

NEWINGTON PARKS & RECREATION
BOARD MEETING
TUESDAY, MAY 17, 2022

RECEIVED FOR RECORD
IN NEWINGTON, CT

2022 MAY 26 PM 3:34:8

Thomas O. Hynes
TOWN CLERK

I. CALL TO ORDER

Jay Bottalico called the meeting to order at 7:07 PM.

II. ROLL CALL

Board Members Present: Jay Bottalico, Richard DaSilva, Billy DeBlasio, Eileen Francolino, Thomas Gill, T Hutvagner, Anthony Kulowski, Ed Marchion, and Don Woods

Board Members Absent: Matthew Kulowski and Nicole Pane

Council Members Present: Tim Manke

Staff Members Present: Bill DeMaio, Superintendent, Sam Lostocco, Administrative Secretary, and Melissa Miller, Administrative Secretary

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

IV. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – APRIL 19, 2022 MEETING

- **Motion**: A motion was made by Jay Bottalico to approve the minutes of the meeting on April 19, 2022. Don Woods seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

V. ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

Bill DeMaio asked Melissa Miller to share the addition to the agenda. Melissa Miller reported the addition was a letter that was received in the mail today. Sam Lostocco will have the letter in this presentation under Correspondence.

VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

NONE.

VII. CORRESPONDENCE

a. Letter from Boy Scout Troop 355

Bill DeMaio reported this letter is requesting a fee waiver for one of the pavilions. It is on the agenda under New Business.

b. Letter from Lue Sobieraj

Sam Lostocco presented the letter for the Board to view. Bill DeMaio reported it was a kind letter about Clay Pedigo, Parks Supervisor. He is going on his third year with the Department and is doing a great job.

VIII. SUMMARY REPORTS

The Monthly Report and Tree Warden Report for April 2022 were given to the Board to review. Bill DeMaio stated the reports were self-explanatory.

IX. OLD BUSINESS

NONE.

X. NEW BUSINESS

a. Request to Waive Pavilion Rental Fee for Boy Scout Troop 355

Bill DeMaio reported the Boy Scouts always do so much good in the community, that he thinks the waiver is something the Board should seriously consider. Bill DeMaio is in support of the fee waiver. It is a Friday night and it won't hurt the Department monetarily, in any fashion. We will be able to clean up the facility on Saturday morning at 6:00 a.m. to get prepared for the next day.

- **Motion**: A motion was made by Ed Marchion to accept Boy Scout Troop 355's request to waive the \$80.00 lower pavilion rental fee at Churchill Park on Friday, June 10, 2022. Eileen Francolino seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Part-Time/Seasonal Pay Scale – Effective July 1, 2022

Bill DeMaio reported that the document provides the details of the 5-step process the Department has. The Board already approved this over several years. Bill DeMaio noted, it states this pay scale will be adjusted for any State of Connecticut minimum wage increase in the future, and the first step in each classification will be reflective of those increases and additional steps accordingly.

- **Motion:** A motion was made by Billy DeBlasio to accept the detailed part-time/seasonal pay scale, as presented at the meeting. This is in accordance with the increase of minimum wage, effective July 1, 2022. Ed Marchion seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

c. Life Star Helicopter Landing at Mill Pond Park on June 4th

Bill DeMaio reported this is for a Public Safety Day that police, fire, and ambulance are putting together.

- **Motion:** A motion was made by Eileen Francolino to allow the Life Star helicopter to land in Mill Pond Park, on June 4, 2022 for the town-wide Public Safety Day Celebration. Tim Hutvagner seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

d. Landing of a Helicopter the Week of July 13th – 16th; Date to be Determined by the National Guard

Bill DeMaio reported that any aerial displays that land in a park facility is under the jurisdiction of the Board. The Department is working closely with Major General Francis Evon, from Newington. He is working very hard to get a chinook, one of the largest helicopters the National Guard has, to land at Mill Pond Park. We do not have a date or time yet, but we are requesting Wednesday, July 13th at 6:30 p.m. in coordination with Church of Christ Congregational's "Sundaes on Wednesdays" event and the carnival night. If it doesn't work then, our second choice is Thursday, July 14th and our third choice is Friday, July 15th. Unfortunately, there is not enough room to land it on Saturday because it is such a large helicopter. Bill DeMaio is asking the Board to approve the concept of this. It will be a demonstration for the public.

- **Motion:** A motion was made by Richard DaSilva to allow the National Guard to land a helicopter in Mill Pond Park, on a date and time to be determined upon availability of the National Guard, during the week of July 13th – 16th. Billy DeBlasio seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Eileen Francolino asked Bill DeMaio if there was a time for either of the helicopter events. Bill DeMaio responded that the time of the Public Safety Day is 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. on Saturday, June 4th. If the Department gets its choice, we would like to have the chinook land at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, July 13th.

e. Proclamation for the Celebration of the ADA on July 26, 2022

Bill DeMaio reported that President Bush signed into effect the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990, giving people with disabilities freedom, independence, and equalization. The Department put together a proclamation, for the Board's consideration, to be passed on to the Mayor and the Town Council. It can then be proclaimed at an upcoming Town Council Meeting. Bill DeMaio has been the President of the ADA Coalition of CT for many years. They just gave the Department a \$500.00 donation to have free ice cream for the first 150 people to show up at the Daily Planet concert at Mill Pond Park on Thursday, July 21st.

- **Motion:** A motion was made by Don Woods to whole-heartedly accept the ADA Proclamation and forward it on to the Mayor and Town Council to proclaim the day at an appropriate Town Council meeting. Eileen Francolino seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

XI. REPORTS

a. COVID-19 Regulations Update

Bill DeMaio reported that the building is currently open to the public. Patrons are encouraged to wear masks, when appropriate, and remain socially-distanced. Eileen Francolino asked about meetings. Bill DeMaio responded that any meetings that were already planned were to be held on Zoom. He anticipates that the next Parks and Recreation Board Meeting will be available as a hybrid meeting. Tom Gill mentioned that the Town Planning and Zoning Commission was notified that their next meeting would be hybrid and were asked if they would participate in person. Bill DeMaio asked the Parks and Recreation Board what they preferred and several Board members shared they would prefer in-person meetings.

b. Mill Pond Pool Update

Bill DeMaio reported he found a company, CT Custom Aquatics, to work on the 18 ft. cracked pipe. They have taken it all apart and it looks as though they have all of the pieces ordered. He expects that, within the next day or two, they should be installing the new pipe and it will be ready to be up and running again. Don Woods asked what that repair cost. Bill DeMaio responded that the cost is time and material. It has been \$107.00 and change, per person, per hour. There have

been two or three guys working for seven days, or so. We don't have a total bill yet for what the materials will cost. Jay Bottalico asked how Churchill Pool is doing. Bill DeMaio responded that it is going well. The Department continues to solder pipes in the locker room that separate during the winter. We resolder the pipes or cut them out and replace them. We power wash and paint the walls and the floor of the pool. We will put water in the pool and see if we have any leaks. If we do have leaks, we try to find them by putting dye in the pipes and see where it bubbles up. We try to fix the leaks that way. In Bill DeMaio's estimation, Churchill Pool is in a little better shape than Mill Pond Pool right now.

c. Veterans Memorial

Bill DeMaio had Melissa Miller report the numbers for the Veterans Memorial. Melissa Miller shared that there are currently 81 registrations for the Veterans Memorial: 20 new and 61 renewals. Name registrations have been trickling in. Melissa Miller added that copies of the registration form will be handed out at the Memorial Day Parade, to encourage more name registrations for the memorial. Hadeel Majdoub, Recreation Supervisor, recently did a Facebook post for the Veterans Memorial name registrations.

d. Kindness Counts Program

Bill DeMaio had Sam Lostocco report the numbers for the Kindness Counts Program. Sam Lostocco reported that there are close to 300 nominations. Approximately 80 more signs will be delivered to Newington residents this week. Eileen Francolino mentioned that if volunteers are needed to deliver signs, there are Honor Society members at Newington High School that are looking to complete volunteer hours.

e. Volunteers Needed for Special Events – June 9th, 10th, and 11th

Bill DeMaio reported that we are hoping that some of the Board members, who have not already signed up, will consider volunteering at these special events. The more volunteers we have, the less we have to pay staff, and the more money we have for fireworks. Richard DaSilva asked who he should contact if he was interested in volunteering. Bill DeMaio replied that he could call the Newington Parks and Recreation office to let us know that he would like to volunteer. Shifts are available for checking IDs, putting on wristbands, and pouring beer and wine.

f. Life. Be in it. Extravaganza

Bill DeMaio reported things are going really well with the Extravaganza plans. We are hoping for nice weather, with no rain. Bill DeMaio encouraged Board members to sign up for the 40th Anniversary with Board Members Celebration. We will be ordering t-shirts and need to know the Board member's sizes. Board members can call the Parks and Recreation office and the staff will help to sign them up for the event. Hadeel Majdoub designed the t-shirt for the 40th Anniversary of the Life. Be in it. Extravaganza. It is going to look pretty sharp.

g. Musco Lighting Letter

Bill DeMaio helped write a letter for the Finance Director, Janet Murphy, to send out. Bill DeMaio wanted to show the Board both the letters for the lighting project and the Beechwood Park Playground project. This will allow for the process to be started, for manufacturing purposes, instead of waiting until July 1st.

h. Beechwood Park Playground Letter

Bill DeMaio had reported this information along with the Musco Lighting letter.

i. Voicemail at the Parks Garage Regarding Ballfields

Bill DeMaio reported that the Parks and Grounds office received a lovely voicemail from a woman who did not identify herself. She left a message about the baseball field at Legends and how proud she was of the care of Newington's baseball fields and the condition they are in, compared to other towns. Jay Bottalico mentioned that Melissa Miller had forwarded this voicemail to the Board.

j. Public Service Announcement from Michael Minelli

Bill DeMaio reported that Michael Minelli is a graduate of Newington High School and is now about 34 years old. He did a McDonald's social media post, which Eileen Francolino brought to our attention at a previous meeting. It was really cool! The Department would like to share a social media post that Michael Minelli produced for the Life. Be in it. Extravaganza. Sam Lostocco presented the video clip to the Board.

Bill DeMaio shared that he will be doing an interview tomorrow with Renee DiNino from iHeart Radio. She is doing a 20-minute interview for the Community Calendar. It will be on ten radio stations on a Sunday morning and whenever else the stations play it. Renee DiNino has been a good friend of Bill DeMaio's for a long time and she is a big supporter of Newington Parks and Recreation.

Sam Lostocco shared a Facebook live post that Bill DeMaio had filmed in front of Mooyah.

k. Preschool Playground Update

Bill DeMaio reported that the Department was fortunate enough to get a grant last year from American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) money. We bought a sandbox and a giant outdoor planter, which our Parks staff put together, for the preschool students. The kids are now growing flowers, plants, and vegetables in it. They water them every day. We were also able to purchase a shade structure with the grant money. The preschool playground is the fenced off area, right on Garfield Street.

l. Creative Playtime Preschool Graduation on Tuesday, June 7th

Bill DeMaio reported that the Board members are invited to this event. The preschool students, who are entering kindergarten in the fall, will enter Mill Pond Park while riding on the Department's train. The parents will be out in the audience, while the kids sing some songs and read a few poems. They will receive graduation certificates. Bill DeMaio invited the Board members to this nice event at Mill Pond Park on Tuesday, June 7th.

m. Newington "N" on Mazzoccoli Way

Bill DeMaio reported that the Parks and Grounds Department planted an "N" in Newington colors, blue and gold. People have told Bill DeMaio that it looks spectacular! Sam Lostocco presented the picture for the Board to see. Bill DeMaio gave a lot of credit to Steve Tofeldt, Parks and Grounds Acting Foreman, for planning this project. Steve Tofeldt is a horticulturist, a tree expert, and he does a good job.

n. Memorial Day Parade – Board Members Marching

Bill DeMaio welcomed all of the Board members to march with the Newington Parks and Recreation Department in the Memorial Day Parade.

o. Chamber of Commerce Awards on Wednesday, May 18th

Bill DeMaio reported that the Department nominated Scott Mangan, the Executive Director of Newington Emergency Medical Services, for a public service award. He will be receiving an award tomorrow night at Indian Hill Country Club. The Department also nominated Victor and Donna Fontana for being volunteer coaches, for the girls' recreational basketball program, for the past 19 years. They are being recognized as Volunteers of the Year. Bill DeMaio and the three Recreation Supervisors, Joe Harvey, Hadeel Majdoub, and Kelly Tinkham, will be attending the awards event.

XII. COMMENTS BY THE BOARD

Jay Bottalico asked if there were any comments by the Board members. He then asked Don Woods if he had heard from Joe Harpie yet in regards to the Charter revision. Don Woods was momentarily disconnected from the meeting, so Jay Bottalico asked Bill DeMaio if he had any updates on the Charter revision. Bill DeMaio replied that the next Charter Revision Committee meeting is this Thursday at 7:00 p.m. It is a public meeting and anyone can attend. Bill DeMaio had a conversation with James Krupienski, Town Clerk, earlier in the day. James Krupienski wanted to know what the Board wanted to do in regards to the makeup of the Board. Bill DeMaio let him know that he would bring it up to the Board tonight. Jay Bottalico wanted to go around and see what each Board member thought. He went on to say that he would just assume to leave the Board as it is. Ed Marchion wanted to leave it. Richard DaSilva wanted to leave it. Eileen Francolino brought up the point that this was voted on at our last meeting. Thomas Gill also mentioned that we voted on it at the last meeting. Ed Marchion went on to say that it is out of our Board's hands at this time. It is now up to the Charter Revision Committee. Jay Bottalico agreed with Ed Marchion. The discussion continued and the topic of alternates was brought up. Jay Bottalico said that this Board needs as many members as we can have since we are involved in so many things. Don Woods was able to get back on the meeting, via phone. He said that at the meeting on Thursday night, the Charter Revision Committee wants to know which way the Parks and Recreation Board wants to go in regards to membership. Don Woods asked what the Board wants to do. It is a conversation that doesn't make much difference, but he wants to project what the Board wants. He wants to make sure that the Parks and Recreation Board stays viable. He wants to make sure we are a Board that matters into the future. Don Woods said that he wants the Board to be successful. Thomas Gill said that there is another avenue, to have more alternates. They would be able to help out at the different activities that we need volunteers for. Fewer members would be needed to have a quorum. Jay Bottalico is concerned about the alternates and keeping people on the Board. Don Woods is going to be honest that the Board is conflicted about the number of people that should be on the Board. At the end of the discussion, Don Woods said that he is going to suggest a seven-member Board with the majority party appointing four people, the minority party appointing three people, and two alternates on either side. If the Charter Revision Committee doesn't think that is viable, Don Woods will suggest we stay as an eleven-member Board, as it is in the Charter.

Bill DeMaio asked Eileen Francolino if the 150th Anniversary Committee had a flyer for their upcoming event. James Krupienski, Town Clerk, had mentioned to Bill DeMaio that he wanted an event flyer to give to the Town Council. Eileen Francolino said she will get a flyer out.

Thomas Gill had a couple of questions for Bill DeMaio regarding the internet for the Extravaganza. Bill DeMaio replied that he had been in touch with a man named Roger regarding the Frontier internet and it cannot be done. He went on to say that he spoke with a marketing person from Frontier, Gabrielle from Florida, who said they still wanted to be involved in the events. They can be part of the Corporate Row for the Life. Be in it. Extravaganza. To answer Thomas Gill's original question, Bill DeMaio replied that Frontier can't hook us up with high-speed internet at Mill Pond Park and he is not sure why. Thomas Gill then asked about prepaying for carnival wristbands. Bill DeMaio responded that the Department has tried prepaid wristbands for the carnival and it has been very unsuccessful. We are finding out that carnivals and Beer and Wine Gardens are spontaneous-type events. People decide that day whether they want to go or not. Thomas Gill brought up the Board of Education's property next to Mill Pond Park. He was wondering if there has been discussion about the long-range plans of the bus garage property. He went on to say there is a need for more parking in that area. Bill DeMaio reported that there was a proposal given to the Board of Education regarding this topic.

XIII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

NONE.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

Jay Bottalico made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Richard DaSilva seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:17 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,

Melissa Miller

Melissa Miller