

TOWN OF NORTH BRANFORD

Town Hall, 909 FOXON ROAD, NORTH BRANFORD, CONECTICUT 06471-1290

*Parks and Recreation Commission
STW Community Center
1332 Middletown Avenue, Northford, Ct. 06472*

Tuesday, August 30, 2016 - 6 P.M.

Special Meeting

Minutes

Attending: Brian Lynch, Steven Torino, Michelle Provencher and Victor Palma.

Absent: Karen Ablondi

Also Present: Lauren Munro, Director; John Onofrio and Brent Aiken, NBLL; Dan Armin, George Miller and Rose Angeloni, Town Council members; Jason Heffernan and Jake Hawley, Dog Park; Roseanne Krajewski, Potato Festival Coordinator and a large contingent of concerned parents representing Totoket Field Girls Softball League.

Brian Lynch called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

3. Recognition -

a. Eagle Scout - Chris Candelora was not present at the meeting.

b. Potato Festival t-shirt design - Two t-shirts were designed for sale at the 2016 Potato Festival, one being the traditional one designed by Stephanie Czarkowski, who was presented with a gift at this meeting and the other was a Commemorative t-shirt celebrating the 15th Annual Festival, designed by Amanda D'Angelo, who was not present at the meeting but her gift will be mailed to her.:

4. Approval of Minutes: The Minutes of June 28, 2016 were corrected to clarify that the proposed handicap/wheelchair accessible area is located at Mill Road Field; the proposed rules for use of the Dog Park were looked at by Town Attorney and the Town Manager was advised to seek advice from the directors of the Cosgrove Animal Shelter. Also in reference to the windshields on the new tennis courts, it was the Athletic Director who approached Lauren concerning them. After corrections the June Minutes were approved on the motion by Michelle Provencher, second by Steve Torino.

The Minutes of July 26, 2016 were likewise corrected to show that there were only 2 inside spaces unfilled just prior to the Po-Co Festival. Also, it is John Onofrio who represents the NBLL, and attends the meetings and the field that was to be put off line was Northford Park. The Eagle Scout project proposed by Nicholas Ash was at the Mill Road Field location, not Memorial. Once corrected, they were then approved on the motion of Victor Palma, seconded by Michelle Provencher and were approved.

5. *Parks and Fields - Discussion and Action*

a. *Eagle Scout dog park kiosk - Jake Hawley is offering to build a kiosk for the Dog Park as part of his Community Service obligation in order to advance to Eagle Scout standing and came before the Commission for approval of his plan. He presented his plan and said that he would probably be finished with the project in September or October. He would hopefully find help with the finances through donations from local businesses, Dillon Roofing and National Lumber in North Haven. Brian mentioned that National Lumber had been hit several times for donations for prior Scout projects and suggested that he go to Branford Building because they, too, had helped with such projects in the past. Jake had hoped that Parks and Rec might be willing to help with funding which would be approximated at between \$600 and \$700, however was told that the Dog Park Committee and the Town Council held the purse strings on the Dog Park and P & R could only approve the concept and give permission to proceed to Town Council with the plan. Once the project is more defined P & R should be shown the plans again. Brian Lynch recommended that Plexiglas not be used since it had been used in prior projects and found unsuitable due to weather conditions and was subject to vandalism. He recommended Lexicom be used instead.*

As reported above the Commission can only approve the concept, it is up to the Town Council and Dog Park Committee for funding. As for color, it would probably be the venue of the Building Department and for signage, it should go with the colors and design used in the other parks. On the motion by Steve Torino, second by Victor Palma to go forward with the proposed design, the Commission was in agreement.

b. *Dog Park - There were donations received from Beniful Dog Food and the Rotary Club of \$2,000 each bringing their donation total to \$14,000. Lauren will set up a meeting with Fran Merola who is on vacation so they can move forward on it.*

c. *Memorial/Coulter Field - Fran Merola has gone forward with the two projects combined and he and Lauren went over finances with the Town Manager and the left over money from the Tennis Courts, he said could be applied. She will email the figures to the Commission shortly. The motion was made by Victor Palma, seconded by Steve Torino, that any monies remaining from the grant should be used for additional of Memorial and Coulter Field projects.*

d. *Mill Road Field - All drainage issues have been addressed and top soil will complete the project. Cost figures may exceed the allotted \$10,000 and will reported back to the Commission after talking with Fran Merola.*

e. *Totoket Valley Park - Football has been using the field because the Football field has not yet been seeded. This should be a one-time use for this year alone.*

John Onofrio addressed the concerns of NBLL that Little League has been displaced by football and the field was ripped up Lauren assured him Fran is aware of it and will take care of it. He also said that Northford Park is unsuitable as a secondary field. He brought up that the Girls Softball League has also been deprived of their field and there was a contingent of upset parents present to address their concerns. The concerns of the boys baseball, however was the main purpose of his being there. He expressed that they had lost two fields with lights and wondered if football couldn't be

moved and temporary lights brought in. He said that a storage unit had been dropped in the infield when it should have been placed in the parking area and recommended that the soccer field be utilized. Brian explained that because football required lighting, neighbors would certainly complain and that when the field exchanges were first proposed everyone seemed satisfied since it was a temporary arrangement. Lauren expressed disappointment in what she had thought Football would be storing for equipment on the field. They had been granted use of the outfield field said that football should use equipment that was corrupting the infield on the practice field and move up to the lighted area for actual practice.

These were the concerns of the Totoket Girls Softball League as well. They felt that not only were they displaced, but also that there was some unequal balance giving boys football priority over girls softball. Brian explained that this was not so, that the proposed field changes were due to many things that had been discussed at previous meetings and the Commission understood that everyone was willing to make concessions to make all the fields better for future use by every sport. The plan was to get football off the baseball and soft ball fields and have all the fields improved giving football it's own field. It was never the intention of the Commission to favor the boys football over the girls softball. The problems cropped up because it was not expected when assigning football use of Memorial field that football would take advantage of it and that hereafter football would be required to use the rear practice field to store equipment keeping it off the infield and the storage unit would be moved elsewhere so that the infield not be damaged further. The intention is to create another softball field. Funding has been put in place to upgrade Memorial and Coulter fields, and the girls Field Hockey field that has gotten pretty beat up. It had been discussed that football would be in the outfield at Totoket Valley. He reiterated that there was never a concept of boys over girls. It was due to restricted funding that switching fields became the only option and it needed to be remembered that the fields belonged to the Town and although volunteers were appreciated and encouraged, the needs of the Town to improve all the fields was important. Improvements had been made to Northford Park, but he agreed it was not a good option. He promised that Totoket would be repaired and be in better shape when finished and the girls would get two good fields out of it. He asked what schedule the girls required and was told that Girls softball could have use of the field on Friday night, and have use of the field at 12 noon Saturday and Sunday. It is uncertain if there will be an adult women's league and their needs will be addressed if that plan matures. Brian assured all that their concerns would be addressed and problems would be remedied as soon as possible.

6. Potato and Corn Festival - Discussion and Action

a. Updates - Rosanne reported that Friday night was well attended and, in spite of intermittent rain on Saturday, it was not too disappointing and Sunday was NB Community Day which was outstanding. There were more than 300 North Branford residents cars that took advantage of the free parking that day. The deal between the Festival Committee and Fire Company 1 was found to be in Company 1's favor, since the initial plan was 15 % which would have been about \$4,000 and the flat rate agreed upon and paid out was \$5,000, but she felt that it was still well worth it since there seemed, at the time, to be a lack of enough volunteers to do it and Company 1 had the opportunity to train their Cadets as well as provide man power setting up signs, directing traffic, etc, so she thought it was fair to say it all balanced out in the long run.. Also, Commission members felt it was a win-win

situation inasmuch as it was going to a Town entity therefore keeping it within the Town while training young people who then might become volunteers in the future. Rosanne thanked Rose Angeloni for suggesting ways of gathering more volunteers to work the Festival, but prior to that there was thought to be a shortage and they wouldn't have been able to handle it. It was at the last minute that many sports groups and organizations stepped up to fill out the need and especially because they worked together in good humor and general efficiency, the area was kept clean and ready for the next day. Those responding to her call for help included SARAH, Inc. of North Haven, students from ACES of North Haven, North Branford High School Basketball, Football and Field Hockey and they were all greatly appreciated.

Steve Torino brought up the issue of designated drivers and of golf carts being used for other purposes than delivering supplies and volunteers from place to place in case there was a liability issue due to accident or injury while transporting the public to/from the parking area or helping vendors deliver their goods to/from their appointed sites and/or cars. Roseanne said she would look into insurance concerning that, but it was never the plan to do such things since the Shuttle Bus brings people into the front gate and a small bus does deliver those wishing a ride from the parking area to the gate.

Steve also recommended that the Park and Rec Department take a table with either someone to explain planned programs or a video showcasing their services and programs to make more people aware of what is being offered.

b. Alcohol for sponsor party/Economic Development gathering - A request was made that a moderate amount of alcohol be allowed at this party and Rose Angeloni explained that the prohibition of alcohol on Town property is by Charter, however a Special Permit can be requested and might be approved. Steve made the motion to make such a request to the Town Council for a Special Permit, second by Michelle Provencher with the Commission in agreement.

c. Festival Position for 2016-2017 - Because the Festival has grown so popular and will most likely remain so, the Commission has recommended that the position of Festival Coordinator be retained on the motion by Steve Torino, second by Victor Palma and carried.

d. Reappointment - Rosanne was commended for her hard work in pulling off another successful and well received Festival and it was recommended that she retain that position if she so wishes. While they felt she was underpaid for the position, it is not in their control to increase her pay but would recommend to Town Council that it be considered. Victor Palma made the motion, seconded by Michelle Provencher and carried. As for recommending further compensation, Brian commented that he would make himself available to advocate additional compensation for her.

e. Preliminary accounting to Town Council - This year's numbers have already been figured to date with a few still not accounted for due to billing, and will be available for the Town Council.

7. Town Sports Organizations - Discussion and Action

a. *Soccer Updates - They have been working on the sheds as was discussed at a prior meeting and Public works is looking to place them with the doors facing Rt. 17.*

b. *Little League - (Already addressed above.)*

8. *New Property Projects - Lauren has spoken on the subject of the playground. She has some of the money already earmarked for the project having \$135,000 set aside for the first phase and she will be bring plans before the Commission monthly when set. Rose Angeloni questioned if she was sure all those funds were available and Brian assured her that Lauren had gone over the figures earlier this month and asked that Lauren double check them to be sure.*

9. *Parks and Recreation Commissions Role – The Town Charter was given out to be looked at concerning the role and objectives of the Commission and comments accepted. Brian questioned Rose Angeloni as to what the Town Council perceives the Commission's roll to be and agreed that it was his understanding also that it be policy, field usage and control of a discretionary fund with a minimal amount of money. Steve Torino addressed concerns about who sets the cost of running programs, the Town Council or Parks and Rec. Brian confirmed that Lauren and her staff did the pricing because they had a handle on the cost of running the various programs and knew what the participants might be willing to pay and set the fees accordingly. Lauren keeps in touch with the various sports organizations setting schedules for fields, lights, etc. Brian said the Commission should not try to micromanage Lauren and Pat in their duties. There was a period when the Commission was short 2 members and quorums could not be met so a number of meetings had to be cancelled, however those days have passed and now that they have full membership with regular meetings on schedule and members from Town Council being present so that they are aware of what plans are made, things have improved.*

10. *Program Review - Now that Kidz Kamp is over, they have learned from experience and trial and error what works and what doesn't, so next year's Kamp should be an improvement. They are moving ahead with fall projects and working on a new brochure at present. It should be ready shortly.*

11. *STW Community Center - Steve Torino addressed the possibility of utilizing the unused tennis courts at the Community Center for roller hockey and other sports that would require some changes, but would ultimately expand the use of the area which could also provide additional income for Parks and Rec and pay for those upgrades and maintenance. It has been considered in the past, however the requirements to bring it up to expectations are expensive and would need constant repeating due to the rock content in the area surrounding the Community Center. Victor felt it would be unfair to take business from a local merchant. Brian recommended that more thought be given to it once costs are sought and weighed.*

12. *Senior Center – The senior booth set up at the Potato and Corn Festival was very impressive and well received. It was recommended that perhaps a video of programs in effect might be considered for next year and a list of programs be given out to visitors for the Recreation and Senior Center.*

Lauren read their revised Mission Statement for the Commission updating and describing the program and with the Commission's approval, advised that it will be printed in the new brochure going out for Fall.

13. *Public Comment - None*

14. *Adjournment - Motion to adjourn by Michelle Provencher at 8:20 p.m.*

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Leigh Bianchi, Clerk