

My Name is Brian Love and I live at 1 Little John CT, Gales Ferry, CT 06335

I am opposed to the Parks and Recreation and Senior Citizens Merger proposed by the Mayor and town Council as the senior citizens program is the only one that will see benefits of the merger.

Mayor Allyn cited the following benefits:

1. He stated Parks and Recreation has been operating in the building on Van Tassel Drive in Gales Ferry and working in tandem with the Senior Citizens Center providing oversight of the facility. From a budgetary perspective, the care and maintenance of the senior citizens center is not paid for by parks and rec or the senior citizens. It's in public works budget. So there is no benefit from either group on this.

2. He noted Mr. Scott Johnson, Jr. has been serving as the Director of both the Parks & Recreation and the Senior Citizens for the past few years and he stated that it may be time to combine the two Commissions. This only continues to benefit the senior citizens' budget as they get a director for free.

3. He explained Ordinance #200-009 Ordinance providing for the Transfer of Revenue from the Real Estate Conveyance Tax to the Park and Recreation Capital and Non-Recurring Expense Fund", calls for forty percent (40%) of the revenue received from conveyance tax to be deposited into the Parks and Recreation Capital and Non-Recurring Expense Fund. He stated by merging the Senior Citizens Commission with the Parks & Recreation Commission that both groups could benefit from these funds. Parks and Rec is already getting the 40 percent and has asked for \$241,732 in capital improvements so how do they gain money by absorbing the senior citizens' budget and providing them access to it? Per the town's budget for 2023, the senior center programs are allotted \$97,182. Parks and Rec is allotted \$464,467. On July 6th the state Senate appropriations committee sent a letter to Mr. Scott showing the state was making 26 million dollars in grants available to senior programs around the state. This money will only be allowed for senior programs, so our kids will not benefit from this. If we combine it will be very easy to move money from the higher budget to the lower budget especially when one organization's money comes from taxes vs grants.

Councilor Rodriguez provided the following comment to the mayor's request:

1. She stated combining the two groups would be a positive step forward for the Senior Center, noting that it would attract a higher percentage of residents to attend the Center's programs. There is no mention of how this will benefit parks and Rec and clearly, the senior citizen program is the priority in this town, even though out of a population of 15,413; 3,853 are under 18(25%) and 2,311 are over 65(15%).

That's why I urge the commission to reject the merger.

Thank you.