

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

Meeting began at 7:01 p.m.

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

GUEST: Mike Orlowski, Wally Irish

MINUTES:

The minutes for February 2009 were unanimously accepted.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Joel Janenda submitted a letter of resignation from the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission. His slot on the commission will be filled by the Board of Directors.

RECREATION REPORT:

The Recreation budget workshop with the Board of Directors was recently held. Handouts from the workshop were distributed to all present. There is a 6% budget decrease. The Manager's recommended budget includes closing Verplanck and Waddell pools during summer 2009. Verplanck has the oldest pool in the system and it is in poor condition. It needs \$75,000 worth of work. The water can be drained and the area locked up. However, it was noted that in the past youth have gotten into closed pools to ride bikes and skateboards. Swim lesson opportunities can be maintained, but lap, open swim and water exercise classes will be cut back. Globe Hollow can accommodate two or three summer camps at one time and it is the most popular site. The Manager's recommended budget eliminated subsidized programs at the high school's big pool. Two lifeguards need to be on duty at the high school due to the size of the pool. They cost \$10.40 per hour. People who register for the early morning swim will need to pay a fee instead of using their pass.

The Manager is proposing that Chris Silver become the Director of the Resource Office for Neighborhoods and Families. He will be responsible for implementing the recommendations of the children, youth and family master plan.

The Class LL and Class S High School State Track Meets will be held at Manchester High School.

Summer camp fees are \$45.00 per week with \$35.00 for each additional child. Before and after care is \$50.00 per week. Just before care (7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.) or just after care (3:00 p.m. to

5:30.p.m.) is \$30.00 per week. The department anticipates that fee waiver requests will increase. Fee waiver requests are referred to social services for review and recommendation.

Full-time staff will have to pick up duties heretofore performed by part time staff. The part-time staff members held positions in aquatics and summer camp and created smooth running programs. They freed up full-time staff members for other projects as well (Rebuilding Together, Pride of Manchester etc.). When emergencies or problems occurred, the part-time staff often addressed the issue.

FIELD SERVICES REPORT:

None

OLD BUSINESS:

The previously established criteria for naming parks, fields etc. was distributed to all present this evening. There are new members on the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission who have not seen the criteria the Commission uses. The history of the naming policy was discussed. The Board of Directors has not adopted the criteria. However, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission has followed the criteria for many years and plans to continue the practice. It is unclear if those proposing naming a facility always know about the criteria in advance. Naming proposals should be in writing to the Town Manager and should state which of the criteria the proposal is based on. If the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission is aware a proposal will be made at an upcoming commission meeting, the presenters should be made aware of the criteria prior to their presentation. The Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission can support a proposal not to make a recommendation or can vote against a proposal. The Commission's recommendation is forwarded to the General Manager and the Board of Directors for their consideration. The Board makes the final decision.

Wally Irish and Mike Orłowski were present this evening to propose the naming of a Town field after Randy Smith. Randy Smith was a sports writer for the Journal Inquirer. Mr. Smith passed away in April 2008. Wally Irish stated he and Randy Smith grew up together and felt Randy was a legend as a sports writer. Randy was a hometown boy. He remained in town with his buddies, even though he was talented enough to work in a larger market (New York, Boston, etc.). Wally is aware of the naming criteria. He also made a presentation regarding the naming proposal to the Republican Town Committee. Wally provided copies of letters of endorsement from the Republican Town Committee (signed by Wally Irish, Chairman); the Journal Inquirer (signed by Elizabeth Ellis, Publisher) and a second letter from the Journal Inquirer (signed by Matt Buckler, Sports Editor). Mr. Irish feels the naming would reflect Manchester doing what is right for one of its own. Randy Smith touched people in a large arena. The proposed naming location is the field at New State Road. Mike Orłowski stated he would miss Randy's unique writing. Randy was born and bred in Manchester. He knew how to word his opinions well. Randy knew his stuff and is well deserving of this recognition. Mike is aware field namings in the past have been in recognition of active team participants. Mr. Irish understands the criteria and came personally to the meeting to explain why he feels Mr. Smith qualifies. He also understands some fields were named prior to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission establishing naming criteria. However, Mr. Orłowski feels that Mr. Smith's contributions to the community qualify him for recognition. They understand Randy was not without faults. Randy Smith had a way

with words. He was a sports writer since his teens. Today's softball program is more friendly/social. It is not competitive like it used to be when softball was bigger in Manchester. Randy played a role in expanding the program. It was question if perhaps another field in town, other than New State Road, could be considered. The guests felt Randy Smith deserves to be connected with a high quality field. Randy played a role in Fitzgerald being built. Randy was a unique sports guy, very witty. Mr. Irish and Mr. Orłowski were thanked for their very persuasive presentation this evening and the Commission was glad they came to discuss this matter.

A motion was made to table the matter until the April meeting. The meeting date may have to be changed to ensure as many Commissioners as possible will be available.

NEW BUSINESS:

Information regarding a fiddle contest was distributed to all present. This contest used to be held in Hartford. A scaled-down version was held last year at Manchester Community College. The 2008 event was held on a weekend day and 1,000 people attended throughout the day. This year, they would like to use Center Park during Pride In Manchester week. Center Park is usually reserved only for Town-sponsored activities. However, the fiddle contest is a unique event and it will be part of the Pride in Manchester week program of privately sponsored activities. There would be no charge for use of the park and a permit would be submitted with an insurance certificate. Scott Sprague feels that this event will be an attractive addition to Pride week. Admission is free. If any money is collected, it will go to the non-profit Peace Train Foundation, Inc. that sponsors the contest. There will be no cost to the Town. If the Town does have to cover a cost, the Fiddle Fest will have to reimburse the Town. The Pride In Manchester Committee would like the event to be part of the Pride week. Heritage Day will be on the same day as the fiddle contest, so people can move between the events. Pride In Manchester is June 6-13.

A motion was made to endorse the fiddle contest as part of Pride In Manchester week and to allow the Peace Train Foundation to use Center Park at no charge for this event. The motion was passed unanimously.

A Daisy Troop would like to use the picnic pavilion at Northwest Park. They would like the security deposit to be waived. They are paying the usage fee. This is the first request for this waiver. The group is first grade girls supervised by their mothers. In the past the deposit check would be held in a safe and returned after the usage. Now the deposit checks must be deposited and a request for a refund check made. This process takes three weeks to return the deposit.

A motion was made to waive the security deposit for the May 31st usage by the Daisy Troop. The motion was passed unanimously.

Adjournment

Respectfully Submitted,

