

RECREATION & PARKS COMMITTEE

Meeting

Minutes

Tuesday, September 12, 2023
7:30 a.m.

Via Zoom Meeting

I. Call to Order:

Mr. Yass, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

A. Attendance – In attendance were Mr. Beaudoin, Ms. Checko, Ms. Das, Dr. Gurtman, M. McNeill, Ms. Roccapriore, Dr. Sondheimer, Ms. Willis and Mr. Yass.

II. Minutes of Preceding Meeting – July 11, 2023

M. McNeill made a motion to approve the minutes of July 11, 2023, Mr. Beaudoin seconded that motion. All committee members are in favor. The committee minutes were approved unanimously.

III. Public Comment – None

IV. Directors Report

Ms. Checko is happy to report that the summer season wrapped up successfully. The summer season was smooth and quick. The Recreation and Parks Department is moving on to work on youth basketball. Ms. Roccapriore will take charge of youth basketball. Countryside building is moving along slowly. The next steps for this building will be the HVAC and the plumbing. Tennis Court project at Sycamore Hill will be restarting soon. The plan is to have this project done by late fall. The Recreation and Parks Department has been letting the public know they can play by the springtime because by the time the project is done, the season will have ended. Mr. Beaudoin asked if there is a time frame on Countryside? Ms. Checko replied no, we are leaving it open ended, and she is hoping it is open by spring. Mr. Yass said he hopes that they can have a nice event that formally reopens the nice facility. Ms. Checko agrees.

V. Committee Communication – The committee has not raised any communications currently.

VI. Old Business

A. ARPA Projects Update – Ms. Checko reported that everything is done. The budgets are spent down. Mr. Yass asked if Ms. Checko can recap which projects have come within our purview. Ms. Checko replied that the projects that were done using ARPA funding were the shade shelters at the pool, the playscape, the restoration work at the

pool, the interior work at the bathhouses. These are the projects Ms. Checko oversaw. The projects that she is not in charge of that are yet to be done are the ones in the Senior Center. These projects are steered in a different direction because state money became available. All the projects in the Senior Center are Bruce Williams purview. M. McNeill stated that she appreciates everything that is being done by ARPA, and wonders what the chances are that we could move the playground or any of the field projects if there is money leftover? Ms. Checko replied that from her understanding, the balance in the ARPA fund is earmarked for two projects – big fiber project and deficit in the pavement management plan.

- B. State of CT Grant Update – Softball Field Project – The State of CT gave us a grant for a softball field. Initially the plan was to renovate Fisher Meadows softball field, but residents lobbied to have a softball field in Sperry Park. This We believe both projects can be done. Fisher Meadows is a shovel ready project. There will be a timeline that the State will mandate. Sperry Park is not construction ready yet. However, both projects can be done. Mr. Yass stated that if we go in this direction we would end up with two softball fields, one short term at Fisher Meadows and long term is Sperry Park. Ms. Checko replied that we would have 3 softball fields, two at Fisher Meadows and one at Sperry Park. Ms. Checko would like to note that Town Council Chair was there at the meeting. Ms. Checko will keep the committee updated on the discussion with the baseball community and how this fits in with our Capital plans.

VII. New Business

- A. Recreation Master Plan – The staff recommended that the contract be awarded to Weston and Sampson. She stated that they are by far the right choice since one firm was weighted very heavily into sports fields and another one was \$20,000 more than our budget. It was an easy choice. The plan now is once we have a signed contract, we can proceed on October 1st. The way things will play out are Weston and Sampson will do a facility inventory, visit the sites and do existing conditions, stakeholder interviews, public meeting, online survey, and then a facilities analysis, then another public meeting. Then, they will present their draft findings to Town Council in March of 2024 and the final product will be ready in April of 2024. There will be public meetings where anyone can come and comment. Mr. Yass asked if they are still keeping their expansive list of stakeholders? Yes, we will include the trails people, historical society, the land trust, not just the sports people. Dr. Sondheimer stated that the Regional Tourism board, restaurants and the brewery would probably like a voice. Mr. Yass stated that the committee should get those names and groups into the Recreation and Parks office and Ms. Checko will give the names to the consultants. M. McNeill asked what and who is on the stakeholder list that is turned over? Ms. Checko will provide it to the committee and the committee will share their input.
- B. Reorganization Plan – Ms. Checko presented to the Town Council last week her reorganization plan which they all agreed it was a good plan. Ms. Checko will retire in about 10 months and with that being said, she created an Assistant Director position and made the Program Coordinator a full-time position. The goal is that Ms. Roccapiore will be a strong candidate for the Director Position when Ms. Checko retires. The committee will be pleased for Ms. Roccapiore to receive that position.
- C. Capital Improvement Plan – Ms. Checko sent out the Capital Improvement plan out to the committee beforehand. The only thing that was unexpected was the need to caulk

the expansion joints at the pool. We were able to get one done with the ARPA money but not finish the job. She is asking that the rest of that be funded in the next fiscal year. The Playscape at Sperry Park and the bathhouse fixtures are being put out in 2026.

Dr. Sondheimer wanted a definition of Capital Budget vs Operating Budget: Capital budget is any project over \$10,000 that would be tangible inventory / equipment and improvements those type of items. Operating budget is projects under \$10,000, tangible, expandable and they are always not long-term investments.

Dr. Sondheimer - Would it be reasonable to put a small item to budget to complete the work of the connector of the Found Land and the Huckleberry Hill, getting the blazing on Buckingham and the invasive species. If that's what the committee wants, Ms. Checko will add it. What is the timeline to submit a Capital Budget? It is due September 29th but she plans on having it in next week.

Dr. Gurtman – She has been speaking with Paul Welsh about the area by Arch Road the new parking area that D.B.W that just paved and Mr. Welsh's wish list is a gazebo in that area. She stated that they got some funding through donors who will contribute to the project but it won't cover the entire project. Would this be something to put in the Capital? It will depend how much it is. Ms. Checko will talk to Mr. Welsh.

Dr. Sondheimer shared his screen with the committee. Plan of conversation and development for improvements: 1) Huckleberry Hill will be cut less than 10 yards to connect by going right across the street 2) get a connector between Countryside Park and the river work if we fix the overgrown work. 3) clear invasive species and 4) the bridges need to be raised so they don't flood every year. Ms. Checko said the bridges will be done this fall. Ms. Check will need to get estimates. Dr. Sondheimer would like to bundle these improvements to include them in next year's budget.

Dr. Sondheimer made the motion that the committee request Ms. Checko to proceed to price these development ideas and include them in the Capital Budget, seconded by Dr. Gurtman.

Discussion/Questions: M. McNeill asked how this impacts the rest of the Capital Budget request? The Fisher Meadows is \$173,000 and if that is funded through the State then that will come off the top, then we can add the trail development. Ms. Checko reported that this is the Town Manager's budget ultimately. He may ask her for a recommendation, or he may meet with Ruth and after the fact then cut things due to the priorities of the entire town. Dr. Sondheimer stated that it stands to reason that the more we put on there the more we put through. Ms. Checko stated that she would put these development ideas after the playscape and before the bathroom fixtures. Mr. Yass clarified that the motion is to reflect these development ideas and attach numbers to them as she considers them with the overall Capital Budget. The reason Ms. Checko put the 2025/26 is because there is a better spot for the playscape and a better fit in the park. In the meantime, she may put the swing sets.
End of discussion.

The committee voted on the motion on the floor. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

These minutes were approved by the Recreation & Parks Committee on December 12, 2023.

VIII. Adjournment

The next meeting of the Recreation and Parks Committee is scheduled for November 14th.

Being no further items to discuss, M. McNeil made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Dr. Sondheimer seconded the motion. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:09 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "MSuljic", written in a cursive style.

Merisa Suljic
Clerk