

NEWINGTON PARKS & RECREATION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2021

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I. CALL TO ORDER

Jay Bottalico called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

II. ROLL CALL

Board Members Present: Jay Bottalico, Bill DeBlasio, Eileen Francolino, Anthony Kulowski, Matthew Kulowski, Ed Marchion, and Don Woods.

Board Members Absent: Roberta Byron-Kolej, Mike Karanian, Nicole Pane, and Jen Win-Johnson.

Council Members Present: Tim Manke

Staff Present: Bill DeMaio, Superintendent, and Kelly Dickinson, Administrative Secretary


Town Clerk

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

IV. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF JANUARY 19, 2021 MEETING

- **Motion:** A motion was made by Eileen Francolino to approve the minutes of January 19, 2021. Bill DeBlasio seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

NONE.

VI. CORRESPONDENCE

a. Pamela Lavery Donation

Bill DeMaio stated that the Department received a \$100.00 donation from Pamela Lavery for summer camp scholarships.

b. Emmanuel Christian Academy

Bill DeMaio stated that the Department received a thank you note from Emmanuel Christian Academy for the donation of basketball hoops from the old Mortensen Community Center gymnasium.

VII. SUMMARY REPORTS

The Monthly Report and Tree Warden Report for January of 2021 were given to the Board to review. Bill DeMaio stated the Department has received an influx of tree complaints since the Tree Inventory Project was completed. He noted that the Department is addressing these complaints as quickly and efficiently as possible, despite not having a dedicated Tree Crew. There were no further questions.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

NONE.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

a. 150th Anniversary Dinner Dance

Bill DeMaio stated that the Town Manager appointed him as staff liaison in conjunction with Eileen Francolino, Chairperson of the 150th Anniversary Committee, to plan the Mayors' Ball to honor all of the living mayors, past and present. He described the event as a dinner dance that will be held in the gymnasium tentatively on Friday, October 1, 2021. He added that this event may or may not coincide with the grand opening of the new Mortensen Community Center, pending COVID-19 guidelines at that time. Eileen Francolino reported that the original plan was to host a Mayors' Ball, but they may have to change the name of the event due to local election laws. She stated that the intention is to host tours of the new community center and to have a night of fun with the people of our community. Bill DeMaio stated he is hopeful we will be able to host the event. He described the newest guidelines that the governor has released, stating that as of March 19 we can now have up to 100 people for an event indoors and 200 people for an event outdoors.

- **Motion:** A motion was made by Don Woods to waive the facility rental fee for the double gymnasium (weekday rate of \$80.00/hr. x 6 hrs.= \$480.00), the facility rental fee for all (3) multipurpose rooms

(weekday rate of \$40.00/hr. x 3 rooms = \$120.00 x 6 hrs. = \$720.00), and the facility rental fee for the arts and crafts room (weekday rate of \$40.00/hr. x 6 hrs. = \$240.00) in the total amount of \$1,440.00. Also, to allow the Department to apply for a state liquor permit and sell adult refreshments at the 150th Anniversary Dinner Dance event on Friday, October 1, 2021. Bill DeBlasio seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

b. 150th Anniversary Historical Walkthrough at Mill Pond Waterfall

Eileen Francolino reported that the 150th Anniversary Committee will be hosting a free Historical Walk that will mainly be in the center of town with various stops including the library, some of the parks, the waterfall, the church, the firehouse, and the Kellogg Eddy House. She stated that there will be an actor in period costume at each of the stops describing how things were made 150 years ago and to discuss some of the history of our town.

- **Motion:** A motion was made by Bill DeBlasio to waive the Mill Pond Waterfall rental fee (\$30.00/hr. x 4 hrs. = \$120.00) in the amount of \$120.00 for the 150th Anniversary Historical Walkthrough on April 24, 2021 from 12:00 to 4:00 p.m., with a rain date of April 25, 2021. Don Woods seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

c. Peter Lavery Memorial Ride Event

Bill DeMaio reported the Peter Lavery Memorial Ride is an annual event that utilizes all three pavilions at Churchill Park. He explained that the event is hosted by Pamela Lavery, who is a non-resident, and that she had requested several fee waivers. He stated that he is in full support of the event.

- **Motion:** A motion was made by Don Woods to waive the facility rental fees for the (3) Churchill Park pavilions (daily non-resident rate of \$280.00 + \$250.00 + \$150.00 = \$680.00), the booth rental fee for Motorcycle Madness (\$50.00), and the Life. Be in it. Extravaganza booth rental fee (\$50.00) in the total amount of \$780.00 for the Peter Lavery Memorial Ride Event on September 19, 2021. Anthony Kulowski seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

X. REPORTS

a. Town Hall Community Center Update

Don Woods, a member of the Building Committee, reported that the project is wrapping up for the winter. He stated that final grading, parking, and landscaping still need to be done. He also reported that there are some HVAC issues that need to be addressed, but for the most part the Town Hall building is complete. He stated that there is still some work to be done to the outside of the Police Department, but overall the project was a success, especially the new community center. Jay Bottalico inquired what the status of the batting cage was, Bill DeMaio reported that the equipment was received, but that the Department is still waiting for CBS Inc. to provide installation (valued at about \$1,000.00). He stated he has contacted the Town Attorney to pursue legal action if the services are not provided as agreed. He added that the Department recently received two scoreboards for the gymnasium and that the staff also received training from the NEVCO representative. He added that the handicapped accessible door handles for the partition door in the gym have been installed and approved by the Fire Marshall and the Building Department. He reported that department staff also recently received training on the display monitors in all the rooms in the new community center.

b. Budget Update

i. Administrative Secretary Position

Bill DeMaio reported that the budget process is a little different this year due to COVID-19, the Town Manager is piloting a program utilizing the professional staff to prepare the budget. The CIP budget presentation to the Town Council is scheduled for the coming weeks. He also reported Lisa Delude transferred to the Human Services Department leaving an open Administrative Secretary position in the Parks and Recreation office. The position was posted and Sam Lostocco, part time employee, took the C-8 test, passed the test, and has been appointed to the position. He also reported that in order to fill the position he had to agree for the salary and benefits to be paid from Enterprise Budget. He also pointed out that the salaries and benefits for the three Recreation Supervisors: Joe Harvey, Karen Gallicchio, and Hadeel Majboub already come out of the Enterprise Fund and this will require the Department to raise more money to compensate. This explains part of the Department's need for increasing fees. Don Woods stated that to his knowledge no other department has to pay for staff out of its budget, essentially raising its own money since no tax dollars fund the positions. Bill DeMaio confirmed that statement and reported that the Department saves each household approximately \$300.00 per year that they don't have to pay in taxes. Eileen Francolino inquired as to why there were staff cuts within the Town since there was a fear that due to COVID-19 residents would not pay their taxes, but it seems they did in fact pay. Tim Manke reported that the taxpayers did make their October payments, however they are still looking

at long-term effects. Anthony Kulowski stated that the governor has extended the moratorium on foreclosures to June 30, so the banks cannot foreclose on homes until June 30. Jay Bottalico asked Tim Manke if he had received the delinquency report yet, Tim Manke replied no.

c. Water Lantern Festival Update

Bill DeMaio reported that the event is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, September 25 from 3:00 to 10:00 p.m., pending COVID-19 guidelines at that time. He stated that this was a very successful event last year and he looks forward to hosting it again.

d. St. Patrick's Day Party in the Park on June 10, 2021

Bill DeMaio reported that the event is tentatively scheduled for June 10, pending COVID-19 guidelines at that time. He also stated that the Irish band, The Screaming Orphans, that was scheduled to perform, now may not be able to fly due to current travel restrictions in Ireland. He added that if the Department is unable to host the event on June 10, the event will be postponed to the first weekend of August. Jay Bottalico inquired if the postponement would include the Food Truck Festival on June 11 and Motorcycle Madness on June 12. Bill DeMaio confirmed that all three events could potentially be postponed to the first week of August.

e. Food Truck Festival on June 11, 2021

Bill DeMaio reported that plans for the event are going according to schedule.

f. Motorcycle Madness on June 12, 2021 from 3:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Bill DeMaio reported that all the sponsors from last year's event have signed on to sponsor the event at the same sponsorship levels.

g. Summer Concert Series

Bill DeMaio reported that he believes the Department will still be able to host the series outdoors in the park. He added that all the slots are filled and that the bands are great. He stated that Department staff attend an annual CRPA entertainment showcase each year and they have recruited some incredible talent including a new acapella band.

h. Extravaganza Update

Bill DeMaio reported that he is not optimistic that the Department will be able to host the event as we have in the past and it may have to be modified due to COVID-19 guidelines. He stated that the Department is still planning for the event, but that he doesn't see how they could host an event of this size with thousands of people safely. He invited the Board members to speak on their thoughts regarding the event. Jay Bottalico inquired how much notice the carnival will need, Bill DeMaio replied that the carnival was already tentatively booked. He added that the Department will be consulting with the Public Health Director for a recommendation as it gets closer. Eileen Francolino agreed with Bill DeMaio that hosting the event would not be safe. Jay Bottalico noted that the Department would be taking a big hit financially by not hosting the event. Don Woods asked how this would affect the Summer Concert Series. Bill DeMaio responded that with the right protocols in place concerts should still be possible, including staff for sanitizing, PA announcements reminding people to social distance, and spacing everyone out in the park. Don Woods asked if the Department could host the fireworks as a standalone event. Bill DeMaio responded that it would likely be a loss with a small return. Jay Bottalico noted that not being able to host these big events will put the Department at a disadvantage financially. Eileen Francolino asked if the deposit for the fireworks would carry over if not used this year. Bill DeMaio replied that he did not specifically ask the company if they would carry the deposit over to next year, but that they are a reputable company and he thought they would agree.

i. Aquatics Report

Bill DeMaio shared that the guidelines regarding pools is always changing, but the Department is currently providing lifeguards five days a week at the Newington High School pool. He added that the governor changed the rules recently to allow for four kids at a time in each lane. He added that the Department has received many complaints from swimming parents and basketball parents who don't understand why he is following the advice of the Health Department and that these parent conversations have been very difficult and disheartening.

j. East Coast Football League "Newington Bulls"

Bill DeMaio reported that there is a new adult football league called the "Newington Bulls" in town who are interested in using the turf field at Clem Lemire Recreation Complex. He added that the team states they are a semi-pro football league, but in reality, they are an adult recreational football league. Players pay to play, do not get paid, and they are not associated with the national football league. He stated that they will have to follow strict rules including paying the field rental fees two weeks in advance. Each team will likely play on Saturday nights from 8:00-11:00 p.m., schedule permitting. He stated youth sports will take priority. Eileen Francolino inquired what makes them a Newington Team other than the coach living in town. Bill DeMaio confirmed her statement and added that the players are from the greater Connecticut area. Eileen Francolino inquired about wear

and tear on the turf field since it was constructed for youth not adults. Bill DeMaio agreed that having the weight of adults versus small children on the field is different with more impact. Eileen Francolino asked if they are being charged non-resident field rental rates. Bill DeMaio confirmed that they will be charged non-resident rates for the field rental, the lights, and the press box for approximately \$700.00 to \$1,000.00 per game. Jay Bottalico noted that the field was designed for youth to high school kids, not adults. He asked what condition the turf field is currently in. Bill DeMaio responded that the field is guaranteed for 8 years and it's currently 10 years old, but he has instituted a yearly maintenance program with a professional company from Texas. He added that the Department requests \$50,000.00 in CIP projects for replacement purposes each year, but it typically gets cut during the budget process. He stated the field is in decent shape at this time, but it will need replacement in the next few years which will cost approximately \$600,000.00. Bill DeBlasio inquired when the new team is planning to use the field. Bill DeMaio replied on Saturday nights starting in the spring though November, but there will likely not be availability in the spring. Bill DeMaio added that he plans to fix up the little league field at John Paterson School for more availability. He also explained that the Department gives priority to high school sports first, then in town youth, then in town adults, and lastly out of town groups. Bill DeBlasio indicated that some parents of youth sports may be upset if they find out that adult leagues are able to play on the field and their kids are not. Bill DeMaio clarified that he has not disallowed the youth groups to use the fields, the youth sports organizations made those decisions independently. Jay Bottalico asked if the Department received any complaints in regards to the denial of the West Hartford Youth Baseball League's request to post a sign on the center green. Bill DeMaio replied no.

XI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

NONE.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

Eileen Francolino made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Jay Bottalico seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:56 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,

Kelly Dickinson

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