

NEWINGTON PARKS & RECREATION  
BOARD MEETING  
TUESDAY, APRIL 20, 2021

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NEWINGTON, CT

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**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Jay Bottalico called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Board Members Present: Jay Bottalico, Roberta Byron-Kolej, Bill DeBlasio, Eileen Francolino, Anthony Kulowski, Matthew Kulowski, Ed Marchion, Nicole Pane, and Jen Win-Johnson.

Board Members Absent: Mike Karanian and Don Woods.

Council Members Present: None.

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

  
Town Clerk

**III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**IV. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF MARCH 16, 2021 MEETING**

- **Motion:** A motion was made by Bill DeBlasio to approve the minutes of the meeting on March 16, 2021. Ed Marchion seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

NONE.

**VI. CORRESPONDENCE**

**a. Letter from Jill Price**

Bill DeMaio reported that the Department received a \$1,000.00 donation from Jill Price for summer camp scholarships. He added that the Department also received a \$500.00 donation from Jill Price's daughter, Lauren Kohl.

**b. Letter from Maryse Bellizzi**

Bill DeMaio stated that the Department received a \$200.00 donation from Maryse Bellizzi for summer camp scholarships as well.

**VII. SUMMARY REPORTS**

The Monthly Report and Tree Warden Report for March of 2021 were given to the Board to review. Bill DeMaio stated that there was nothing unusual to report regarding the Monthly Report. He noted that the Parks and Recreation office staff are back working in the office almost every day, since the office has been very busy and they coordinating all the details of their upcoming events. In regards to the Tree Warden Report, he gave credit to the Tree Warden, Tom Lapierre, and the Parks staff for doing a great job of staying on top of the tree complaints that the Department receives almost daily.

**VIII. OLD BUSINESS**

**a. Little Free Library Location Change**

Bill DeMaio stated that the Board had voted at a previous meeting to approve the installation of a Little Free Library at Seymour Park. He added that Anna Reynolds School applied for a grant and were approved, but they would prefer to install the library at Anna Reynolds School instead. He agreed that it was a better choice for the purposes of monitoring and maintaining it.

- **Motion:** A motion was made by Jen Win-Johnson to approve the location change of the Little Free Library from Seymour Park to Anna Reynolds School near the baseball field. The Anna Reynolds staff will be responsible for agreeing on a location with the Superintendent of Parks and Recreation, they will be responsible for erection, removal, vandalism, and maintenance. Eileen Francolino seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**IX. NEW BUSINESS**

**a. Proposed CT Brawlers Agreement**

Bill DeMaio reported that the CT Brawlers wrote a letter to the Mayor that was shared with the Town Manager and with himself. He added that he has lots of experience in negotiating agreements that are beneficial for economic development. He explained that when an organization or team requests a reduction in fees, the administration then has to determine if the economic impact is beneficial to the Town. He considered the business benefit that would occur if the 150 people stayed at a hotel in Newington. Rick Bachand indicated that they would not be staying in Newington. He reported that Rick Bachand requested that we leave the field open in case their plans in Glastonbury fell through, but Bill DeMaio informed him that the fields are first-come first-served and that the Department would not be able to hold the field and risk losing revenue from another group who could potentially reserve it. He added that the Mayor, the Town Manager, and himself made a good negotiating team and worked in the best interest of Newington and the Brawlers, in regards to the proposed agreement.

- **Motion:** A motion was made by Ed Marchion to approve the tentative agreement with the Connecticut Brawlers and allow the Superintendent to continue negotiations and report back with the final document. Anthony Kulowski seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **b. Nutmeg State Games Tournament**

Bill DeMaio reported that the Department has had a relationship with the Nutmeg State Games for the last six years and that it brings economic growth for the Town. He added that the high quality facilities in Newington draw these types of groups to the town. He expressed his support for granting the group resident rates for future tournaments because of the economic impact for the Town and the fact that many of the teams are made up of Newington youth. He added that this decision would bring revenue and positive notoriety in the press.

- **Motion:** A motion was made by Nicole Pane to approve offering Nutmeg State Games resident rates for large indoor tournaments since many of the teams consist of Newington youth. In addition, to allow the Superintendent to negotiate large tournaments that have a positive economic impact for the Department and the Town. Bill DeBlasio seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **c. Summer 2021 Program Brochure**

Bill DeMaio reported that the Department has completed their quarterly brochure for the summer of 2021, which includes hundreds of programs and gets mailed to 13,500 households in Newington as an insert in the April issue of Newington Life. He added that the brochure is typically given to the Board to review and familiarize themselves with the seasonal programs, instructors, special events, and fees/charges included. Jay Bottalico asked if the program brochure was emailed to all the members and Bill DeMaio responded yes.

- **Motion:** A motion was made by Bill DeBlasio to accept the Summer 2021 Program Brochure as presented, including attached fees and charges. Eileen Francolino seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **d. Installation of LiveBarn Camera System**

Bill DeMaio reported that the Department has been in negotiations with LiveBarn since September. He added that LiveBarn is the leading videographer system in the country and they install the camera system and sell monthly subscriptions to watch youth sports programs/games. He went on to say that this is beneficial to families who work and are unable to attend their child's games, as well as family or friends who live out of state or far away. He added that friends and family can watch their child's games live, from basically anywhere in the country, from their phone or computer for a monthly subscription fee. He added that the Department will receive 30% of the gross revenue from the subscription sales. He went on to say that LiveBarn has offered to install the system, valued at more than \$10,000.00, for free. He added that subscribers also have the ability to download the videos and make highlight reels as well, which is a great option for students applying to college. He added that this agreement will make the Department anywhere from \$5,000.00 to \$100,000.00 in the next five years. He added that the camera system will be installed in the Mortensen Community Center, as well as Volunteer Field, Legends Field, and Memorial Field at Clem Lemire Sports Complex. Jay Bottalico asked if the cameras will be installed at all of the fields at Clem Lemire. Bill DeMaio responded no and that the soccer fields at Clem Lemire will not be included, only Volunteer, Legends, and Memorial fields. He added that the system also has the ability to zoom in and follow a specific child or person as well. He expressed that he is in full support of installing this system. Eileen Francolino asked if the service includes an announcer or "caller" for the games. Bill DeMaio responded no, it does not. Eileen Francolino gave an example of a hockey game she watched with a similar system and explained how much more enjoyable it was to watch the game with an announcer. She suggested considering hiring staff for this assignment as a way to entice more people to subscribe. Bill DeBlasio asked who was responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the system in regards to damage from baseballs and other sports equipment. Bill DeMaio responded that they (LiveBarn) are responsible for it. He added that a portion of the money received will be used for field and building maintenance.

- **Motion:** A motion was made by Jen Win-Johnson to fully endorse the installation of the LiveBarn camera system at the Mortensen Community Center, as well as Volunteer Field, Legends Field, and

Memorial Fields at Clem Lemire Sports Complex. Matthew Kulowski seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

## **X. REPORTS**

### **a. Town Hall Community Center Update**

Bill DeMaio reported that the project is entering its final stages. He added that asphalt has been laid, the new curb has been installed, as well a binder coat and top coat. He went on to say that trees have also been planted outside the building and that overall the project was a success. He added that the Town Manager made mention of the community center opening sometime in June and that he is hopeful this will happen.

### **b. Mill Pond Pool Update**

Bill DeMaio reported that the conceptual drawing will be sent by the architect in the next week. He added that the geotechnical survey and the subsurface analysis are done and the architect is working on drawing up the map placing the pool in the appropriate place, based on the information gathered. He added that once the map is received, he will forward it to all the building committee and the board members for review. Jay Bottalico asked if the location of the pool is still near the Garfield Street side of the park. Bill DeMaio responded yes, but the survey showed the water table is only 6 inches deep at the playground area and 6.5 feet at the Garfield Street area. Jay Bottalico asked if the new map plan would be ready for review at the next meeting. Bill DeMaio responded yes, including the analysis. He added that the roof will have two levels with plantings, some of which will be watered by the roofline.

### **c. AARP/FitLot Exercise Programs**

Bill DeMaio reported that these free programs started that evening. He added that these programs offer 8-week sessions as well as a drop-in program. He went on to say people can sign up through the Parks and Recreation office and that Barbara Womer was hired as an instructor for classes during the week and a physical education instructor from CCSU has been hired for the weekend classes. He stated that these free programs will be offered again in the fall and that the donation from AARP allows the Department to run these classes for free for the next three years.

### **d. Clem Lemire Playground Shade Structure**

Bill DeMaio reported that large poles have been installed at Clem Lemire that will support the shade structure. He added that the contractor expects to have the project complete by next week once the picnic tables arrive. He went on to say that the structure will provide shade, as well help protect again foul balls.

### **e. MCC Batting Cage**

Bill DeMaio thanked Jen Win-Johnson for her support of the Department online in regards to the Facebook live videos that have been posted recently for the batting cage and other various new activities. He reported that the Jugs machine arrived and that the Department purchased attachments that allow it to serve slow pitch softballs, fast pitch softballs, and baseballs. He added that the machine has the ability to serve balls from a speed of 13 mph to 100 mph. He stated that the bin holds 36 baseballs or 18 softballs at a time. He reported that the Department is very happy with it. The Department paid extra money for a structural engineer to document that it was installed correctly structurally and safely.

### **f. Mill Pond Summer Concerts**

Bill DeMaio reported that the summer concert series schedule is listed in the Summer 2021 Program Guide. He added that this year's series has more concerts than ever before and that Data Mail Inc. generously donated \$7,500.00 to sponsor the series. He expressed his appreciate for the family's commitment to Newington and the Department.

### **g. Veterans Memorial**

Bill DeMaio reported that the Department is offering new name registrations for the 2021 memorial for a fee of \$30.00 and name renewals (from last year's memorial) for a fee of \$15.00. He added that these registrations are applicable for one year of recognition. He stated that the memorial will travel to the Life. Be in it. Extravaganza, schools, fire houses, Veterans ceremonies, other various events. He reported that the memorial was very successful last year and that due to COVID, the memorial was driven on a 25-mile tour around town stopping many neighborhoods and hosting short live concerts by the band Dually Noted who played patriotic music. He added that the money raised gets split between fireworks and local Veteran groups who sell the name spaces as a fundraiser. Jay Bottalico asked if registration is open to Veterans only. Bill DeMaio responded no, it includes living and deceased Veterans, as well as active military members. Ed Marchion asked where people can sign up for the memorial. Bill DeMaio responded that registration is being accepted online. Bill DeMaio reported that Hinding Sports Builders sponsored the construction of the memorial for the second year in a row for \$5,000.00.

### **h. Kindness Counts Program**

Bill DeMaio reported that anyone who wants to nominate a kind friend or neighbor can go online to submit a nomination. He stated that nominees receive a letter in the mail informing them of the nomination and that a sign will be delivered by volunteers to their yard. He added that there are 127 signs being delivered in the first batch. He noted

his appreciation to all the volunteers who are helping deliver the signs, including Jack Morgan, Matt Nelson, Kris Riley, and Carol Grem. He added that nominees who return their sign to Mill Pond Park on July 15, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. to the Bring Your Own Cheese (BYOC) Party will receive a free glass of wine compliments of Happy Harry's Liquor and Wine Warehouse.

**i. Miniature Golf Course**

Bill DeMaio reported that the 9-hole miniature golf course has been delivered and installed at Mill Pond Park. He added that the course is free to park visitors. He went on to say that families have the option to bring their own balls and clubs to play with or they can leave their driver's license at the Parks and Recreation Office, the concession stand, or at the pool house at Mill Pond Park to obtain clubs and balls to play with as well as scorecards, licenses will be returned once equipment is returned. He stated the Department will be hosting a Miniature Golf Tournament on May 15, 2021 from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The tournament will have three categories: the "Family" category which can consist of 2 adults and 2 children or 1 adult and 3 children, the "Children's" category which can consist of children ages 8-15 years old, and the "Adult" category for people 18 and older. He added that the prizes include a \$20.00 gift certificate for first place in each category and a \$10.00 gift certificate for second place in each category per team. He stated the gift certificates can be redeemed at the Community Café concessions stand in the new Mortensen Community Center and all the proceeds from the tournament will go towards fireworks. He went on to say that anyone who signs up for the tournament will receive a free train ride on the new children's train between 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Otherwise train tickets can be purchased for \$3.00 per person.

**j. Children's Train**

Bill DeMaio reported that the Department is very impressed with the children's train. The train has a bell, a smoke stack, a P.A. system in each car, colorful features, and includes 5 cars. He added that the Department will be accepting sponsorships for advertisements on the cars, with a possibility of free train rides if companies want to include the fee in their sponsorship agreement. He stated that children and adults or parents can ride the train. Eileen Francolino asked if the train can be rented out for birthday parties. Bill DeMaio responded yes.

**k. Summer Camp Scholarship Donations**

Bill DeMaio reported that the Department received several Summer Camp Scholarship donations including a \$1,000.00 donation from Jill Price, a \$500.00 donation from her daughter Lauren Kohl, and a \$200.00 from Maryse Bellizzi. He added that the summer camp fee per week is \$200.00, and the Department will offer 17 underprivileged children half off (\$100.00) of one week of camp. Families will need to meet with the Human Services Department to determine economic status and eligibility.

**l. Volunteers Needed for Special Events June 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, & 12<sup>th</sup>**

Bill DeMaio reported that the Department is looking for volunteers to assist in upcoming events on June 10, 11, and 12. He added that if members volunteer, it helps the Department save on staffing costs. He went on to say that volunteering is often a fun way to help out and still enjoy the festivities.

**m. Beacon Park Update**

Bill DeMaio reported that the Department is working with Public Works to remove and replace the paths at Beacon Park, including a new drainage system. He added that the contractor was currently working on a first draft of the new playground design that would be available soon. He reported that two bocce ball courts will be installed as well. In addition, he stated that Hinding Sports Builders will be power washing the basketball court. Eileen Francolino asked how the recycle shed was working. She added that the shed is often full and suggested that the Department should gravel down around the shed area, as it is often muddy. Bill DeMaio responded that the program has been a huge success. He added that the Boy Scouts made \$675.00 last month and the Department made \$175.00 of that for fireworks. He went on to say that the recycle shed should probably have been bigger, but that they never anticipated it would be this successful. The plan was for the groups to pick up the cans and bottles from the shed once a week, but the bags often need to be picked more than once a week because the shed fills up so quickly. He listed several groups who have signed up including Anna Reynolds School, Boy Scouts, and Project Graduation. He went on to say that adding gravel to the lot is a good idea, but there are wetlands in close proximity to the area. Eileen Francolino asked if the groups were responsible for picking up the bags, not the Department. Bill DeMaio confirmed that statement. He added that if the recycle shed is full, people can leave the bags on the side of the shed.

**XI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

NONE.

**XII. ADJOURNMENT**

Ed Marchion made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Anthony Kulowski seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,

*Kelly Dickinson*

Kelly Dickinson