Board of Parks & Recreation
Meeting Minutes
January 28, 2015

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 25, 2015.

Board Attendees: Nancy Caplan, Scott Johnson, Cathy Weisenburger, Rick Loh, Hans Christian Thalheim, and Frank Cantelmo

Ex-Officio Attendees: None

Staff Attendees: Joe Siciliano, Tom Greco, Sue Snyder, Rich Ernye and Bruce Spaman

Guest Attendees: Leslie Yager, Sue Baker and Nancy Chapin

I. The meeting was called to order at 6:39 p.m. at the Dorothy Hamill Rink

II. A motion was made by Mr. Cantelmo, seconded by Ms. Weisenburger to approve the minutes of the December 3, 2014 meeting; 6-0-0.

III. Ms. Caplan thanked Mr. Ernye for providing a tour of the Rink prior to the meeting.

IV. Binney Park Sedimentation Study, Jim Michel
Ms. Caplan introduced Mr. Michel who is the Chief Engineer for the Department of Public Works.

Mr. Michel provided a brief overview of the Binney Park Sedimentation Study. The study is in the final review process. The main purpose of the study is to determine the sediment source.

The water shed crosses boundaries between Greenwich and Stamford; 940 acres are in Greenwich while 620 acres are in Stamford. Areas of deposition were found (where sediment would land) and other areas of scour (sediment torn away from the sides of the bank and carried downstream). The main stem (mostly in Greenwich) is where 95% of the sediment is coming from.

Several improvement locations were explored; there are currently two locations being considered; one being the entry point of Binney Park and the other being the parcel directly across Sound Beach Avenue. The proposal is to create a small sediment pond in each location. The ponds
would be deeper than the normal pond with a more manageable bottom. A maintenance plan would be established for an annual vacuum out of the pond. Once the process is permitted, and the annual vacuuming is allowed within the permit. The other recommendation is to perform some bank stabilization wherever possible. The estimated cost of the sediment ponds is approximately $600,000.00 and the annual maintenance is estimated to cost $33,000.00. Engineering is currently working on the final design and will schedule to meet with DEEP to discuss the design and required permitting.

Mr. Michel reported the tentative opening date of Cos Cob Park is March 2, 2015. The finishing touches with the landscape will be completed in the spring.

Mr. Siciliano added that he appreciates all the work that went into the park; it will be great for the residents.

V. Dorothy Hamill Rink, Rich Ernye

Mr. Ernye reported there are 700 children in the ice skating program; ice hockey has about 100 participants. The 38th Annual Skate Competition is scheduled for Sunday, February 22nd; there are 100 participants in the competition.

Ms. Caplan added there is a Parks and Recreation Foundation account that funds two $500 awards for competition winners annually.

Mr. Ernye advised that the last public skate session will be March 14th. Greenwich High School is #1 in the state, thus the Rink may need to remain open for an extra week to accommodate their practice schedule.

Mr. Ernye informed that a total of 1056 hours of ice time were sold this season, this number is up from up from two years ago which totaled 917.5, last year was slightly higher because of the temporary closing of Playland. This year’s expected ice rental revenue is $445,000.

Mr. Ernye reported in the next fiscal year, a new Zamboni will be purchased, and the water tower beams will be replaced. During this season, mechanical problems occurred with unit #2 and it went down (compressor and chiller barrel) in the process of replacing unit #2, the compressor on unit #1 (that was replaced last year) failed, the unit was under warranty and was replaced at no cost to the Town. When both units were down (for one month) a temporary unit was rented. Both units will be up and running in the next week.

Mr. Ernye advised that the skating school makeup process has been revamped and now requires a call ahead to reserve a time. This process has been successful and helps control the flow of people.

Mr. Ernye stated he and Ms. Snyder have been working on a timeline to help with the process of planning for Rink renovations.
Ms. Snyder added she and Mr. Ernye have an interest in seeking expert advice from those in the field as well as visiting other facilities to see what design features are out there and the pros and cons of each.

Ms. Snyder expressed concern for the possibility of having to close the Rink and lose the customer base while a new facility is being built.

Mr. Loh added the Friends of Hamill Rink had done some research 6-7 years ago. The Friends used an architectural firm that has built rinks all over the northeast as a resource. Mr. Loh advised that he will provide the firm’s information.

Mr. Siciliano added that the department needs to be careful of compromising the ability to obtain information from the firm then asking them to bid on the contract.

VI. Director’s Report, Joseph Siciliano
Mr. Siciliano reported he and Mr. Greco met with Peter Tesei and John Crary to review the highlights of the department’s budget. There is an overall 2% increase in the operating budget and the department falls well within the guidelines for the capital budget. The week of February 9th will be the meeting with the BET Budget Committee to address any questions on the department’s budget.

Mr. Siciliano advised that the $520k gift for the Byram Park beautification project was approved by the RTM. There will be some planning sessions forthcoming and over the next to 6-8 months the project is expected to be completed.

Mr. Siciliano stated meetings have been scheduled with the Binney Park Master Plan Committee and Martha Lyon for February 25th at 2:00 pm. The public hearing is tentatively scheduled for March 11th.

Mr. Siciliano clarified that the Master Plan will consider landscape upgrades and recaptures the historic features of the formal park area.

VII. Chairman’s Report, Nancy Caplan
Ms. Caplan stated that the Board’s Capital Project Committee has been working with the department to develop a plan that identifies 5-8 major projects that the Board can get behind. The committee will meet next week to finalize the report. Once the report is complete, the Board will be asked to champion some of the projects.

Ms. Caplan advised that in the absence of Mr. Slyne, the discussion on further automation of the department’s offerings will be tabled.

Ms. Caplan reported she attended a POCD meeting held at Eastern Middle School last week. The topic of Binney Park was discussed. Ms. Caplan suggested someone reach out to Katie Deluca of P&Z to inform her of what
is going on with the Binney Park Master Plan. Mr. Siciliano replied that he has been in touch.

Ms. Caplan inquired if the POCD recommendations will be translated into actionable items that will be tied to the budget. Mr. Siciliano replied that the plans will be a guide for various projects, when P&Z is sought for permission for these projects, P&Z should hold the requestor(s) to the guidelines set forth in the POCD, within reason.

VIII. Committee Updates
Mr. Johnson provided an update on the rowing lane permit; the notice of permit is expected soon. The permit is ultimately going to relate to the Harbor Management Commission, (HMC) and their plan, which they are currently working on. The Commission needs input from the other Town agencies especially Conservation. The Harbor Management Plan will be in effect next year and hopefully it will be consistent with the outcome for this year.

Ms. Baker stated she passed along Mr. Johnson’s suggestions to the Conservation and Shellfish Commissions. When the plan is set, it will provide municipal clout to have jurisdiction to earmark coves that are sensitive, title marshes that are fragile and anything that deserves special recognition.

Mr. Johnson added the department’s perspective is important as the outcome has an impact on their operations. The sooner the input is provided to the HMC, the better. The plan will be similar to the POCD, but more specific.

Ms. Baker reported that Denise Savageau was successful in obtaining a $10M grant for the CT waterfront.

Mr. Johnson stated that the GHS stadium project has more motivation behind it than initially thought.

Mr. Siciliano added Mr. Tesei asked the department to place $30,000 in the budget for the high school stadium’s initial study. If approved, the department will leave it up to the Board of Education to conduct the study as the department and the BOE have different priorities.

Mr. Loh reported the Harbor Management Commission is a work in progress; the committee is working to setup their structure to move forward. There are differing opinions.

Mr. Johnson stated that he sees no reason why the HMC cannot submit recommendations for Harbor Master.
IX. Unfinished Business
Mr. Siciliano reported there was hype surrounding the storm earlier in the week, but it didn’t happen as anticipated. In preparation, the department had a significant amount of crews out; in addition there were 30 CL&P crews in Greenwich.

X. New Business
Ms. Caplan stated a memorial service was held for Toni Wyman at the First Presbyterian Church. Mr., Siciliano stated it was a great service and the best reception he’s ever been to.

XI. Public Comments

XII. Meeting adjourned 7:57 pm.