

RECREATION & PARKS COMMITTEE

Meeting

Minutes

Tuesday, March 7, 2023

7:30 am

Via Zoom Meeting

I. Call to Order:

Mr. Yass, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:32 a.m.

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

Absent: Ms. Das

II. Minutes of Preceding Meeting – January 10, 2023

M. McNeill had a change to page 6, section IX New Business, second to the last line, the word *me* should be changed to *be*. Mr. Beaudoin made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 10, 2023, meeting as amended. Dr. Sondheimer seconded that motion which passed unanimously.

III. Public Comment - None

IV. Director's Report

Ms. Checko reported that we are currently working on our summer season with regards to planning camps and clinics. Summer Fun Camp and Adventure Camp are the only two programs that we run in-house so we are currently recruiting and accepting applications for staff for those camps as well as pool staff. Most of our openings are in aquatics so please spread the word that we need lifeguards and water safety instructors.

The Sycamore Hills pool will open on Saturday, June 10 and close on Monday, September 4.

We are currently coordinating the spring field use and will be issuing permits for Avon Little League, Avon High School, Avon Soccer Club and Avon Youth Lacrosse.

The Countryside building project is moving along. The Sycamore Tennis Court work stopped last week due to the snow and will resume as soon as they can.

Ms. Checko is currently working with Dr. Sondheimer and the Engineering department on replacing the interpretive signs in Fisher Meadows. Ms. Checko is also having the Fisher Meadows field layout signs professionally done with black metal posts and they will replace the temporary signs currently there.

Mr. Yass said at the last meeting we talked about discussing with the Town Manager how some of the findings from Ms. Roccapriore's report might be shared with the Town Council members and is there an update on this. Ms. Checko said she drafted a cover letter breaking items down and shared the survey with Town Council and they received it in their packet this past Thursday. Mr. Yass asked Ms. Checko to share that cover letter with committee members.

Mr. Yass said the committee had previously suggested scheduling an additional meeting to keep the pace the pace of conversations going. Mr. Yass said one rational for increasing the frequency of the committee meetings is so that we could be more proactive than reactive to what Town Council may be doing and weigh in as members of the Recreation and Parks Committee citizen advisories. Ms. Checko said she will continue to pass information along to committee members. Ms. Checko said yes, we have one scheduled in June. Ms. Henry will get the date of the June meeting to committee members.

Mr. Yass asked Ms. Checko to get information to the committee members about the status of the playground discussion, the Sperry Park planning status, the Town Wide Master Plan status, and where we are regarding possibly re-directing some of the ARPA funds that have been freed up. Ms. Checko said nothing has changed with Sperry Park and the playground is on today's agenda. She said she and Ms. Tiezzi will start the Request for Proposal for the Recreation and Parks Master Plan and will have it posted July 1. Mr. Yass asked if this is a generalized RFP or does the committee need to discuss what would go into that. Ms. Checko said this is not necessary and the RFP is a staff matter. Dr. Sondheimer said he would like to review the RFP. Mr. Yass agreed that the committee would like to look at the RFP and Ms. Checko said she would talk to Mr. Robertson about this.

V. Program Specialist Report

Ms. Roccapriore said for the winter programs, a new Functional Fitness program was started in partnership with the F45 gym in Avon and was very popular. Another session is being offered in the spring. We are also offering a WAVE Women's Self-Defense class that is being taught by and held at Avon Kempo and Aikido Academy. We've added a second adult pickleball class; a Beginner/Intermediate level and an Intermediate/Advanced level. We currently have 21 in the class with 9 on the waiting list.

For spring classes, our Spring Vacation Craft Camp is doing very well, however, our April Vacation Soccer Camp and our Food Explorers Camp are slow with registrations.

For summer programs, we are starting to work on those and will have everything finalized and posted April 12 and registration will begin on April 14. We are running 7 weeks of our Summer Fun Camp and our Adventure Camp along with several one-week specialty camps.

We are planning on having a summer concert on August 2 at the Sycamore Hills Park location. We are bringing back the Family Fun Night at Sycamore Hills Pool and we are also doing 3 Family Movie Nights this summer.

Mr. Yass said he noticed there was some publicity for an interesting program that the Avon Police Department is going to be running. He asked if we could amplify the attention to that because it looks like a very good program, and we want to be supportive of that effort. Ms. Roccapriore said yes, we will keep publicizing this program for them. They need a specific number of participants to be able to run this program so hopefully they will reach that

number. They are talking to the Avon High School and working with the Farmington Police Department on this as well. Mr. Yass asked if this is the first time this program is being offered and Ms. Roccapriore said yes, it is.

VI. Correspondence

a. Program Participation Reports

Ms. Checko said this is a snapshot of enrollment by category from January 1 – March 1, 2023. Mr. Yass asked if we would be seeing this report routinely. Ms. Checko said yes, it will be included each meeting.

Ms. Willis asked if the After School Ski program was considered a Youth Program or a Youth Sports League and where is this classified. Ms. Checko said it is considered a special event. Ms. Checko said the way this report prints, it is when the program started so technically Ski Bus should be on here, but she thinks because it is a special event, that's why it's not showing. She will investigate this more in depth. Ms. Willis said she knows it was popular and she talked to several people who couldn't get into the program. She also spoke to several parents who wished that the program was longer. She asked how many people registered. Ms. Checko said the Thompson Brook Bus was filled with a waiting list and the Avon Middle School bus ran at potentially a loss, but the numbers on the Thompson Brook bus made up for being under the minimum on the Avon Middle School bus. Ms. Checko said her number one priority is safety of the students and we are not going to add a second bus because we want to make sure the program is safe for the participants.

VII. Committee Communication

Dr. Gurtman informed committee members that two surveys will be coming out. She said Avon has applied to become a Bike Friendly Community and there is a survey that is coming out through the League of American Bicyclists, and she has already shared it with the people of the Bike Walk Community and Ms. Tiezzi will be sharing it more broadly. Dr. Gurtman is encouraging people to complete the survey. She said the second survey is for the Town Connectivity Study. This study is looking for ways to connect everything within the community including Park and Recreation facilities. Mr. Yass asked if both surveys will be distributed through the Town Wide list server. Dr. Gurtman said yes, that is her understanding.

Ms. Willis had someone reach out to her asking about using the space near the Town Hall gazebo. Ms. Willis said she directed them to contact Recreation. Ms. Checko said this area is called the Town Green and we would issue a permit through our department. Ms. Willis said the person was looking to hold a children's business fair.

Mr. Beaudoin asked if there would be an opportunity for the committee to meet in person before the end of the year. He suggested meeting at Fisher Meadows. Mr. Yass said he is not averse to having some sort of hybrid meeting so people could phone in. Mr. Yass asked Ms. Checko what the Town's position is on in person meetings. She said she will check with Grace Tiezzi and Jennifer Worsman. She thinks we would have to offer a hybrid option; however, we don't have the technology. She said we would have to go to the Selectman's Chambers and figure out how to run the "owl" and we could meet in person there. Ms. Checko will investigate this. Ms. Checko recommended meeting in person at Countryside Park when that project is done.

VIII. Old Business

a. ARPA Projects Update Report

Ms. Checko reported that the new lifeguard chairs have been ordered. She said we are going to forego the bathroom fixtures because the lifeguard chairs were extremely expensive. The priorities are safety and Mr. Robertson, Ms. Tiezzi and Ms. Checko all agreed that the lifeguard chairs should be replaced first and foremost. She said there may still be enough money to paint the walls and she will be able to re-do the floors. She doesn't have a dollar amount on the balance after these items are done but she will keep committee members up to date with what will be done with the balance. She said we may be able to do some of the fixtures.

Ms. Checko said the playscape will be delivered around March 17 and it should be installed by the third week of March.

There are no updates on the Senior Center projects except that Mr. Williams is working on an incentive with Eversource because the cost of the HVAC system came in extremely high. He is hoping the incentives will help with some of the cost.

M. McNeill said she thought that she had seen in the minutes of the Town Council meeting that they considered putting a lot of the remaining ARPA money into Recreation and Parks. She was wondering if this is correct and if so, how is this going to be discussed and who should we be asking. Dr. Sondheimer said he was at the last meeting, and we have supporters on the Town Council. He said he thinks it means Ms. Checko working with Ms. Tiezzi and Mr. Robertson on getting the projects approved. Ms. Checko said yes, this is correct. Ms. Checko said she assumes they will take the suggested list that was submitted in the beginning and work off this. She will get clarification on this.

Ms. Checko asked Dr. Sondheimer which Town Council meeting this was, and he said it was the March 2, 2023, meeting.

M. McNeill said if we can be of any supportive assistance for these projects and if we want to call a special meeting so the committee members could rally behind the department and let the Town Council know that this is something the committee wants as well. Ms. Checko will see what she can find out.

b. New Playscape

Ms. Checko said she spoke to some of the people that want a playscape installed in the northeast section of town, and she has a better idea of what they are looking for. Specifically, they want a playscape in Sperry Park. She said she spoke to Mr. Peck in Community and Planning Development, Ms. Tiezzi and Mr. Robertson and Mr. Robertson feels that this is something that could be done at Sperry Park. Ms. Checko spoke to Engineering, and it is in the plan if we add the new field. It would be funded through capitol. Mr. Robertson wants to wait until the Master Plan is done and a list of priorities and projects compiles in case there is something that is a higher priority. Mr. Yass if it is done this way, what the timeline would be to install the playscape. Ms. Checko said she is putting it in capitol for Fiscal Year 2025 and if it was funded in that fiscal year, it would be built in late 2025 or beginning of 2026. Mr. Yass asked what the

cost would be for the playscape in that location. Ms. Checko said we don't know because prices keep increasing. She said the playscape being installed at Sycamore Hills Park cost \$75,000 and that is a small playscape. She said Sperry Park is only 7 acres and there are already 3 ball fields, and we will be adding another field, so the playscape will be a smaller one. She does agree that one is needed there. Mr. Yass wondered if we should leave this on the agenda to monitor. Ms. Checko felt this item could be removed from the agenda since there isn't anything to monitor. She said she will make sure the consultants know it is part of the request.

M. McNeill asked if the playground is put in capitol does it mean it is taken off the APRA list. Ms. Checko said it does not. She said the way APRA projects were approached, they had to be in the capital budget because when the capital budget is put forth to the Board of Finance, they approve the entire thing, or they may make cuts. Anything that was presented as an APRA project had to have been previously approved in the budget by the Board of Finance. That doesn't mean that the Town Council doesn't have the ability to pull in a special interest project, she hasn't gotten the sense that this is the direction that Mr. Robertson would want to go.

IX. New Business

a. Recommended Changes to Public Place Regulations and Appendices

Ms. Checko said these Regulations and Appendixes govern the way we control permits and support the Ordinances for Public Places. She said from time to time, we review them and make sure the information is relevant, up to date, and look at the fees. Town Council ultimately must approve our recommendations.

Mr. Yass suggested going through each page and identifying any changes we may want to make and then draft a copy for submission to Town Council.

Page 1 of Regulations – M. McNeill said on page 1, section C, #1, code 2, after where it says 75% Avon residents, there is a comma after 75% that should be removed. Mr. Yass asked about the identification for special recognition of Avon Old Farms School on page 1 as well as Talcott Academy on page 2. He said there are other private schools in Avon, and asked Ms. Checko for context on this. She said we moved Talcott Mountain Academy 4 times in the process of revising the regulations. Avon Old Farms School, in our minds, is an extension of the Avon Public School system. They are a great neighbor, they are helping with the Old Farms Road project, and they are invested in the Town and the children, which is why we kept them in code 1. She is not sure what to do with Talcott Mountain Academy. If we include Talcott Mountain Academy in code 1 with Avon Old Farms School, then we would need to include all the CREC schools and all other non-Avon public Schools in town. Mr. Yass said agreed and said there are other non-Avon public schools that are not identified here. Mr. Yass said Talcott Mountain Academy may ask why they are not in category 1 with Avon Old Farms School. Ms. Checko said she thought we should move Talcott Mountain Academy back into category 1, because historically this is where they have always been categorized. She said they come to us once a year and rent two fields at Fisher Meadows for a field day, and they also rent Thompson Road property for rocket launching. Mr. Yass felt we don't need to identify every school but be open to the notion that other schools may ask why they are not noted.

Page 2 – M. McNeill said the first sentence where it says 75% membership Avon residents should read *75% Avon resident membership*. Ms. Checko said she will fix this

in all places in the Regulations.

Mr. Yass referred to section III, Applications Procedure, item B and asked if given the language there, will we have the issue with the baseball field usage that we had last year.

Ms. Checko said we will not because in the second paragraph of item B a line was added that states *Applications made by athletic leagues for the summer season shall be made by April 15th* and this was approved by Town Council last September.

M. McNeill asked about section III, item B where it states 7 business day prior to the requested date(s), and she wondered if that is sufficient time or should be make it more days. Ms. Checko said if someone came in sooner, we would accommodate them. For big events there is also a permit that is required from the Planning and Zoning Department which is called a Temporary Special Events Permit and we can coordinate that with the applicant so that permits are processed in a timely manner.

Ms. Willis asked about section III, item E and the line that has been removed regarding conflicts. She asked if this has ever happened or has this been replaced somewhere else in case there is a conflict with a group. Ms. Checko said yes, she would settle a conflict based on the fee schedule and the priority of the user groups.

Page 3 – M. McNeill asked about section V, item B Security Deposit. She noted that it states the security deposit must be in the form of cash or check, but in on page 3, section VI, item A number 1 it states that payments can be paid in the form of cash, credit, debit card, check or money order. Should the security deposit also be payable in the same form. Ms. Checko said no because the security deposit we hold on to in the office and return it to the applicant within 7 business days after the scheduled activity.

Page 4 – Ms. Checko said in item # 4, second to the last line, we are going to eliminate the words *plus Medicare and FICA* and leave it consistent throughout. It will now say *current rate of pay, per hour, per person for a minimum of three hours.*

Mr. Yass noted that in item 3, line 3 where it says at \$20 per Attendant, per hour or any part there of with a 3-hour minimum, we need to make *there of*, one word.

Page 5 – Ms. Checko said under section VII, item A Insurance, we are going to remove the first part of item 1 up to the hyperlink Certificate of Insurance and replace the beginning of that sentence with the wording from item 2. Item 1 will now read *The Town of Avon reserve the right to require any applicant, regardless of classification code, to provide a Certificate of Insurance, (hyperlink) in a form acceptable to the Town, naming the Town of Avon as an additional insured.* Mr. Yass asked how applicants will know what the dollar amount for the insurance would be. Ms. Checko said they can click on the hyperlink in item 1 which will take them to the requirements.

M. McNeill inquired about section B, item 1. She thought we should add a line at the end of the paragraph stating *Refunds will not be given if the applicant fails to have required services.*

Page 6 – No changes.

Page 7 – Mr. Yass said once the changes are approved, the *Amended* date will be added.

Appendix A-1 – No changes.

Appendix A-2 – No Changes

Appendix B – Mr. Yass asked why everything was deleted on this form. Ms. Checko said she re-did Appendix B, and the next page is the draft of the new Appendix B. On the prior Appendix B, she eliminated multiple use fee, the non-refundable rain/snow fee and the Softball field and multipurpose fields had two different sets of fees and she eliminated those. Ms. Checko said on the new Appendix B, the table is simplified. She said she looked at what other towns charge and their fees were extremely high. She didn't feel we should increase our fees too much. She incrementally increased the current fees going forward. She also changed the classification codes to better classify the users. The second page lists the actual facility under the class listed on the chart. Ms. Willis said the word *Classification* is misspelled where it says User Classification Codes and in the heading of the table.

Mr. Yass said under Code 3, we need to move Talcott Mountain Academy to Code 1. Mr. Yass asked Ms. Checko to talk to Mr. Robertson about the language regarding the non-Avon public schools. He suggested removing the names of the schools and replace them with *not-for profit educational institutions*. He said we can adopt that language today and if Town Council agrees, we can update the document. Ms. Checko said she will figure out where to put this language.

Ms. Checko said the other item that took some time was Class E, Sports Courts. Ms. Checko said there is a group in town that uses the tennis courts, 5 days a week all summer long and they are not a sanctioned league. Ms. Checko said our department has received complaints from residents about the limited availability of the courts due to this and other court permits. She spoke to Mr. Robertson regarding this issue. She is planning to meet with the coordinator of this group and see if she would be willing to bring this program under the Recreation Department umbrella. We would set her up as the coordinator for this program and it would be open to the public and require registration. Ms. Checko said this would help reduce the amount of court time they would use. If the group decides not to come under the Recreation and Parks Department umbrella, and if Appendix B is approved as is, we will no longer be able to issue them a permit. Mr. Yass asked if they have been issued permits in the past and Ms. Checko said yes, they have. Mr. Yass asked if the language was interpretive or would the language force this result. Ms. Checko said the language would force the result because we will no longer issue permit for sports courts.

Dr. Sondheimer asked if we charge for the permit. Ms. Checko said there are fees, but not a fee for the permit. The group pays a \$6 per player fee for residents and \$11 per player fee for non-residents for the entire summer. Mr. Yass said the committee understands Ms. Checko's position with regards to permits for sports courts and he feels that Ms. Checko can work with Mr. Robertson to decide on the level of visibility to incorporate this change. The Town Council would then be aware and could address it as they are going through the agenda. Ms. Willis said if this treats this group like every other group and it brings consistency, then she supports the change.

Appendix C – This is the actual Ordinance and there are no changes.

Appendix D - Mr. Yass asked if the writing in blue hyperlinks to the hiking maps. Ms. Checko said yes, she added those maps in.

Ms. Checko said she will add *mountain biking* as a conforming use to Fisher Meadows, Found land and Huckleberry Hill Recreation Area. Dr. Sondheimer asked if we want to include Fisher Meadows due to the large number of walkers. Ms. Checko said there are mountain bikers already at Fisher Meadows. Dr. Gurtman said she has the same concern as Dr. Sondheimer, and she is at Fisher Meadows a lot and she has only seen mountain bikers once or twice. Ms. Checko said she will not add it to Fisher Meadows. Dr. Sondheimer said there are also mountain bikers on the trails at Buckingham. He said the trails are on some maps, but they are not in a preserve of any sort. Ms. Checko said the trails at Buckingham are not mapped out. She suggested not adding it to Fisher Meadows and adding it to Found land and Huckleberry Hill Recreation Area. She said since mountain bikers are already at these areas, if we receive complaints about them in these parks, we can let people know that this is a permitted use. Mr. Yass said like the baseball issue from last year, if we start hearing complaints from several people, we can always change this at a later time. Dr. Gurtman asked about the area across from New Road that has a lot of mountain bikers and where does this fall. Ms. Checko did not know. Dr. Gurtman said this is Town land. Mr. Yass asked if this area is listed in this document. Dr. Sondheimer said on the map of Recreational Facilities, in the Buckingham area there is quite a bit of Town owned land all the way down to the river and there are trails in that area. He said lots of people bike there but there is no way of describing it. Ms. Checko suggested bringing this up again the next time they are revised.

M. McNeill asked about Open Space and Garden Plots under Alsop Meadows and if this an implication that people can have a garden. Ms. Checko said the Recreation and Parks Department has a Garden Plot program and those are reserved through us. Gardeners sign a contract and pay a fee as well as a security deposit. Returning gardeners have first choice. We take a list of interested people throughout the year and if plots are still available, we would contact the people on that list in the order in which they called. She said this program is advertised in our brochure. M. McNeill suggested changing the wording to *Garden Plot Program*. Mr. Yass suggested the wording be *permitted Garden Plot Program*.

Ms. Willis noted item 11, under Sycamore Hills Recreation Area, second line, and asked if the like the letter C has a strike through on it. Ms. Checko said, yes it does.

Dr. Sondheimer said he noticed that *snowshoeing* is not listed anywhere. He said anywhere cross-country skiing occurs; snowshoeing should be included. He also noticed that Fisher Farm doesn't have a list of activities and he assumes it is the same as Fisher Meadow. Ms. Checko said it is not. Fisher Farm is basically the trail system and the leased farming activities. Dr. Sondheimer said we should add the *walking, hiking, jogging, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing*.

Dr. Sondheimer asked if camping was allowed at Alsop Meadows. Ms. Checko said it is allowed at Alsop, Fisher Meadows and Found land but only for local scout troops, with permission.

Dr. Sondheimer asked about dogs on leash in the parks. Ms. Checko said it is in the Ordinance and the only place we have mentioned it is on the fields because those seem to be the problem areas. He asked if Service Animals were allowed everywhere. Ms. Checko said yes, they are, and she will make sure they are listed in all appropriate areas.

Ms. Checko said the last document is the original Building Use for the Avon Senior Center and all the items are included on the last page of the Conforming Use document.

M. McNeill went back to Appendix A-2 and the last two lines on the bottom of the page. She had a question about the Signature of the Applicant. It states if the applicant is an individual they need to sign, but if it is an organization, a signature is not required. She felt that we should have a signature in either case. Mr. Yass suggested adding *Person completing Application on Behalf of Organization* and have the person sign on that line. Ms. Checko said this may be a Town Attorney change and she will investigate this.

Dr. Gurtman referred to Appendix D, page 3, item 15 and said the official name of the trail is the *Farmington Canal Heritage Trail* and she suggested we update that. She also noted that it says no motorized vehicles other than wheelchairs so that would make her think that e-bikes are not allowed. She thinks they should be allowed and suggested changing the wording to *no motorized vehicles other than wheelchairs and e-bikes*. Dr. Sondheimer said there are various government recognized categories of e-bikes. Dr. Sondheimer pointed out that the wording says bicycles and he asked about tricycles on the trail. Ms. Checko said tricycles are not motorized. Dr. Sondheimer said a bicycle is a two-wheel vehicle and tricycles are three wheels and asked if they are they allowed. Dr. Gurtman suggested changing the word *bicycle* to *cycling* Mr. Yass recapped that we would add the word *e-bikes*, but not define them. Ms. Checko said her recommendation is to add *e-bikes*, and this will cover those who are on e-bikes, and we'll see if there are any issues. Dr. Gurtman will talk to East Coast Greenways and see if they have any recommendations.

Mr. Yass said we can move forward and make a motion to adopt these changes.

Mr. Beaudoin made a motion to adopt the changes to the Public Place Regulations for submission of the document to Town Council. M. McNeill seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

X. Adjournment

The next meeting of the Recreation and Parks Committee is scheduled for May 9, 2023.

Being no further items to discuss M. McNeill made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:49 a.m. Dr. Gurtman seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by

Sharon Henry

Sharon Henry
Clerk