

Parks and Recreation Commission
North Branford Community Center
7:30 pm
Monday, December 29, 2008

Special Meeting

Minutes

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 7:45 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Present: Dr. Brian Lynch, Victor Palma, Marie Diamond and Anthony Perrelli

Absent: Randy Joiner

Others Present: Director of Parks and Recreation Pam Gery and
Council Liaison Joanne Wentworth.

3. Approval of Minutes

On a motion by Victor Palma, seconded by Marie Diamond, the Minutes of October 20th were approved with the following correction that of the funds for the replacement of the furnace at the Senior Center \$500 came out of the Senior Center Budget and \$12,000 came from the Capital Fund that was supposed to be going for bleachers. Under other business, in reference to the Potato Festival meeting held that night, it should be clarified that it was the *first* Festival meeting. All Festival meetings are held *prior* to the Regular meeting, in other words the same night.

4. Town Sports Organizations

Nothing to report.

5. Parks and Fields

The fields have been closed down, lights off etc. for the season. More will be discussed under Budget Review.

6. Program Review:

Currently in the midst of the winter season and organizing the plans for the spring/summer brochure set to go out in March. Membership has been doing very well. Fees were discounted last year in hopes to increase membership, however that didn't prove to do so, so fees have gone back up to what they originally were. They have never gone up, just back to the regular amounts that help subsidize the operating costs in order to support this unique facility and make the hours available. Current membership stands at 390 and it's hoped to top 400 in the next year. The high was a few years ago at 550. Everything is really healthy.

7. Monthly update of new property projects

Nothing much under new projects other than the moving of Wall Field. Since meeting with engineers, public works and Town Planner timelines need to be established, and money needs to be put into Capital Improvements. It was discussed last year, however most were cut and it brings up the topic of Budget Review.

8. Budget Review and Discussion

The Capital money must be set aside. It will be needed first to get the site work done, getting the field in place and playable. Public Works has already begun this first phase, clearing and getting a parking area laid out, but it must be remembered that the property has expanded since it was first purchased and there is more area now. A timeline can't be set because it depends on the State. It would be safe to say that by 2011 there needs to be a hundred thousand set aside to mirror what is being replaced, whether it be the parking or the concession stands (which would raise a lot of funds for the Town). Numbers need to be done by January 19th to present to Town Council, but Public Works would have those numbers. Funds for irrigation and lighting last year were kicked out of the budget so they aren't there, but they have to be set aside and need to be earmarked for the future when they will be needed. Field Development should be one of the number one priorities with irrigation immediately after that. Perhaps asking for 50-50-50.

The irrigation system has to be installed to support the seeding/sodding of the fields in order to make them ready for play by 2011. That takes time, so 2010 is realistic. Since it feeds off well water and Pam will look into whether there is still money in the budget because they never put the well in at the Northford field due to the cost of irrigation at that site. The Committee will defer to Public Works to estimate the costs for such things as drainage, storm drains, etc. Money has already been set aside for irrigating the Mill Road site. Bleachers will also have to go back into the budget, as well as repairing the courts at Northford Park where there are cracks in the pavement and at Stanley T. where rocks are coming up through the asphalt. The courts are a safety risk and should either be repaired or locked out. It was discussed as to whether it shouldn't be included in the school budget since the schools are the ones using the facilities located on their grounds. Pam will try to meet with the new school superintendent to discuss the matter. The estimated cost two years ago was \$25,000 and could possibly be more now.

Pam reported three accounts that have made money for the Town. The first is the Program Revenue account that was made in 2001 that took all the summer camp expenses, some \$15,000 to \$20,000 out of the Town Budget and put it into a revolving account that made revenue. Funding for every single program in Town, the Festival, the summer camp, etc. goes through this account and nothing is asked from the Town Budget for program expenses. On the other hand, there are \$41,000 of building maintenance expenses such including oil, electric, water, cleaning, repair, etc. that should be the responsibility of the Town since these are Town facilities; their buildings. When the furnace blew, money had to be transferred from the bleacher account to cover it. The Town should have covered the cost of the new furnace out of their Contingency Fund, however it was an emergency and the Town Council was not meeting on time. The Community Center operates at a deficit that grows year after year because it is not included in the Town Budget.

There is an account for meals; food costs that the Town has never had to pay for. The building consistently costs between thirty six thousand and forty two thousand dollars a year. Operating costs from thirty one thousand to forty one thousand.

Another area discussed was Fitness Center equipment replacement that needs to be part of the funding plan. The center has made over three hundred thousand dollars in revenue in five years. While some equipment has needed repair, none has been replaced or upgraded. The air conditioning repair was submitted and it did go through for next spring, since it is necessary in order for the fitness and program rooms to earn money.

It was recommended to put operating expenses as line items in the new budget request instead of lumping them all under Contractual, as that currently includes expenses for the Community Center. Every other building such as the Town Hall, the Senior Center, etc. has a line item for utilities, yet the Fitness Center, which has covered its own expenses such as additional staff, repairs to equipment and such, is expected to pay expenses above sustaining itself. It shouldn't be the left the only Town facility required to cover its own hardcore expenses.

Pam is hoping to start a program to train teenagers as babysitters and those who complete the program could use the Center for referrals. They could earn credits by helping to staff the babysitting room, a benefit offered to parents utilizing the Fitness room. This would benefit the Center by cutting costs for providing this service.

The final account was one that was meant to sustain the Senior Center meals and other programs and has done so for many years until the wages for personal was switched into that budget. It can't afford this expense and within a very short time will run into a deficit.

Pam announced that the Potato Festival is progressing beautifully. Sue Calamita and Chris Brown have taken on the Sponsorship Program and have already gotten new interest. Thirteen thousand people passed through the gates this year and within a few years should no longer a Parks and Rec program, but a Town event. Sponsorship applications should go out in the next few weeks with a special incentive being a special sponsorship party provided by all restaurants in the area; attendance by tickets awarded to sponsors depending on the degree of sponsorship.

9. Community Center

The attached calendar of meetings for 2009 was presented and accepted unanimously on a motion by Brian Lynch.

10. Other Business

None.

11. Planning for Next Meeting Agenda

Next meeting will be January 26, 2009 at 7:30 pm. The Festival meetings will be held the same Monday night at 6 pm.

12. Adjournment

On a motion by Brian Lynch, seconded by Marie Diamond, the meeting was adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Leigh Bianchi
Clerk

Cc: Town Clerk, Members, Town Manager, Director Pamela Gery and Town Council Liaison Joanne Wentworth.