



Board of Parks & Recreation

Meeting Minutes

January 24, 2018

Please be advised that these minutes are in DRAFT form and will not become "Public Record" until they are formally approved by the Board of Parks and Recreation at their next regularly scheduled meeting planned for February 28, 2018.

Board Attendees: Frank DiVincenzo, John Hartwell, Kirk Schubert, Patrick Slyne, Rick Loh, Gary Dell'Abate, and Scott Johnson

Staff Attendees: Joe Siciliano, Susan Snyder, Brian Kerzner and Tom Greco

Ex-Officio Attendees: Barbara O'neil

Guest Attendees: Leslie Yager, Michael Scotti, Betsey Underhill, Dean Gamanos, Bruce Socket, Lillian Pandolfi, Kevin Zaleski, Susan Norton, Molly Fergusson, Graham Tanaka, Jill Oberlander, Karen Fassuliotis and Janet Gold

I. Mr. Dell'Abate called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. In the Keegan Conference Room.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the Board Minutes from the October 25, 2017 meeting. 7-0-0

Pickleball Presentation, Betsey Underhill

II. Mr. Dell'Abate introduced Betsey Underhill, pickleball ambassador who spoke on behalf of the pickleball program. Ms. Underhill has lived in Greenwich all her life and is very much a part of the community. Involved in many volunteer positions as she is very passionate about giving back. Very involved in sports tennis and paddle tennis.

III. Ms. Underhill provided a brief overview of the sport of Pickleball, played mainly with four people, light paddle cross between ping pong, paddle tennis and tennis. The sport has nothing to do with pickles, the founder's dog's name was pickles.

Pickleball is the fastest growing sport in the country; 4,605 new courts built in the last year. Feels that it is the fastest growing sport in the Greenwich Community. 8th year now/ the program has expanded so greatly so fast that she feels Greenwich needs to keep ahead of the demand. The way to accomplish this is to figure out the next move. Ms. Underhill's proposal is for official outdoor pickleball courts to meet the demand.

Ms. Underhill stated that Frank Gabriele of the Bendheim Western Greenwich Civic Center is her hero as he was the first one that said yes to bringing the sport to the Civic Center. Currently, there are two courts at the Bendheim Western Greenwich Civic Center (year round), three courts at the Eastern Greenwich Civic Center (8-9 months), paddle tennis courts.

Ms. Underhill suggested the most cost effective way to bring in official sized pickleball courts is to utilize existing tennis courts; there are so many ways to configure pickleball courts utilizing existing tennis courts. Laughlin Avenue courts are the ideal location for the possibility; one tennis court at Laughlin can be converted to four pickleball courts and the tennis net could stay up; portable nets can be brought in for pickleball.

Upon discussion, Mr. Siciliano stated when Ms. Underhill first came to him with her proposal; it was different in that it did not suggest the courts be multi-sport courts but rather just pickleball. Mr. Siciliano suggested the better way to go is to convert one tennis court into pickleball so there isn't a constant setup of the net for pickleball players. Mr. Siciliano further added, the department will have to take a look at the statistical data for tennis usage to determine a location for and official pickleball court.

IV. Director's Report, Joseph Siciliano

Mr. Siciliano reported that the department is working through the planning phase of operations, staffing, and concessions, for the new pool. The pool is scheduled to open around June 1. The first year the department will keep lessons and programming at a minimal ----do not want to overschedule. Want to provide the opportunity for people to visit and utilize the facility. The team is working to integrate appropriate swim times; adult swim, lap swim, etc.

Mr. Slyne suggested posting photos of the new pool on the website to create enthusiasm. Ms. Snyder stated that the Junior League has reached out to her to post some pool materials in the Newsletter.

Mr. Siciliano stated the Junior League has been using the security photos to generate private donations as this allows potential donors to see progress.

Mr. Siciliano added that there are two databases that the department uses to communicate with residents; one is the RecTrac database that has 15,000+ household email addresses and a Constant Contact newsletter (2x/month) database that consists of 20,000 email addresses.

Mr. Dell'Abate questioned if the Board could meet at the pool site for the April 25 meeting since there was not a meeting location established. Mr. Siciliano replied that it would depend on the construction progress.

Mr. Siciliano reported that the RTM has voted to change the Board term expirations; terms will now be extended June 30 instead of March 31. The term sheet will be updated once the Board of Selectmen vote on the term extensions.

Mr. Siciliano announced that a survey company has been selected for the EGCC survey. The company selected is Sports Facilities Advisory, SFA. SFA met the RFP better than all the other groups. An acknowledgment was issued to the Purchasing Department to issue an award letter based on the score sheets provided by the selection committee for the submitted proposals. Currently waiting on SFA to send insurance documents back, sign contract, gain approval from Purchasing, the Law Department and Finance and commence with the study. This process typically takes 4 weeks to obtain a fully executed contract.

Mr. Siciliano added that when the grading reports were sent in, purchasing tallied the scores. Mr. Siciliano reported that he met with Ben Branyan, Al Monelli, and Amy Siebert to decide if the interview process was necessary based on the scores. Based on the scores, interviews were not necessary. Alan Monelli negotiated a discount with SFA, by reducing much of the traveling expenses as it was not necessary.

Mr. Schubert inquired what the next step was and who is going to be deciding on the process. Mr. Siciliano responded that the details were outlined in the proposal.

Mr. Schubert noted that he felt some of the process was too restrictive and funneled. Mr. Siciliano that there will have to be collaboration with the Department of Public Works, DPW on the execution. Mr. Siciliano stated that he spoke with Alan Monelli and Mr. Monelli expressed his intent to stick closely to the Request for Proposal, RFP. Mr. Siciliano stated that DPW wants to follow the RFP as the guide; we'll have to see if there is any latitude.

Mr. Johnson inquired if the scope of work from the outline will be incorporated into the construction contract. Mr. Siciliano replied that it would be incorporated into the contract. The RFP will be a part of the contract as the outline, if we want to deviate from that, then we need to have a discussion with DPW.

Mr. Dell'Abate asked to take another look at the proposal from SFA. Mr. Siciliano stated the document will be sent to the Board.

Mr. Johnson stated that the RFP seemed a bit survey oriented, rather than design. Mr. Siciliano replied that a survey is what everyone asked for, there is additional money in DPW's budget for design & construction drawings and to take the building process through the P&Z preliminary site plan process.

Mr. Johnson asked if it would be out of their scope of work for SFA to comment on what the facility should look like as a result of the survey. Mr. Siciliano responded that as a result of the survey, SFA should provide information on the initiatives that the community wants to be incorporated into the facility and make recommendations for design features, then their work is done, however this does not preclude them from bidding on other portions of the project.

Ms. Oberlander, BET Liaison inquired if the survey will include the entire Town, or a select portion? Will they also look in evaluating the rankings of what the existing facilities are out there?

Mr. Siciliano responded that a part of the scope is to look at what the other options are in the community and surrounding communities. A cross mix of the community will be polled for the survey.

Mr. Dell'Abate added that there were open meetings for user groups, attendees had an opportunity to express their desires for a new facility.

Mr. Siciliano further added that the survey will include general residents, try to broaden the reach as far as possible to have a good mix of respondents.

Mr. Siciliano recalled when the Bendheim Western Greenwich Civic Center was renovated; the community responded with 10 design features, 7 of them were incorporated into the design. These design features play true today, 12 years later, however one missed the trend on one feature; the computer lab, prior to handheld devices.

Mr. Siciliano suggested a meeting take place in the next couple of weeks with DPW before the survey work begins.

Mr. Schubert expressed his desire to have a broader discussion on the subject and sees a lot of issues in adhering to the existing RFP.

Mr. Siciliano stated he can setup the meeting, but he is not managing the contract, DPW is handling the oversight of the survey coordination/program.

Mr. Johnson seconded Mr. Schubert's comment; he feels a lot can be gained with SFA from an efficiency standpoint, slightly beyond a pure survey. Mr. Siciliano responded that we cannot just change the scope of the RFP, not because SFA cannot do the work, but rather that a commitment has been made for a specific scope of work and fee agreed upon based on that work and now we're talking about deviating from that.

Mr. Slyne stated survey methodology is critical. Is the survey one person, one vote? Or is it which group is the loudest? Mr. Siciliano stated that he has offered the use of the Department's database, which includes 15,000+household email addresses. Preference would be to count groups as one.

Mr. Siciliano advised that budget discussions begin next week, the First Selectman will provide budget presentation Monday night, there will be a capital projects discussion on Thursday discuss, Monday the 5th there will be a presentation on the operating budget. There will be intermediate conversations about fields in between. Mr. Siciliano advised that at some point he will come and address the Field Committee on adjustments, priorities, etc.

Mr. Johnson stated he met with the Board of Education, BOE and the Town Attorney on Cardinal Stadium upgrade ideas. Mr. Johnson inquired if Mr. Siciliano was invited to any of the meetings with the architectural firm/consultants. Mr. Siciliano replied that he was involved in all the presentations/discussions.

Mr. Dell'Abate stated he read an article in the paper about overturning the stipulation regarding lights at the stadium. Mr. Johnson responded that he knows a fair amount, on the subject but that it would be an executive session discussion.

Mr. Siciliano introduced the new Superintendent of Marine and Facility Operations, Brian Kerzner. Brian was formerly the Operations Manager for Boats and Harbors. Prior to working for the Town, Brian worked at Riverside Yacht Club as an Assistant Manager. Brian possesses a Bachelor's degree, and is working towards a Marina Management degree. Brian and Craig Whitcomb will be taking a certification course to become Certified Pool Operators.

VI. Greenwich Point Master Plan, Tom Greco

Mr. Greco reported that the department has contracted with Stantech Consulting, and the project is coming to an end. The purpose of the project was to get an understanding from the community what their views were in terms of recommendations for improvements at Greenwich Point. The consultants met with special interest groups and conducted a public forum which resulted in 81 recommendations for improvements at Greenwich Point. The recommendations have been categorized by the project team based on the timeframe the projects should be completed; 2-5 years, 5-10 years, 10+years. The recommendations will be prioritized and presented them back to the community at a public forum in early March.

Mr. Slyne inquired about several downed trees. Mr. Siciliano responded that there is an age-old battle, are they downed trees or habitats for wildlife? If the trees are blocking a path or roadway, they will be moved, if in wooded areas, there is pushback from conservation.

VII. Parks and Recreation Foundation, Scott Johnson

Mr. Johnson reported that he was involved in the setup the P&R Foundation several years ago. The Foundation provides an avenue to receive charitable donations.

Mr. Johnson stated with Nancy's passing, there is a need to make sure things are followed up on. Mr. Johnson further added that he and Mr. Siciliano's assistant have been working on this. A resolution circulated amongst the Foundation Board to assign new signatories on the bank account. Mr. Johnson asked for a commitment from the board in assisting with the Foundation matters, It is important to keep up both from an IRS standpoint and a legal standpoint. Mr. Johnson asked if Mr. Slyne could help out. Mr. Johnson stated since he was the lawyer who created the Foundation and he'd like to step away at some point. The Board of P&R should have ex-officio, chairman and two others (Mr. Loh and Mr. Hartwell).

Mr. Johnson stated that by charter there is a requirement to have a BET member on the Board (previously Mike Mason). Ms. Oberlander requested a copy of the bylaws.

Mr. Johnson suggested that down the road, the bylaws be amended to lower the number of directors required. The work on the Foundation is not a big commitment, but needs attention.

Mr. Johnson stated that the first step is to assign new signatories. The duties include; depositing checks, paying bills, sending acknowledgement letters, and raise money for administrative costs (or establish administrative fees for donor gifts). Mr. Johnson stated that he and Mr. Dell'Abate are technically chairmen of the Foundation Board (as per Bylaws the Chairman of the Board of P&R is also the Chairman of the Foundation Board) as they are currently co-chairmen of P&R Board.

VIII. Field Sub Committee, Gary Dell'Abate

Mr. Dell'Abate reported that the Field Committee is working out great. The committee helps alleviate the department of headaches by meeting with people and educating them on the process.

Ms. Snyder reported that the committee is scheduled to meet Feb. 7. She received a couple of requests for expansion of existing programs. Ms. Snyder further added that there was a field users meeting on Monday, Jan. 22. At the field users meeting, it is reiterated that a presentation of need is required to go before the Field Committee for new groups or expanding groups. Users think they will obtain fields and don't realize the constraints such as field remediation, change in school start times, etc. The overall process of the Field users meeting has been helpful in establishing a relationship with the department and the users.

Mr. Hartwell stated he has attended some meetings regarding turf fields. In his observation, that those in favor of turf fields represent a vocal minority. The attitude of many is "not in my backyard".

Mr. Siciliano added that the artificial surfacing is the reason to further the conversation about better fields, but the discussion is about the utilization and the complexity of the neighborhood, people are concerned about more intense use of the neighborhood; parking and traffic. The preliminary layouts drafted for the middle school fields allows for only a single sport to be played at one time. If we build a better field, improve existing fields or have an artificial surface installed, the time to do it is now.

Mr. Siciliano advised that the department and Board agreed that Western Middles School, WMS is the ideal site to place the first turf surface. When WMS went under remediation, it was decided that Central Middle School, CMS was the next best location, (GHS students can walk to CMS).

Mr. Hartwell expressed his desire to keep the conversation going. Mr. Hartwell stated he will attend the next meeting and speak in favor of the turf fields. Mr. Dell'Abate stated that the user groups should be alerted to the meetings so they could be a vocal majority in favor of the turf fields. Mr. Hartwell stated the meetings are posted in the paper.

Mr. Siciliano recalled when the turf field was proposed at Cos Cob Park, Mr. Schubert and a couple of others spoke in favor of the field and the lighting, the user groups do not seem to be tuned into this process. The opposition brings 30-40 people to speak against it.

IX. Lia Fail Way, Frank DiVincenzo

Lia Fail: Mr. DiVincenzo stated he and Bea Crumbine are now in the fundraising phase. They put together packets of pictures and an outline of the project to solicit funds. Currently up to \$9,000 in pledges of the \$45,000 goal.

X. Dorothy Hamill Rink Sub-Committee, Rick Loh

Mr. Loh reported the committee is making progress. Through Ms. Snyder's efforts, a proposal went through the CIP discussions, and was viewed favorably.

Mr. Siciliano stated that the proposal passed the Selectmen's combined budget and has been submitted for CIP consideration for funding.

Mr. Loh added that the request is for \$30,000 to conduct an updated evaluation (last conducted in 2004) of the current facility; and a feasibility study to take the rink project to the next steps.

XI. Unfinished Business

None

XII. New Business

None

XIII. Public Comment

Mr. Mike Scotti, PAWS of Greenwich thanked the Department for the work ongoing at the dog park. Currently dealing with mud issues. Darrin Wigglesworth agreed to seed the park. Mr. Siciliano added that the park is being seeded section by section to avoid closing the park.

Mr. Scotti announced that PAWS presented a petition to the Town about the ban on professional dog walkers in Town parks in November. Since, the Town has been quiet. Mr. Scotti inquired how they could get the topic on the agenda for discussion. Mr. Siciliano stated that he has not heard anything further from the First Selectman.

Mr. Siciliano noted that he had previously suggested that the group bring their proposal before the Board of Health since they have regulatory control over dogs throughout the Town.

Mr. Scotti stated his desire is to get on the agenda to discuss what can be done about professional dog walkers, ie. Permits. Mr. Scotti offered a presentation to talk out suggestions that mitigate the issues. Mr. Siciliano agreed to have the discussion and asked that a representative of the Board attend. Mr. Dell'Abate volunteered.

Mr. Siciliano the question is does the Town want to accept the risk/liability of issuing a commercial dog walker a permit to use Town property?

XIV. Meeting adjourned 8:20 p.m.