



Board of Parks & Recreation
Meeting Minutes

January 8, 2020

Please be advised that these minutes are in DRAFT form and will not become "Public Record" until the Board of Parks and Recreation formally approves them at their next regularly scheduled meeting planned for February 26, 2020.

Board Attendees: Nancy Chapin, Rick Loh, Frank DiVincenzo, Gary Dell'Abate, Scott Johnson and Mike Bocchino

Staff Attendees: Joe Siciliano, Sue Snyder, Greg Kramer, Tom Greco and Brian Kerzner

Guest Attendees Miriam Kreuzer, Karen Giannuzzi, Leslie Yager and Sue Baker

- I. Mr. Dell'Abate called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. in the Keegan Conference Room.
- II. A motion was made by Mr. DiVincenzo and seconded by Mr. Johnson to approve the Board Minutes from the October 30, 2019 meeting. 5-0-0
- III. **Director's Report, Joseph Siciliano**

Mr. Siciliano reported that First Selectman Camillo will be holding a meeting about Town and Board of Education capital projects tomorrow evening. On January 23, the First Selectman will make a presentation on the Town Budget. The Board of Education will present their budget as well.

The Department is planning for spring and summer programming. Reservation Day for picnic and overnight camping permits will be held on January 21.

Mr. Siciliano advised that he will be attending the Board of Selectmen meeting to talk about the fee schedule. Every year, the department tweaks the fees. Fee changes rotate so every fee is not increased every year. The staff makes fee recommendations based on their experience and research of local communities. Mr. Siciliano reported he met with the Board of Selectmen, (BOS) and made an opening presentation of the proposed fees for 2020, he is anticipating that the fees will be approved.

Mr. Dell'Abate asked if fees were something that the Board would review and discuss. Mr. Siciliano replied if there were substantial changes, he would like to bring it to the Board, however the increases are very minimal.

Mr. Dell'Abate inquired about an article he read in the Greenwich Time regarding banners on Greenwich Avenue. Does the department lose money with the banner program? Mr. Siciliano replied that currently, the department charges a fee for the banner. Upon review of the overtime fees paid to support this initiative, the department is proposing an increase in the fee

to include the overtime cost to hang/remove the banners. The proposed fee is a \$300 administrative fee + the cost of overtime. The banner program was an initiative of the former First Selectman. Mr. Siciliano added that he does not have a position on whether or not this program continues. The program has run for 2 seasons, banners are hung at the corner of Lewis Street and Greenwich Avenue. The first year, the department did not charge a fee, the second year, there was a \$300 fee, this year the proposed fee includes the \$300 fee + overtime; the taxpayer should not pay overtime to an employee for the work done for a not-for-profit organization.

Mr. Dell'Abate inquired if the banner at the Old Greenwich train station is regulated by the Town. Mr. Siciliano replied, that it is not regulated by the Town, and is not permitted by Metro North.

Mr. Siciliano reported that announcements went out about the stadium meeting. The Board of Education, (BOE) is meeting at Dundee on Thursday about the 3 options being considered for Central Middle School. There is also a meeting next Wednesday at Central Middle School beginning at 6:00 pm with the DEP and EPA, this is a public information session on the remediation of fields 6&7 and the turf replacement at Greenwich High School, (GHS).

Mr. Johnson questioned if Mr. Siciliano was involved in developing the design suggestions for Central Middle School (CMS). Mr. Siciliano stated he was part of the working group the BOE and Milone and MacBroom, who followed up after the initial meeting. The working in the beginning. Tim Coughlin, Field Operations Manager is the department's representative with group consists of; Tim Coughlin, Dan Watson (Facilities); Lori O'Donnell (CFO) and Thomas Healy (Principal).

Mr. Johnson added that he feels it is appropriate for the Department and the Board to chime in on how it impacts the department programs.

Mr. Siciliano advised that the BOE sent an email asking for the department's position regarding the three options, the department submitted a position statement which backs the artificial turf option. Artificial turf supports most all programming and will get the most playability. The artificial and natural turf option has some issues and eliminates one of the 90' baseball diamonds, it is not going to help the recreation programs, the high school program; freshmen and JV, which is why it is not a viable option. The natural grass option is better than what we have because if they install an engineered natural grass field, it will have a better subsurface, better drainage, and hopefully irrigation system. A natural grass field would require an increase in maintenance. Per the consultants, in order to maintain a premier field, the field shouldn't be used more than 25-30 hours per week. The Board of Ed middle school program uses the field 25-30 hours per week, which doesn't leave any time for other programming.

Ms. Baker suggested that the consultant makes more money if they sell artificial turf. Mr. Siciliano replied that it has nothing to do with the consultant, the Town decides what they want, the consultant does not install or manufacture artificial turf, they just design.

Mr. Loh added that the location is a problem, the field is sitting in a bog.

Mr. Dell'Abate acknowledged that not everyone on the Board is in favor of artificial turf, and he doesn't think that all middle school fields would be artificially turfed, but he likes the idea of an artificial surface at CMS because it is in the center of Town.

Ms. Chapin stated that she is not in favor of artificial turf, and questioned if the Board will take a vote on a position. Mr. Dell'Abate replied at some point, we're just not there yet.

Mr. Dell'Abate added that as a parent who coached for a long time, when his children played baseball, the only field used was at Western, it was a hike to get there from the eastern side of Town on a Friday. That is why CMS is the most logical, as it is central to Town.

Mr. Johnson further added CMS is also important for the high School.

Ms. Chapin stated that as a Cos Cob resident, there is artificial turf at the high school, Cos Cob Park and private schools (Stanwich and Country Day). And from an environmental standpoint, it feels like there is too much plastic in Cos Cob.

Ms. Chapin inquired if there are any natural grass engineered fields currently in the inventory. Mr. Siciliano replied no, every grass field in the inventory was an afterthought.

Ms. Chapin replied that this seems like a logical place to try an engineered natural grass field.

Mr. Siciliano stated that while the department has issued a position, the department has no control over what the BOE does, they will vote on what they want to install. Parks and Recreation maintains the fields, but has no authority over their asset. As long as the BOE votes, they'll get what they want.

Ms. Baker inquired if Parks and Recreation maintains the artificial turf at the high school. Mr. Siciliano replied yes. Every year they are inspected, g-max tested, infill, gluing, etc. the whole maintenance program is budgeted in Parks and Recreation. The capital replacement however, is in the BOE budget.

Ms. Kreuzer added, it would be surprising that the decision would be made at the BOE level, and approved on by the community, without knowing what the operational costs to maintain the field are. The operational budgets should be included.

Mr. Siciliano replied that what's happening is, P&R is maintaining the CMS field now, it is a huge project because of its current conditions. There are operational costs that come with synthetic turf and grass turf, no one has asked the question. The difference in operational costs is probably negligible; they have different requirements. Natural turf maintenance costs will depend how much the field is used. The difference is the consistency of play with artificial turf, and revenue. The goal is to try to satisfy what the user groups are asking for which is consistency in the scheduling and playability. Now with the organic turf program, there is a tremendous amount of labor.

Mr. Dell'Abate asked what the fee was to rent the turf fields at the high school for an hour. Ms. Snyder replied that the current fee is \$50 (for profit groups) and \$35 (not-for-profit groups); proposing an increase \$55 and \$40 respectively. The groups also pay a per user fee per participant.

Mr. Dell'Abate added that if private schools are charging \$200-\$300, it wouldn't be unreasonable to charge \$100 for municipal fields, it is still way cheaper.

Mr. Siciliano indicated the he's heard from residents, that they've already paid taxes and do not want to pay significantly higher fees.

IV. Chairman's Report, Gary Dell'Abate

Mr. Dell'Abate stated that with John Hartwell's resignation, the Board needs to firm up the some of the committees. Mr. Hartwell was Chairman of the Field Committee, Mr. Dell'Abate and Mr. Johnson discussed it, and would like Tom McGarrity to Chair the Field Committee, Mr. McGarrity has agreed.

Mr. Dell'Abate also noted that Mike Bocchino will join the Field Committee. Mr. Siciliano added that Mr. Hartwell was also a member of the Field Study Committee and someone should fill that seat. Mr. Dell'Abate stated that he wanted to cover the Field Study Committee and he and Mr. Johnson will alternate, if necessary.

Mr. Dell'Abate added that there are other positions to fill on committees such as another representative on the Binney Park Advisory Committee.

Additionally, a liaison for the Golf User Group; Mr. DiVincenzo agreed be the liaison.

Mr. Johnson informed that a committee needs to be established for the Greenwich Point Master Plan. Mr. Johnson asked Sue Baker to join him with participation on the committee, she agreed. Mr. Johnson suggested Pat Sesto, Sue Baker, Roger Bowgen and Chris Franco.

Mr. Johnson asked Ms. Baker to give some thought to who should sit on the committee. Ms. Baker can represent the Greenwich Point Conservancy, Conservation, and Shellfish commissions.

Mr. Johnson suggested Ms. Baker talk with the interest groups and report back.

Mr. Siciliano recapped that the study was completed, 83 recommendations came out of the study. There is \$100,000 in the budget to complete some of the initiatives. If the funds are not spent by June, it will go back to the general fund. Progress needs to be made to move this along.

Mr. Dell'Abate advised of a complaint he received regarding the electronic survey the department sent out. The complainant expressed concerns that there were several pages with the same questions. Mr. Dell'Abate stated he went and reviewed the survey and thought if you were not familiar with the Town or use various facilities, it seems like a lot. Mr. Dell'Abate inquired how many responses the department received and what is done with them.

Mr. Greco responded that the last time the survey was conducted, 3 years ago, there were 1,800–2,000 responses. As a result of the survey; it was identified that the most important areas to residents was bathroom cleanliness, trash in the parks and fields. As a result, bathroom cleaning and trash pickup programs were implemented. The survey results were used in budget deliberations to support the programs and funding was approved.

Mr. Siciliano added that the survey is thorough and may seem cumbersome to some, but it is a tool the department uses to address concerns from the public. Parks and Recreation is one of the only departments that does this. The survey is conducted every 3 years.

Mr. DiVincenzo expressed his opinion that because the survey is every 3 years, it is understandable why it is lengthy.

Mr. Johnson distributed the year-end Foundation ledger to the BET members. The Foundation is not a Town agency; it is a private 501 (c) 3. Mr. Johnson provided a brief overview of the Foundation's operations, accounts and the process for donations/gifts. The Foundation has a Board of Directors, which was amended recently to make participation easier. Mr. Johnson added that there needs to be a member of the BET on the Board.

Mr. Siciliano added that Miriam Kreuzer and Bill Drake are the designated BET liaisons to the Board. Mr. Johnson stated that one of them should be on the Foundation's Board of Directors.

Ms. Chapin stated that the Tree Conservancy has a unique well-working relationship with the department, as they can gift to the parks. Mr. Siciliano responded that there is a resolution in the budget documents, that designates the responsibilities. Their relationship for their location at the Garden Education Center, is between the Tree Conservancy and the Garden Education Center.

Mr. Siciliano added that the same applies for the Friends of Greenwich Point and the Greenwich Point Conservancy when working on a project. Large scale gifts like the Chimes Building, will go through the full gifting process. The resolution is for more routine things.

V. Binney Park Advisory Committee, Nancy Chapin

Ms. Chapin reported that the island is done. The committee will talk to the Department of Public Works, (DPW) regarding the timeline for the bridge construction; this will impact some work that the committee wants to do such as the loop trail. The loop trail is out to bid; waiting for responses. One leg of the trail can start along Arch St, around the playground along the road, and stop at the tennis courts, this area may be impacted by the bridge work. The committee will meet on January 21.

Mr. Siciliano added that the first bridge work to be done is Sound Beach Avenue and Harding Road and where the reading room is; they are not going to touch the traffic circle.

Ms. Chapin stated that there is major erosion in the area. The committee wants to talk with DPW to get the plant back plan in their budget.

Mr. Siciliano advised he spoke with Jim Michel, if the area is used for staging, it needs to be as good or better than what is there now. Mr. Michel stated it could be built into the budget because part of the bridge repair will be funded by state funding, the landscaping restoration may get funding from the state program.

Ms. Chapin stated she would like to have a landscape plan in mind to have something to work with.

Ms. Chapin added that it would be great to have a member of the Board work on a public/private fundraising effort for the restroom building. It could be a great patio area for the user groups/parents of young children. It has the potential to be really nice and it is an opportunity to get the active recreation users involved.

Mr. Siciliano suggested maybe the garden clubs would like to get involved. Ms. Chapin reported that Binney has been a great success story because the staff has been amazing.

Ms. Baker questioned Mr. Kramer if he is worried about how brackish it might become for the plantings around the pond. Nothing is held by the dam, it is flooded all the time. Mr. Kramer replied that all the plants being looked at are tolerant.

Ms. Chapin announced that there will be benches on the island will have plaques for Crucitti and Nancy Caplan. There will be successional tree plantings that will show every season. Alan Monelli has been great.

Mr. Siciliano stated this has been a success story; everyone is working well together and has made great progress.

Ms. Baker asked why the fireplace was removed. Ms. Chapin responded that it was not usable, it was an attractive nuisance (garbage dump). Its removal has opened up the vistas.

VI. Dorothy Hamill Rink Sub-Committee, Rick Loh

Mr. Loh reported that the committee met to go over the procedure heading into the next phase which is the request for proposals from architectural firms to produce a basic design. Al Monelli was great, walking everyone through the steps. Ms. Snyder added that next month, the committee will address the needs in the rink and come up with a consensus.

VII. Eastern Greenwich Civic Center, Scott Johnson

Mr. Johnson reported that he spoke with Alan Monelli, the survey and basic site plan analysis is being conducted by Milone and MacBroom. Not much else can be done with the architect until this is complete. By the end of the month, the committee will get together to review ideas and meet with the architect. Working with a tough schedule for budget deadlines.

Mr. Johnson further reported that he spoke with First Selectman Camillo who informed of an initiative on sustainability requirements (net 0). Mr. Camillo noted that the committee must be serious about public/private relationships.

Mr. Johnson added that he spoke with Mr. Schubert, who is hopeful to work with Ms. Nolan on an initiative to price out some of the small items that can be used to solicit private contributions. This is very important to show an interest which will help when it comes to the overall funding.

Mr. Siciliano noted that the Town has put together a Sustainability Committee, there will be some conversation on how to move forward with the sustainability of the building.

VIII. Field Study, Joe Siciliano

The kick off meeting took place with Weston & Sampson. The committee setup a timeline. Since the kick off, the department sent them a significant amount of information; scheduling, prioritization, site survey, GIS, etc. The next meeting will be mid-February to assess where we are. Anticipating a final report in 6 months.

IX. Unfinished Business

Ms. Yager inquired if the bales of hay are around the trees where the sledding lawsuit was in Glenville. Mr. Siciliano replied that the department puts bales of hay around tree trunks at various sites, if needed; places where people sled.

X. New Business

None

XI. Budget, Joe Siciliano

Mr. Siciliano distributed and reviewed the budget. (**Attachment A**). there is a budget increase of 1.4% over last year, under the 1.75% maximum allowed. There were some modest increases with no decrease in services. Mr. Siciliano stated he is confident about the budget, the department is prepared to answer any questions and defend the budget.

XII. Public Comment

None

XIII. Meeting adjourned 7:52 p.m.

**Parks and Recreation
2020 - 2021
Budget Summary
General Fund**

	Parks & Recreation Department		Administration Division		Recreation Division		Parks and Trees Division		M F & O Division						
	2019-20	2020-21	2019-20	2020-21	2019-20	2020-21	2019-20	2020-21	2019-20	2020-21					
Revenue Sources	4,972,451	4,981,345	0	0	1,919,801	1,957,495	25,250	44,250	3,027,400	2,979,600					
% inc (dec)		0.2%		0.0%		2.0%		75.2%		(1.6%)					
Operating Cost															
Salary & Wages (100)	9,770,476	9,978,489 →	2.1%	1,023,694	1,039,216 →	1.5%	1,712,321	1,751,016 →	2.3%	4,739,404	4,799,027 →	1.3%	2,285,057	2,389,230 →	4.1%
Services Other (200)	444,010	396,883		115,200	57,550		165,810	168,658		58,900	62,500		104,100	108,175	
Supplies & Materials (300)	794,345	785,445		42,500	40,500		146,845	142,245		283,550	279,050		321,450	323,650	
Maintenance (400)	321,613	322,910	(3.5%)	28,363	29,560		67,850	65,050	(1.2%)	76,000	80,200	0.8%	149,400	148,100	0.9%
	0														
Total Operating Cost	11,330,444	11,483,727	1.4%	1,209,757	1,166,826	(3.5%)	2,092,826	2,126,969	1.6%	5,157,854	5,220,777	1.2%	2,870,007	2,969,155	3.5%
Total % inc (dec)		1.4%													3.5%
Budget Notes:															
Adjusted Oper Cost	11,330,444	11,483,727	1.4%	1,209,757	1,166,826	(3.5%)	2,092,826	2,126,969	1.6%	5,157,854	5,220,777	1.2%	2,870,007	2,969,155	3.5%
Total % inc (dec)		1.4%													3.5%
New Initiatives Included Above															
Total New Initiatives	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Net Cost of Operation															
Adj Operating Cost - Revenue	6,357,993	6,502,382	2.3%	1,209,757	1,166,826	(3.5%)	173,025	207,168	19.7%	5,132,604	5,176,527	0.9%	(157,393)	(10,445)	(1406.9%)
% inc (dec)		2.3%													(1406.9%)