorize a pilot program. At various times during the evening, a few events would require the whole track to be shut down to other users for a brief time. The High School boys and girls track coaches support the program. This is a low cost alternative. It is less expensive than soccer/baseball. The club would like the \$500 use fee and the \$50 press box fee be waived. If there is a recommendation this evening, it would go to the General Manager. The program could either be approved immediately and start in July or it could go before the Board in August and only be run for one or two weeks. The field would only be booked for a 4-week trial, and then pick back up next year. If there are a good number of Manchester participants, not just out of town, the fee structure needs to favor the residents. If the program involves mainly non-residents, the fee will need to be paid. Every effort will be made to encourage Manchester residents, as they are seeking to create a feeder program. The track has a lot of usage, including the general public on bicycles. It will cost \$50,000 to \$60,000 to resurface the track; 2010 is the target. The coating is wearing away and if it becomes too worn, there will be a higher repair cost. The Running Company should show the Town an expenditure/income report to show loss or gain. If there is a profit, they should donate the money back to the Town. The track team could request permission from the Board of Education to run the concession stand.

A motion was made to waive the facility use charges (\$500 for the track and \$50 for the press box) for the Manchester Running Company and begin a pilot program at the High School, not to exceed four Thursday night track and field meets beginning no earlier than July 9th and ending no later than the day before the start of the 2009-2010 school year. All reasonable efforts will be made to keep lane 7 and 8 open to community users. The Town will be reimbursed for all direct costs. The Running Company will provide an insurance policy, which lists the Town of Manchester as an additional insured. The motion was unanimously passed.

During post-motion discussion, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission recommended staff and the Commission evaluate the program at the end of the season before an application/agreement is approved for next year's use.

Adjournment

Respectfully Submitted,