



TOWN OF LEDYARD

12 Van Tassel Drive
Gales Ferry, Connecticut 06339

Parks, Recreation & Senior Citizens Commission

Meeting Minutes - Final

Chairman
Kenneth J. DiRico

Special Meeting - Hybrid Format

Wednesday, January 17, 2024

7:00 PM

Parks & Recreation/Senior Citizens
Center

REMOTE MEETING INFORMATION

Topic: Parks, Rec, and Senior Commission Meeting
Time: Jan 17, 2024 07:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)
Join Zoom Meeting
[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84303993691?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84303993691?pwd=TWppWGhUcVJlaXRPNVdKdm4raVhyQT09)
pwd=TWppWGhUcVJlaXRPNVdKdm4raVhyQT09
Meeting ID: 843 0399 3691 Passcode: 013563
One tap mobile +16469313860,,84303993691#,,,,*013563# US
Dial by your location • +1 646 876 9923 US (New York)

I. CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chairman Cobb called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. at the Ledyard Senior Center.

II. ROLL CALL

Present Commissioner Jessica Cobb
Commissioner Loretta Kent
Commissioner Norma Sokolski
Commissioner Margaret Anne Harding
Commissioner Paula Crocker
Commissioner Carol Ann Schneider

Excused Chairman Kenneth J. DiRico
Commissioner Lucrezia Finegan

Absent Commissioner Charles Gallagher

MOTION to seat alternative Commission member Carol Schneider in place of Commission member Lucrezia Finnegan.

A motion was made by Commissioner Sokolski, seconded by Commissioner Finegan, that this be Approved and so declared. The motion carried by the following vote:

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED
MOVER: Norma Sokolski
SECONDER: Margaret Anne Harding

AYE 6 Cobb Kent Sokolski Harding Crocker Schneider
EXCUSED 2 DiRico Finegan
ABSENT 1 Gallagher

In addition, the following were present:

Scott Johnson, Parks, Recreation & Senior Center Director
Jessica Buhle, Town Councilor
Frank Cometa, Ledyard Resident
John Gowitzki, Ledyard Resident

III. RESIDENTS & PROPERTY OWNERS COMMENTS

Mr. Cometa, stated that there are 180 people playing pickleball and they are requesting three things from the Parks and Recreation Department.

1. Key for outside container to store nets.
2. Indoor playing time in the school gyms. Maybe even later in the day at 9:00 pm.
3. Permanent pickleball courts. He stated that the tennis courts were not used much.

Mr. Gowitzke stated that the fence on the back wall needs to be repaired. It is in need of a bottom rail, and the scratch marks and cracks should be addressed.

Mr. Johnson responded that pickleball in the gyms could not happen until at least March due to Basketball. He also stated that we have to be out of the buildings by 9:00 p.m. Space is the issue. He also stated that he has received a quote to build 2 courts in between tennis court and playscape for FY25 budget and will submit to Town Council.

Mrs. Buhle stated that adding lights to the court would enable them to play later in the day if the weather was good. She suggested automated lights which would be easier at the Community Center but would be a hard sell for capital improvements. She suggested doing fundraising for ongoing costs.

Mr. Cometa stated that he appreciated all that Parks and Recreation has done to support pickleball supplying balls, nets etc.

IV. MEMBER COMMENTS

Ms. Harding asked if we can talk about the senior exercise room.

Mr. Johnson responded that this is a special meeting and we can only discuss items on the agenda.

V. REPORTS

1. Director's Report

Mr. Johnson reported that they are still dealing with a staffing shortage.

Hired Courtney as the office assistant. Although she was not the most qualified nor had the most experience, she had stepped up when there was no staff and had done an excellent job. Mrs. Crocker echoed those words and said that she felt Courtney was doing an excellent job, pleasant and very helpful.

Matt from Colchester was given and accepted an offer for Assistant Director. He has worked with ADA programming which will be a big help to us. He will begin on February 20th as he was to finish up all things he had started at his present position

Brochure is due next week and is being worked.

There are good numbers for the programs. Things are being toned down a bit right now due to basketball. Youth leagues are bursting and it is hard to find the space needed to run the programs.

Motion to accept the Directors Report

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: Loretta Kent

SECONDER: Carol Ann Schneider

AYE 6 Cobb Kent Sokolski Harding Crocker Schneider

ABSENT 3 DiRico Gallagher Finegan

VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. MOTION to approve the Parks, Recreation & Senior Citizens Commission regular meeting minutes of October 17, 2023

Discussion

Ms. Harding stated she did not understand what the rain gardens were.

Mr. Buhle responded that the rain gardens are sponsored by the Eastern CT Conservation district and are native plants to help with things like the erosion of Highland Lake. They have been put in Erickson Park and did receive some grant money from the Ledyard Rotary Club. Three gardens have been completed and all four gardens have been mulched.

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: Norma Sokolski

SECONDER: Carol Ann Schneider

AYE 6 Cobb Kent Sokolski Harding Crocker Schneider

ABSENT 3 DiRico Gallagher Finegan

VII. OLD BUSINESS

1. Boy Scout Skate Park Project Proposal

Mr. Johnson stated that he is currently looking for direction from CIRMA, the Town's Insurance carrier. Mr. Johnson is researching possible increased cost to the Town's insurance policy for additional liability. Mr. Johnson stated that signs can be installed to "skate at your own risk" but this would not prevent an individual from filing a lawsuit.

RESULT: CONTINUE

2. Discussion regarding recreation space within subdivisions

Mr. Johnson suggested that the letter from Jessica Cobb be sent to Land Use Committee to be advocated and then sent to the Town Council for tracking.

RESULT: WITHDRAWN

3. Discuss the need for Pickleball infrastructure and how to meet the demand

Mr. Johnson stated that Pickleball would be discussed later on the agenda during the Fiscal Year 2025 budget.

RESULT: CONTINUE

4. MOTION to approve the Rules and Procedures.

This item was referred to the Administration Subcommittee for review prior to the next meeting.

RESULT: CONTINUE

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

1. MOTION to approve the Parks, Recreation & Senior Citizens Commission 2024 meeting schedule. In addition, the following subcommittees may hold special meetings as needed.

- Administration
- Facilities

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: Margaret Anne Harding

SECONDER: Carol Ann Schneider

AYE 6 Cobb Kent Sokolski Harding Crocker Schneider

ABSENT 3 DiRico Gallagher Finegan

2. MOTION to approve the Parks, Recreation & Senior Citizens Department Fiscal Year 2025.

Discussion:

Mr. Johnson stated there are plans to hire a gym monitor for the Middle School and Gales Ferry School. This would be a cost savings for the department. Parks & Rec would then only incur a three hour cleaning fee on Monday from the Board of Education for gym use.

Mr. Johnson stated that there is an over abundance of teams this year in soccer, football, baseball and the cost of field upkeep is going to increase. Mr. Johnson added that there is no charge to the Youth Leagues for use of the fields.

Ms. Crocker asked if Seniorcenterct.org is worth the money we pay for it. Ms. Crocker stated she would monitor the emails that come in and make a recommendation about the site.

Mr. Johnson stated that revenue received for programs is placed in the special revenue account. This can be challenging to track a balance as fees are always going in and out to pay instructors, overhead, and Senior Center fees. Mr. Johnson added that 20% of class fees are for overhead. Mr. Johnson stated that all fees remain in the special revenue account to cover programming and are not transferred to the Town.

Mr. Johnson stated there will be a slight increase to the cost for the MyRec software due to increase in yearly revenue fun through the system. This is due to adding the senior programming to the system.

Ms. Buhle inquired if there were any major items that Mr. Johnson would like to see in the budget that were not included. Ms. Buhle added she believes it is valuable for the taxpayers to know what items Mr. Johnson would like to see included in the budget that were not important enough for this year. Mr. Johnson responded that there are many things that we would like but there is not room in the budget this year. Mr. Johnson shared there is already \$29,000 increase to the proposed budget and there is not room to cut any of those increases.

Discussion ensued regarding what items should be in the budget vs. capitol plan.

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: Norma Sokolski

SECONDER: Carol Ann Schneider

AYE 6 Cobb Kent Sokolski Harding Crocker Schneider

ABSENT 3 DiRico Gallagher Finegan

3. MOTION to approve the Parks, Recreation & Senior Citizens Department Fiscal Year 2025 Capitol Budget.

Discussion:

Mr. Johnson stated the fill in material for playscapes is a more expensive option up front, but will save money in the long run, it will prevent maintenance from being an issue.

Mr. Johnson stated that park automation (locks for doors) will improve building security and ease of access and also reduce staff hours. For example, staff will not have to be called in to open or close bathrooms every day.

Mr. Johnson stated the Blonder's basketball court will receive maintenance to prolong the life of the court. This court also requires cleaning.

Mr. Johnson shared that the pickleball courts would be located behind the Gales Ferry Community Center. There will be some site work and tree trimming required. Mr. Johnson stated he does have some funds budgeted for tree trimming this year. These will be concrete courts. Mr. Johnson also shared that pickleball is currently the fastest growing sport in America.

Parks and Recreation has run out of storage space for the items needed to run the programs. Mr. Johnson stated he was researching Conex containers for storage. Mr. Johnson stated this would be helpful for storage especially in the summer to store and transport items for summer camp. Ms. Cobb mentioned that Mr. Johnson should consult with Planning and Zoning as she believes the regulations regarding shipping containers have changed.

Ms. Kent asked if Mr. Johnson could justify why so much is spent on football and who uses the concession stand at Judge Crandall field. Mr. Johnson responded that Parks and Recreation owns the building at Judge Crandall field and the building is falling apart and Baseball and Football use the concession stand. The concession stand is in rough shape from years of neglect. Mr. Johnson stated that the Parks & Recreation budget supports all Leagues. Mr. Johnson estimates that approximately \$200,000 is spent per year to support all leagues.

Ms. Cobb suggested working to plan more than just one year ahead and working towards a long term plan. It was suggested that an outside firm be hired to create a Parks master plan with would include that would identify the needs within the community.

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: Norma Sokolski

SECONDER: Margaret Anne Harding

AYE 6 Cobb Kent Sokolski Harding Crocker Schneider

EXCUSED 2 DiRico Finegan

ABSENT 1 Gallagher

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Crocker moved the meeting be adjourned, seconded by Ms. Schneider.

The meeting adjourned at 9:21 p.m.

VOTE: 6-0 Approved and so declared

Respectively Submitted,

Vice Chairman Cobb
Parks, Recreation & Senior Citizens Commission

DISCLAIMER: Although we try to be timely and accurate these are not official records of the Town.