

RECREATION & PARKS COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Tuesday, November 12, 2019
Avon Town Hall, Building Department Conference Room

I. Call to Order - 7:30 a.m. – By Peter Ponziani, Chairman

A. Attendance

1. Members & Staff Present

Ruth Checko, Director, Peter Ponziani, Barbara Ausiello, David Jadovich, Joe Weist, Kelly Jackson

2. Members & Staff Absent

Donald Droppo, Jr., Kimberley Pereira

II. Minutes – March 5, 2019

Minutes from the March 5, 2019 meeting were presented.

Mr. Jadovich motioned to accept the minutes as presented and Ms. Ausiello seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

III. Public Comment

Kelly Jackson reported to the committee that the holes at Alsop Meadows have been filled.

IV. Director's Report

Ms. Checko reviewed the Director's report with committee members and provided an update on projects.

Sycamore Hills

As of right now, there is \$50,000 in FY 20 CIP for kitchen upgrades. The range has been replaced and upgrades have been made to the exhaust hood in the Community Room kitchen. DPW will be upgrading all the exterior and parking lot lighting to LED. All unnecessary islands have been removed in the parking lots. The entire parking lot has new storm drains and has been milled, paved and lined.

The Pavilion is not in good shape but it is safe. Ms. Checko said the pavilion will be the last part of the Sycamore Hills Renovation Project. DPW will do the concrete and work for piers, but the pavilion is custom and will need to go out to bid. Hopefully it will get replaced in the early winter or next spring.

Ms. Checko said the stockade fence near the pool office parking lot has been replaced.

DPW opened and closed the pools and buildings instead of a contractor. It went very smoothly. The warm dry weather this fall allowed us to paint the wading pool and 2/3 of the main pool. Next spring we will drain the diving well and paint that area.

Fisher Meadows

All of the irrigation on the existing fields was replaced last spring and has been up and running since. In the new area the guide rail systems has been installed. We worked with a turf specialist to get the grass and roots established. We delayed use of the fields for the fall sports. Looking toward spring 2020, we are cautiously optimistic but will rely on the expert's recommendation, weather and conditions over the winter and in spring.

Barbara Ausiello inquired about the wet area at Fisher Meadows. Ms. Checko said that area is a wet meadow and it's being looked at for proper drainage. She reported that the rain garden has been replanted and should be all set now.

Softball field renovations- We did what we could at FM SB #1 and 3 in the spring. The back stop has been fixed and little league and High School purchased an outfield homerun fence. Town Council has approved a supplemental appropriation for \$52,000 from the Recreation Activity Fund to purchase 2 covered dugouts, remove unneeded fencing and redo the entire infield to improve drainage and we will install the engineered clay we have on other fields. This project will bring the girls softball field up to par with the baseball fields.

Sperry Park improvements

Last spring we were able to do some renovations at Sperry-- as best we could. Little League is requesting that the Town fix potholes and install paved pathways to make the park more ADA accessible. This is something DPW would have to do. Little League came to us this fall and wanted to fund improvements on both baseball fields. We did some soil borings for them and they have hired a contractor and will pay for the renovations which are now complete.

Country side building

Ms. Checko said this building is 50 years old and there is a need for architectural services because we have a lot of structural issues as well as mechanics and air quality. It is still in the CIP. We have closed the fireplace. DPW reinforced some components of the deck that were deteriorating.

Ms. Checko informed the committee that she has put in a CIP Request to update the Recreation Master Plan. She felt that with a number of projects now complete, that it would be good time to bring in the community and some focus groups and take a look at updating the Recreation Master Plan.

Buckingham Recreation Area

Some repairs have been made to fencing and playground components in the play scape recently. The field advertising program raised about \$7,100 in sponsorships this year. This is down from \$9150 over last year. Last month Ms. Checko asked the board to support building an area for pitchers to warm up using the advertising funds. The shed has been relocated closer to the dugout and a stone dust area was built for this purpose that is 70'x10' and is alongside the batting cage.

High School

The synthetic turf project is 90% done. The baseball field is in excellent condition after the renovation. It is often playable when Buck BB is not. Ms. Checko reported that she is working with an Eagle Scout who is building dugouts on the field. Ms. Checko said the ribbon cutting ceremony was held for the new turf field this past weekend.

Program Specialist

Bonnie Daly, Program Coordinator for the Recreation Department is retiring in December. Ms. Daly was the consultant that did programming and special needs coordination. We are looking for her replacement and hope to have someone on board January 1, 2020. Ms. Daly will stay on part time and will be responsible for special needs coordination.

Mr. Ponziani asked how revenue has been doing. Ms. Checko said that there was \$281,000 in undesignated fund balance in the Reimbursable Recreation Activities fund 09 and this is where the Fisher Meadows softball field renovations came out of. Ms. Checko said revenue was up in the 09 account from last year, the Senior Center revenues were down and the Parks revenue was also up.

Summer Season

The department had a very successful summer season. The pool attendance, some swim lessons, and revenue were up. We added water aerobics for seniors that was so successful all our lifeguards and other families joined.

The summer day camps were split into two very separate camps. Adventure Camp served kids in grades 5-9 and was based out of the Sycamore Hills pool. They went on a different field trip every day of the week and there were 6, one week sessions. This past summer we partnered with Canton Recreation and Parks, however, we will not be partnering with them next summer and we have raised our maximum from 20 to 30 participants per session. Survey results were literally 100% excellent experience.

Summer Fun Camp stayed at PGS. We expanded it to include Kindergarteners and we took students up to grade 4. This program ran for 7, one week sessions and there was entertainment brought in and 1 field trip per session. Survey results were 97% pleased with the program and staff.

This fall we worked on Ski Sundown program. We took in quite a large waiting list for TBS and AMS, but did not generate our minimums to add a second bus. We did hear rumblings about this. Ultimately Ms. Checko made the decision not to continue adding to the wait list. With Bonnie retiring and no one in her place until January we were not comfortable trying to take on more kids.

Barbara Ausiello informed Ms. Checko that people were not happy that a second bus was not going to be added this year. Ms. Checko said that both buses, one from the middle school and one from Thompson Brook school filled within the first week.

V. Correspondence

None

VI. Committee Communication

This item was covered in section V, Correspondence, item A.

VII. Old Business

A. Fisher Meadows Expansion Project – This item was covered in the Director’s report.

B Synthetic Turf Field Project – Avon High School

This item was covered mostly in the Director’s report. Kelly Jackson said that she has heard complaints about kids getting cuts from the sand when they skid on it. Ms. Jackson said since the crumb rubber material was not used, the sand seems to cause cuts for some people.

Barbara Ausiello asked about lights on the field at the high school. Ruth said some fundraising has begun by ACORN. Ms. Ausiello said the PTO took some of their own money to put towards the lights and there has been some grumbling about that. Ms. Checko said she is aware of this but does not have enough information to speak about it.

VIII. New Business

A. Proposed Meeting Dates

Ruth presented the proposed meeting dates for 2020 to the committee. Meeting dates were signed by Peter Ponziani.

B. Capital Improvement Projects FY 2021

Ruth informed the committee that she has included a Dog Park in her Capital Improvement Budget. She said a member of the Town Council would like to see a Dog Park in Avon. She said the original thought was to put it at Alsop Meadows, but that would not be the best spot for it. Ms. Checko said she recommended putting the dog park at Buckingham. She said when the Recreation Master Plan is updated, it will include looking at the feasibility and need for a Dog Park. Ms. Checko said there is a CIP Request for preliminary planning at Buckingham Recreation area It would include tennis courts, basketball courts, a paved parking lot and lights at Buckingham.

Mr. Ponziani asked what would be needed for the Dog Park. Ms. Checko said it would be between \$50,000 and \$60,000 and would include drainage, stone dust or millings, a small and large fenced in area for the dogs, a corral, doggie bags and dispensers, and it could include benches, tunnels for the dogs to play, ADA accessibility and a shaded area.

Ms. Checko said the CIP also included updating the trail fencing on the Farmington Valley Trail and that would be about \$95,000. The fencing would start at the Simsbury line and go all the way to the Thompson Brook trails. Ms. Checko reported that there is a group that is interested in doing some fundraising for this project and there is still an open Purchase Order for BSC Group that still has \$4,500 left on it that can be put towards the fencing project.

C. Overview of General Fund Budget FY 2021

Ms. Checko said there were not any big changes to the General Fund Budget except for the increase in the minimum wage for seasonal staff. She said the budget for FY 20/21 will have less impact on the 01 General fund and more impact on the Recreation Reimbursable fund 09. Ms. Checko said next fiscal year will be the real challenge for the seasonal staff wage increases and the compression caused by minimum wage. Mr. Ponziani asked if we would be raising fees to help cover the increase. Ms. Checko said we most likely would need to raise program fees.

Ms. Checko informed the committee that there is a lot more staff training. Kelly Walsh from the Police Department does the Sexual Harassment Training and Sharon Henry does the Blood Borne Pathogen and Hazardous Communication Training provided by our Risk Manager. Summer staff also receives Diabetes Management, Epi Pen and Medicine Administration training.

IX. Adjournment

Mr. Weist motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 AM. Ms. Ausiello seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted by Sharon Henry

Sharon Henry
Sharon Henry
Clerk

