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 October 30, 2019.

Board Attendees: Nancy Chapin, Rick Loh, Frank DiVincenzo, Gary Dell’Abate, Scott Johnson, Kirk Schubert, John Hartwell and Tom McGarrity

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

Guest Attendees: Barbara O’Neil, Leslie Yager, Nina Becker, Miriam Kreuzer, Karen Giannuzzi and Sue Baker

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

II. A motion was made by Mr. DiVincenzo and seconded by Mr. Loh to approve the Board Minutes from the July 31, 2019 meeting. 8-0-0

III. Director’s Report, Joseph Siciliano
Mr. Siciliano advised that he’s been participating on the implementation committee for the POCD (Plan of Conservation and Development). The committee includes Planning and Zoning (P&Z), Public Works (DPW), Administration, and Inlands Wetlands. There have been several meetings; the committee has been looking at the format and content of the document and are reviewing how items are assigned. The document is a work in progress.

IV. Eastern Greenwich Civic Center
Mr. Siciliano reported that he, Mr. Johnson and Mr. Monelli attended the BET Budget Committee meeting and the full BET meeting to answer questions regarding the Eastern Greenwich Civic Center project (EGCC).

Mr. Johnson added that one member questioned the size of the building which was slightly bigger (35,000-37,000 sq. ft.) and he took the opportunity to say the size was confirmed by the architects during the public review process and it was designed to try and address the community. The point was that the additional square footage being asking for, may be a major driver in the cost.

Mr. Siciliano stated that it is premature to say as the building has not yet been designed, none of the building fixtures/furnishings have been selected, etc. you don’t know what the building industry will be doing at that time. P&Z and Architectural Review may put requirements on the plans that may drive the cost. Trying to work in the parameters of $15M. there were
discussions about energy efficiency in the building, all of which drives the price tag, either pay for the efficiency or pay for the energy over time.

Mr. Johnson added that the committee wants the building to be designed for the future, done well without cutting corners. The shading study, geothermal are things to be looked at but they will impact the price.

Mr. Siciliano was pleased to announce that the $170K (subject to released) for the EGCC project has been released. These funds will be for 30% design plans. Mr. Monelli will make an announcement on the selected architect, once the paperwork is finalized.

V. Field Study Committee, Joe Siciliano

Mr. Siciliano advised that the Field Study RFP has been returned. There were 5 firms that submitted proposals. All proposals came in at or below the $75K budget. The committee is moving forward in reviewing and evaluating each proposal. The evaluations are due on October 4. The Purchasing Department will tabulate the evaluations and forward the information to the department. The committee will meet to discuss and select a firm, then purchasing will formulate the contract.

Mr. Siciliano advised that he had previous discussions with a couple of companies that he is familiar with that do this type of work and their estimates were $125-150K. The scope of work does not include any real design plans. They will capture the items to be addressed. Each field will be evaluated. Some items that they identify can be done in-house, some need re-design.

Mr. Siciliano stated his opinion that some of the companies bid on this study at or below the $75K budget, anticipating that they will pick up the next level of work (design phase). The committee has set the prioritization of fields to be studied. Part of the RFP includes recommendations for both natural grass fields and artificial surface to accommodate the necessary field hours taking into consideration future growth. Some fields are at the lower end of the spectrum because of current activity; the high school and Western Middle School (WMS) are both under consent agreements for environmental, New Lebanon field is new, Eastern Middle and Central Middle Schools are currently being studied with the Board of Ed. More time will be spent on some fields than others. Looking at the possibility of lights for the future---lights have been a hard sell.

Mr. Siciliano expressed his opinion that WMS should be a lit field; with LED lighting it should have minimal to no impact on the surrounding neighbors.

Mr. Schubert inquired about lighting at Cos Cob Park. Mr. Siciliano replied, that the plan went after lighting, however the neighbors opposed, and it was ultimately shut down by P&Z. They wouldn’t even approve walkway lights.

Mr. Siciliano thanked Mr. Schubert for attending and speaking in favor of lighting during the process.

Mr. Dell’Abate recalled that they wouldn’t permit pin lights on the 9/11 memorial. Ms. Chapin stated her opinion that she thinks it’s wrong to put lights there.

Mr. Siciliano added that other communities have been able to compromise, by setting curfews for the lights, lighting only in early spring and in the fall as the days get shorter.
Mr. Dell’Abate stated when he was coaching, and the clocks changed in October, the practice time went from 2 hours to 45 minutes to 1 hour. The parents would point their cars towards the field and turn their headlights on to light the field so they could get the extra practice time.

Mr. Siciliano reported that Byram beach/pool saw 52,000 visitors this summer. The season average before the new pool was build was between 30,000-33,000. The season was much more manageable than last year. There have been some complaints about a lack of shade and seating on the deck. The point is to keep the flow of visitors using the pool to avoid a long line for access. Visitors are encouraged to move to the beach when they are not using the pool rather than stay and hang out.

VI. **Parks and Trees, Greg Kramer**

Mr. Siciliano introduced Dr. Gregory Kramer, the new Superintendent of Parks and Trees. He holds a bachelor’s degree in biology / botany from the University of Miami, a master of science in environmental horticulture from the University of Florida and a doctorate in plant medicine. Greg has over 25 years of work experience in the horticulture industry, in both the public and private sector. He is a welcomed addition to the organization, Greenwich is lucky to have him with his qualifications, skills and abilities. Greg will become the Tree Warden, once he finishes his certification. Steve Gospodinoff is currently the Tree Warden.

Mr. Kramer expressed his intent to use his knowledge and experience to benefit the Town. With the ability, he can make big changes in the parks system. Mr. Kramer advised he has been working to develop relationships, he expressed his desire to be collaborative. Mr. Kramer stated he is impressed with the amount of energy and involvement the community has.

Mr. Siciliano added that Mr. Kramer has worked with the high level parks personnel and has provided new training opportunities and experiences.

Ms. Chapin further added that she has seen his collaborative spirit and he has been terrific!

VII. **Greenwich Point Master Plan, Joe Siciliano**

Mr. Siciliano recalled that Stantec was contracted to prepare a master plan for Greenwich Point. The plan has been used to request funds from the BET to execute some of the projects. $100K was requested, the money was appropriated in July. The Board and the Department need to decided how to spend the initial $100K. Mr. Siciliano proposed that a committee be formed with the department and Board participation, to begin the discussions.

Mr. Johnson inquired if the historical landscape plans like the one for Binney are considered master plans that satisfy the POCD. Mr. Siciliano replied that the Stantec report is similar but with less narrative, it is a foundation, it’s an index of projects to be addressed.

Mr. Johnson stated there should be an analysis on areas that are environmentally/historically significant. Mr. Siciliano perhaps some of the money can be used to develop those statements.

Upon discussion, Mr. Siciliano called for Board participation on a committee that will work to identify and execute projects in the plan. The committee should include Conservation and other interested Town agencies.
Ms. Chapin added that the reason the Binney Park Committee works so well, is because of the community involvement. Ms. Chapin suggested Greenwich Point Conservancy have a place on the committee. Mr. Siciliano responded that the core group would be the Board, the department and other Town agencies and other organizations would be brought in as necessary.

The Chimes Building can be removed from the list as it is the next project for the Greenwich Point Conservancy, and is already underway. Mr. Siciliano stated he has met with them and has seen the first draft plan.

VIII. **Binney Park Advisory Committee, Nancy Chapin**

Ms. Chapin reported that there has been significant progress and the park is looking good. They have been working with GroPro.

The committee has identified priorities and is working to execute them. They have hired someone to do the island. The parks staff have been great, Park Foreman, Jon Fasone took on the project by the clubhouse patio, and did a really great job. The loop trail project is going out to bid. Another RFP is in the works for the patio clubhouse which is currently in discussion for the possibility of a Public/Private partnership.

Ms. Chapin encouraged everyone to visit the site, it’s fabulous.

IX. **Dorothy Hamill Rink Sub-Committee, Rick Loh**

Mr. Loh reported that the committee has been making progress. They met with the architect and reviewed a rough draft of facilities study, the final draft is in production. The estimate to build a new rink or upgrade/expand Hamill Rink both came in between $16-17M. Making clear that building a new rink makes more sense. The estimate does not include a temporary rink. Under the plan, the new rink would be built in a new location on the current site so the old facility could be used during construction, and once complete, the old building would be demolished and replaced with a parking lot. Sue Snyder has been great throughout the process. Alan was great to have; he understands the architects. The next step is to go out to bid for an architect. Also need to plan public hearing(s). The plan is to have the ability to use the new building year-round. Mr. McGarrity added another compelling factor, if renovated, the rink would lose 1-2 seasons.

Mr. Siciliano added that the new facility study answers a whole lot of questions. Once finalized, the report will be available online.

X. **Field Committee, John Hartwell**

Mr. Hartwell stated that the New Lebanon School field will be ready in the spring. Hamilton Ave. School is a different story because of the issue with cutting down the trees.

Mr. Siciliano stated there is another proposal being discussed that would leave the trees, hopefully the revised proposal will be out soon. The committee discussed finding out how the First Selectmen candidates feel about artificial turf.

Mr. Johnson replied that Mr. Dell’Abate has a position statement from Jill Oberlander. Mr. Dell’Abate read aloud an excerpt from Ms. Oberlander’s statement. (Attachment A)
Mr. Siciliano added that there was $300K in the BOE budget to look at the middle school fields. Central Middle School field was selected, there is a contract with Milone and Macbroom for $150K. Mr. Siciliano stated that they are using the matrix he developed as a guide comparing natural grass to artificial turf, lighting, parking, traffic, hours of playability, profile of the soils, drainage, subsurface, topsoil, irrigation, field crowning, etc. The matrix hits the high points for an analysis. Can be modified per location. The information is helpful when going before the BET for funds.

Mr. Hartwell introduced some women who are on the RTM and whose children play soccer. They will be great for the process. They lost a lot of playing time last year. Mr. Dell’Abate added that often times those opposing artificial turf come and speak in opposition, but rarely do residents come out to support it.

**XI. Lia Fail, Frank DiVincenzo**

Mr. DiVincenzo commended Darrin Wigglesworth for a job well done at Pinetum where the monoliths have been relocated. The dedication ceremony went well; it was a great turn out.

Mr. DiVincenzo thanked Mr. Siciliano who did a great job. Also thanked the Board for their support.

Mr. Dell’Abate added he was excited for the monoliths to find a new home and thanked Mr. DiVincenzo for all his hard work.

**XII. Unfinished Business**

None

**XIII. New Business**

None

**XIV. Public Comment**

One mom who coaches, noted they missed 5 soccer games due to rain last year. Mr. Dell’Abate stated the Board is aware and they are trying to find a solution. Mr. Johnson added that 40% of OGRCC practices were canceled last fall due to weather. Mr. Dell’Abate added that people need to show up at public meetings to have their voice heard.

Ms. Chapin added that she feels it is important to reflect the varying opinions of the Board on the subject of artificial turf as she is in opposition of it.

Mr. Siciliano advised that when the Cos Cob Park was in process, Don Mohr sent the meeting schedule to every sports organization; only a few members of OGRCC including Mr. Schubert showed up to support artificial turf at that location. The same thing happened for Central Middle School; a couple supporters attended, and Mr. Hartwell was the only speaker in support of artificial turf at that meeting.

Ms. Chapin expressed her feelings that the conversation is one-sided in favor of artificial turf, and while she may be the only member on the Board opposed to it, the Board should not project one opinion. Mr. Siciliano responded that everyone should be heard. We are looking for a conversation; supporters do not show up. Mr. Hartwell added that in the past 6 months, it has been incredible how many people have come forward to say we need to have playable fields.
Ms. Becker offered a perspective of a field user, it doesn’t need to be black and white, there is a lot of analysis being done and if both sides are open minded as to the usability and where, then the conversation doesn’t stop at “yes” or “no”, but “maybe” and “where”.

Mr. Siciliano responded that the department/Board receives many complaints about field playability etc. and if these people/groups are in support of more playability with artificial turf, they need to come speak out about it and not complain. The opposition has no issue coming out to voice their opinions on the matter and supporters should also.

Mr. Dell’Abate added that the number one question he receives is, why aren’t the fields more playable? His approach is not to be one-sided, but to address those people.

Ms. Baker stated that this topic came up at the forum with the First Selectmen candidates. Both candidates said they would prefer natural fields and would be working to see if there were a way to manage that. Mr. Siciliano added that natural grass would be their preference, but they are open to discussions.

XV. Meeting adjourned 7:44 p.m.
Hello, Gary.

Thank you for reaching out.

The short answer: personally, I prefer grass to synthetic or artificial turf fields. I am a parent first - and grass is a known commodity. That said, I am also a pragmatist and understand that there needs to be a balancing of interests and that there is a population of residents that have a strong preference for synthetic turf fields. I have not seen enough analysis on the cost and practicality of engineering a natural grass field to improve playability and reliability. Without this understanding, I am reluctant to rubber stamp (pun intended) a synthetic turf field where younger children may be playing on it regularly.

I am hopeful that we will have a better understanding of these issues following the Department of Parks & Recreation’s field study. The Town field plan should balance out the demands for use, cost to install and maintain (whether engineered natural grass field or synthetic turf), and - most importantly - the health and safety of Town residents, particularly the younger ones. (Note, however, that when the BET asked the Board of Health to opine on the health safety of an infill composition, it declined to do so).