

**TOWN OF MANCHESTER, CONNECTICUT
PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2009
MINUTES**

Meeting began at 7:12 p.m.

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

GUEST: Tyler Driscoll, Patrick Byrne

MINUTES:

The minutes for June 2009 were unanimously accepted.

COMMUNICATIONS:

All Commission members present at this evening's meeting received a hand-out with sections one through four of the bike and walk path conceptual design. Section one, from Gardner Street to Highland Park Market, has been approved and is going out to bid. Former Commission Member Bill O'Neill has been a consistent and strong advocate for bikeway greenway construction. The design for Section two, Wyllis Street to Porter Street and on to the Town line is nearly complete, but there are no funds, therefore, a town referendum may be needed. This matter may come before the Commission for a recommendation. Completing construction of the planned greenway/bikeway within Manchester is a community goal. Chairman Conyers wanted to make sure the Commission knew project status. This is still a four to five year project. Requests by the residents of houses and condominiums, as well as, matters regarding the brook were all issues in Section one. There will be a little park across from Highland Park. The Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission has endorsed greenway projects over the past 30 years. It could even be ten years before the project reaches Bolton.

RECREATION REPORT:

The summer camps were successful and participants had a good time. There were no major injuries; the worst was a broken arm. There were 1,000 youths attending per day. It was a difficult summer for aquatics because it was cold and wet. Two pools, Waddell and Verplanck, were shut down, but there were no complaints, not even to the Town Manager. Most likely, this was due to the rainy weather. Fall program registration is in progress. The programs begin in October.

The Randy Smith dedication occurred. There is a stone with a plaque, as well as, a sign. The ceremony went well and those supporting the project thanked the Recreation and Park staff for their assistance.

Fall softball has 62 teams. This is a record; the previous was 43. They play on lighted fields only. Northwest Park baseball field is shut down for the fall. Requests are coming in to use this closed field. East Catholic and MCC don't have lit fields. There are no other fall leagues in the surrounding towns. Non-residents do participate, but no resident team gets turned away. There are 80 adult teams in the spring/summer leagues. Manchester hosted the Little League Eastern Regional Tournament; 16 teams competed. The tournament went very well. Waddell and Northwest Park were used.

The Town received word that the Silkworms team is for sale. To date, there are three interested parties. Usually 400-500 people attend the games. When there is a special promotion, 800 people could attend. The concession stand is very profitable for them and they sell good food.

The Bennet small gym floor has been re-done and new glass backboards have been installed. The water problem (roof leak) has hopefully been identified and repaired.

175 dogs participated in the Doggie Dunk last week. MDOG held their fair the same day. They are still raising money for the dog park. It was questioned if a sign stating future location of the dog park has been posted. The land can't be cleared until they have the funds and are ready to proceed. MDOG is an active group.

The full-time Athletic Director's job at the High School is vacant. The AD is a big job. They arrange the busing for games, etc. This position supervises physical education and health, so certain credentials are required. They currently have an acting Athletic Director.

Scott Sprague reported on the status of the lease with Manchester Country Club for the golf facilities. MCC is behind in their rental payments and the Town is working with the Club and Rockville Bank (the Club has a loan from Rockville Bank) to try and work out a plan for the future of the golf course.

The netting at Northwest Park between the baseball and Little League fields is great. Rarely does a foul ball go over the net. Players from the high school, Legion and Babe Ruth don't hit over the net. However, it is possible when the Silkworms play.

The goalmouths at Hillstown are in bad shape. The fields are in good condition otherwise. Usually, one field at Hillstown is closed down each year. After the tournament, one will be shut down.

FIELD SERVICES REPORT:

The staff is working at the Northwest Park field. The tree work at Center Springs is done. When the leaves fall, the work will be easily visible. The staff is also assisting with the renovation of the Youth Services Building, which is part of Human Services. They have a lot of cooperative programming and special events with the Parks and Recreation Department. The swimming pools are being winterized. All the usual fall preparation is in progress and they are working with the Board of Education lining fields as needed.

OLD BUSINESS:

Patrick Byrne and Tyler Driscoll attended this evening to update the Commission on the summer Thursday Nights Under the Lights track and field events. They provided a printed summary for all present. Everything went very well, smooth on all fronts. They received a lot of positive feedback. Complaints were few and far between. Participants were age 3 to 63. They provided little trinket prizes to the younger participants. The median age was high school range. There were some really great athletic outcomes. The level of competition did not scare anyone away, but participation was not a throw away either. There was a good balance between residents and non-residents. As word got out about the events and the weather improved, attendance

increased. The 200 was the most popular, then the 100. The long jump was also popular. They found using the high school restrooms would have been a better decision than using Port-O-Potties. Next year they will pay for a janitor and open the high school. They had a PA system. Everyone enjoyed the competition and watching the events. Some high school staff volunteered to work the meets. For most sports, coaching over the summer is not allowed, but coaches can attend events. Mr. Byrne and Mr. Driscoll were advised to verify the policy for this sport, as there could be a risk of a youth becoming ineligible to play in school. They did need a coach present for the keys, equipment and press box. They did have a professional official. Some of the younger participants were afraid of the start gun, so they used a whistle. There was an athletic trainer present. Shot put, discus and javelin were offered. Mr. Sprague noted that he had spoken to Commissioner Crockett and that a little more emphasis on throwing events would be appreciated. They will not attempt to offer the pole vault event in the near future, as it requires volunteers with special expertise. The events started on time at 6:00 p.m. and they were finished by 7:30-7:45 p.m. They were cleaned up and off the grounds by 8:15-8:30 p.m. As long as it was safe, they combined age groups in one heat. They could accommodate 40-50 more participants if they hired five more staff (ten participants per staff member.) The events would run later if there were more participants and they may need to use the lights. They would need more registration assistance. 150 is the maximum number of participants they can ultimately accommodate. The general public did come to use the track during events. They were very willing to move to accommodate heats. The first event night was smaller, but participation doubled on the second event night and stayed at that level for the remaining event nights. They had requests for more javelin times, but when they expanded javelin times, participants didn't sign up. They offered the hurdles one time. There was no bad weather. They sold water and Gatorade. They did have a cooler of free water. Medical staff and a trainer were available. No injuries were reported. An experienced coach ran the javelin and taught the younger participants how to throw javelin and discus. They put an advertisement on Craig's List for officials. They paid some staff to help with registration and measuring. If someone asked for compensation, they paid them. Otherwise, they utilized volunteers. The employees and workers had a great time. They received no complaints about their clean-up process. During the last two event nights they turned on the track lights. There are great pictures on the website. An email was received from Thayer Redman in support of the summer events. They plan to move forward with planning for next year. They will advertise sooner, especially to the elementary and middle school aged youths. They did put out a flyer in the summer camps this season. It was suggested they send flyers to physical education teachers as well. They would like to hold 4 to 6 event days next year. They will come before the Commission again in January or February with next year's proposal. Information for the summer Park and Recreation Brochure is due by mid March.

NEW BUSINESS:

None

Adjournment

Respectfully Submitted,