

Park and Recreation Commission

Minutes

(meeting taped)

Monthly meeting: Monday, March 8, 2010 in the City Hall.

There were a number of people wishing to speak during public portion. The members present, Chairman Jack Walsh, David Mikos and Andrew Cota, decided to open the meeting while awaiting another member to make a quorum. The meeting was opened at 7:10 p.m.

PUBLIC PORTION:

Arthur Gerckens of 374 Hawthorne Avenue spoke on behalf of the Derby Youth Soccer. He noted that he attended a meeting a few years ago and at that time his tone was a bit adversarial. That was not his intent. He felt coming before the board and speaking prior to the start of the season, would open the line of communication and would clear any miscommunications with the parents. Certainly, all are striving to do what is best for the benefit of the children. He indicated that he has been appointed as Communication Director for the Youth Soccer program. He stated that many of the parents wonder what is going on with Witek Park. They wondered why games were still at Bradley School. He sought an understanding of the field usage. He noted that with the lack of a Middle School program last year, that age group had no opportunity to play whereas, if the Youth Soccer was made aware of this, they could have developed something within their program. He hoped to come to some kind of understanding with regards to soccer in Derby.

Chantal Gerckens of 65 Hillcrest Avenue wanted to possibly resolve the field usage at Witek Park between the High School programs and Youth Soccer. She noted that Cheshire has been successful in marking their fields for shared use and she presented drawings to Mr. O'Connell on how this was done.

Fred Columbo of 68 Seymour, guardian of a player in Youth Soccer and Chair of the Derby Inland Wetlands Agency, stated that the original purpose was to build soccer fields at Witek Park amongst resident protest. Since the fields have been completed there are still sightings of a variety of wildlife in the area. The fields were built as there was a need for soccer playing areas for the youth of Derby but now we find out that out of towners are playing there. Youth soccer was told that they could not play at Witek Park in the fall because the fields would be marked for the High School programs, a different layout than for the younger players. Many times he has passed Witek Park in the fall and the facility has been locked and he wondered why it was not available to the youth.

Chairman Walsh noted that in the approval for the construction of the fields, a tuff management program was stipulated. To maintain the playing surface, limitations have been set on the number of games that can be played. This is something that has been set by the Board of Alderman.

Robin Smith of 159 Ida Avenue is secretary of Derby Youth Soccer and relatively new to the program. She agreed that an open line of communication is important. She noted the speed bumps along the drive and the number of signs for said bumps. She asked that signage be installed that reminded residents about cleaning up after their dogs. She indicated that it is a serious problem on and around the fields.

Jim Stadt of 38 Laurel Avenue stated that he is a Middle School coach and the reason for the cancellation of last year's season was that many of the players did not have valid physicals prior to the season starting. He understands the need to maintain the fields at Witek Park but he questioned whether anyone has gone to Bradley and seen the poor conditions of the fields as well as the limited parking. If Bradley is to be used then he asked that the field conditions be improved. He noted that the younger players

generally practice on the softball field. He wondered how much 8, 9 or 10 year olds can damage a field. He voiced concern for safety in that the Bradley field is located a great distance from the parking area and that the parking area is greatly congested, how can emergency vehicles access the area in times of emergency. Also, it is a great distance for the parents with limited mobility.

Brad Tobin of 114 Hawthorne Avenue indicated that the fields were built to address the youth soccer needs and these fields are a crown jewel. He understood that the High School would be playing games there and the youth programs would be using it to alleviate the overcrowding at Bradley School. He has driven by there many times and seen the gates locked.

Ron Slowick, 60 Chestnut Drive and President of Derby Pop Warner, thanked the Commission for their continuing support and requested that the current level of funding be maintained for the upcoming budget. He noted that New England Pop Warner has agreed to allow a Patriot Division which will encompass youth ages 11-14 with a weight class of 105 lbs or more. This is a pilot program that Derby Pop Warner will be exploring. This is a program being started in the New England region of the national program.

Arthur Gerckens raised safety and health concerns. He indicated that the dog poop is a serious problem at Witek Park. He noted that at Bradley School there is parking in the fire lanes. He also was concerned with children darting out between cars and the possibility of them being hit. He also noted that the porta-potty down at the end of the driveway is a great inconvenience. While he understands that they were located there because of vandalism when they were by the fields, this location is not a solution.

Chantal Gerckens indicated that there is a desire to hold soccer clinics and she wanted to pursue the availability of the fields. She felt that the parents desire to come up with a resolution that defined the field use.

Chairman Walsh indicated that the Parks and Recreation Department manages the scheduling of the facility uses but the ultimate authority is the Board of Alderman for all the facilities. The Commission believes that recreation is for everyone of every age in town. He wished that there were more fields and more money for maintenance. Public Works maintains the fields now and they do their best with the staff that they have on any given day. A few years ago an overall plan was drafted that spoke to the field conditions, the staffing and the manner in which to administer an effective recreational department. As of yet, the plan has not been implemented.

Meeting was called to order at 7:40 p.m.

By roll call, members present: John Walsh, Nick Serednitsky, Andrew Cota and David Mikos. Beverly Moran, Red Clynych and James Benanto were excused.

Parks and Recreation Director Dennis O'Connell and Athletic Director Joseph Orazetti were present.

Continuing the discussion, Mr. O'Connell stated that the proposed schedule was to split the youth soccer program in the fall having them use Witek Park for the older players and Bradley School for the younger ones. The older player's field layout would blend with the High School markings on the field. Having the program in two locations would lessen the parking demands at Bradley School. As Youth Soccer is the only program playing fully in two seasons, this was a suggested solution. The program would have exclusive use of Witek Park during their spring season. The Youth Soccer program chose not to split the divisions.

Chantal Gerckens noted that many families have children playing in different divisions and having them all in one locations allows for the parents to bounce between the two.

Mr. O'Connell suggested a meeting with Derby Youth Soccer, the Athletic Director, the High School coaches and himself to explore scheduling possibilities. He noted that the Cheshire drawing presented this evening details dividing a field in half rather than the four quadrants that were presented to him by Derby Youth Soccer previously. In half could be more manageable. He also questioned whether the program could spread their usage over the full week. Ms. Gerckens indicated that currently Travel is on Monday, Wednesday and Friday and Youth is Tuesday and Thursday.

Mr. O'Connell also stated that the porta-potty was moved after repeated vandalism. Having to place it in an inconvenient area is unfortunate by apparently necessary. The gates have to be locked when the facility is not in use otherwise there is vandalism to the fields.

Ken Marcucio of Chatfield Street stated it was frustrating that Derby continues to be penny-wise and pound foolish. He asked why proper facilities were not included at the time of construction.

Mr. Columbo noted that it was stipulated during the application process that no permanent structures would be allowed.

Mr. Marcucio noted that the chronic maintenance problems at the other facilities are not being addressed. The Little League Complex has been in dire need for years.

Chairman Walsh stated that the Commission is keenly aware of the unceasing problems, the study done more than a decade ago detailed the conditions. Referendums that would have provided the necessary funding were voted down repeatedly. During the Middle School construction project, Parks and Recreation Commission members approached the building committee and the question of fields was raised but nothing was done with the exception of a small space being designated for outdoor gym needs but it is insufficient for practice or game use. The football field was a gem when it was used exclusively for football but with the additional use added over the past few years, that field has certainly deteriorated. Bradley is a bit better now because the facility has less use. Most certainly there is a need to push for maintenance or overhaul of the other facilities but the cost is a serious factor.

Mr. O'Connell noted that only one men's team has permission to use Witek Park. They play on Sunday mornings and have no impact of the schedule. They practice at Bradley. He has not received a roster to determine the number of Derby residents but this is a team that has been playing for more than a decade. He indicated that if there is any other adult team playing at Witek Park they have not received authorization to do so.

Chairman Walsh reiterated that the Parks and Recreation Department consists of the part-time director and the continuing success is greatly dependent on the volunteers. He expressed appreciation to everyone for their interest and tireless efforts. He also indicated that the Commission and the Board of Education try to work together to serve the needs of the recreation and athletic programs of the City. The Board of Apportionment and Taxation has to try to balance all the needs in the City and they have been fair to the Parks and Recreation Department. There have been many accomplishments such as the soccer fields at Witek Park and the Greenway.

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA:

Without objection the agenda was accepted, as written.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A motion was made Andrew Cota by and second by Nick Serednitsky. Move to accept the minutes of February 8, 2010, with the clarification that under "Other Business" where it states there is insufficient funding in place it should state that there is partial funding in place for the Greenway.. Motion carried unanimously.

CORRESPONDENCES:

Apraxia Resource Center of CT requests use of the Derby High School track field on Sunday, May 23, 2010 for a walkathon (see attached letter dated February 11, 2010). Mr. O'Connell indicated that there does not appear to be any conflict in scheduling. This would likely need Board of Alderman approval. Mr. O'Connell recommended approval of this request.

Motion was made by David Mikos and second by Andrew Cota. Move to approve the recommendation to approve the request made by Apraxia Resource Center of CT for use of the Ryan Field Complex track on May 23, 2010 for their scheduled walkathon. Motion carried unanimously.

NEW or OTHER BUSINESS:

A.) O'Sullivan Island: Without objection, the matter was tabled.

D.) Booster Club request: Without objection, the matter was tabled.

C.) Little League: Kenneth Marcucio, representing the Little League Program was present to answer any questions. He stated that registration is at about 120 participants, mostly younger ages. The League will be playing with Ansonia, Beacon Falls and possibly Shelton. Numbers are down and it was noted that the participation numbers for all the different programs seems to be down. The registration fees were set and there have been no complaints received. The League works with the families and no one is turned away. Payment plans can be set up. The players are able to sell coupon books that offer special deals with local businesses. Their sales can offset the registration fees. They presented their budget for the year (attached). Mr. Marcucio indicated that water supply to the Little League facility has been a problem for years. With the construction of the Middle School, a new water main was installed in the driveway and Mr. Marcucio stated that a connection "T" was installed so that a connection can be made in the future.

Chairman Walsh reiterated that the volunteers are invaluable to the support of the program and he thanked them for their service.

B.) 2010-2011 Budget: The 2010-2011 budget was presented. A modest increase is being requested. The line item for recreation 14 thru 18 was previously set for girl's softball 14-18. The request this year is to expand the offerings to that age group. With the increase, possibly three teams could be supported. Mr. Serednitsky's programs have been quite successful.

Mr. O'Connell will be speaking with Shelton about the skate park. Most of the funding will go for the wages for an attendant. The lease with the State is nearly over, they do stipulate that the park must be supervised.

Equipment maintenance and building and field supplies line items were raised to the level that was received in previous years.

The girl's softball program will be pursued again this year. Last year, there was little interest. Shelton does have a program that would welcome players from Derby, if there is an interest. Mr. O'Connell will pursue advertising this program to garner support. The line item is currently funded for \$2,500. This amount could be reduced but Mr. O'Connell was hesitant to remove it completely because interest may redevelop. Members were agreeable to reducing the line item to \$100.

Regarding the wage line items, it was noted that no increases were received for the last two years. The request averages to approximately 3.5% and there has been a small increase in the number of hours for the maintenance wages.

		2010-2011 Budget		2009-2010 ACTUAL		Change s	%
Dept 5100 - Parks & Recreation							
110-0110-0000	Parks Director Wages	15,600		15,000		600	4%
110-0111-0000	Supervisors	64,325		62,727		1,598	3%
110-0112-0000	Attendants	17,940		17,572		368	2%
110-0114-0000	Lifeguards	12,977		12,689		288	2%
110-0115-0000	Bldg Maintenance wages	16,856		15,337		1,519	10%
			127,698		123,325	4,373	4%
140-0141-0000	Playground Wages	7,478		7,320		158	2%
230-0231-0000	Yankeegas	5,500		5,000		500	10%
230-0232-0000	Water Co.	5,800		5,800		0	0%
230-0233-0000	Light Pole Ryan Field	1,500		1,500		0	0%
			20,278		19,620	658	3%
270-0278-0000	Witek Park Maintenance	15,000		15,000		0	0%
			15,000		15,000	0	0%
330-0330-0000	Equip. Maintenance	27,000		25,000		2,000	8%
330-0331-0000	Bldg & Field Supplies	22,000		21,000		1,000	5%
330-0332-0000	Office Supplies	3,000		3,000		0	0%
330-0333-0000	Recreation Equip.	5,000		5,000		0	0%
330-0348-0000	Technology (computer)	250		250		0	0%
			57,250		54,250	3,000	6%
390-0001-0000	Derby Colt Baseball	3,300		3,300		0	0%
390-0007-0000	Girls Softball	100		2,500		-2,400	-96%
390-0009-0000	Soccer	5,000		5,000		0	0%
390-0010-0000	Little League	8,000		8,000		0	0%
390-0011-0000	Pop Warner	10,000		10,000		0	0%
390-0012-0000	Wrestling	1,000		1,000		0	0%
390-0013-0000	Playground Supplies	1,500		1,300		200	15%
390-0016-0000	Girls Softball 14-18	1,800		1,000		800	80%
			30,700		32,100	-1,400	-4%
480-0484-0000	Youth Basketball	9,000		9,000		0	0%
480-0488-0000	Skate Park	2,500		2,500		0	0%
			11,500		11,500	0	0%
	Dept. Total	262,426				6,631	3%

				255,795			
	Ryan Field Capital	10,000		10,000			
	Grand Total	272,426		265,795			2%

Members next reviewed the Capital projects. The Little League roof is the most urgent.

Mr. O'Connell noted that he is still pursuing the Lowe's grant request. The application is seeking a lighted landscaped path from the upper area by the school to the field, this was lost with the construction of the Middle School. Also, new visitor bleachers at the football field were included in this request.

Dept 3700 - Capital Projects			
3700-340-0342	Ryan Field Lighting	\$30,000	Replace existing lights& ballast, install back reflectors, wiring upgrades
	Ryan Field Visitor Bleachers	\$75,000	New installation
	Field Groomer	\$11,000	Replace existing machine due to age
3700-430-0438	Ryan Field Bleachers	\$62,000	Finish section to complete the overall project
	Pop Warner Lights	\$7,500	Install lighting fixtures at Picnic Grove
	Bradley Tennis Courts	TBD	Repair or remove existing courts
	Universal workout machine	TBD	Replace existing machine due to age
	Little League field house roof	\$5,500	Replace roof - HIGH PRIORITY- roof leaking
	TOTAL	\$201,000	

Mr. Marcucio mentioned that the bleachers at the Little League field are also in need of replacement. He was asked to seek estimates on the cost of replacement.

Motion was made by David Mikos ask Nick Serednitsky. Move to approve the budget recommendation for the 2010-2011 Parks & Recreation Budget, as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

DIRECTOR REPORTS:

Parks & Recreation Director's Report: Mr. O'Connell reported that he was disappointed that the Girls softball program was not rejuvenated. He indicated that the Youth Basketball program went very well. As noted previously, the Little League registration numbers are down. He had no numbers from the other programs.

High School Athletic Director's Report: Mr. Orazetti noted the installation of a new baseball scoreboard. The scoreboard was donated to the school from the Derby Police Union.

The spring season will start on March 22nd. There will be Middle School baseball and softball as the funding was restored.

Motion was made by David Mikos and second by Nick Serednitsky. Move that the meeting adjourn at 9:05 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully prepared,
 Karen Kemmesies, secretary
These minutes are subject to the Commission's approval at their next scheduled meeting.