

TOWN OF NORTH BRANFORD

1599 FOXON ROAD, P.O. BOX 287, NORTH BRANFORD, CONNECTICUT 06471

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

STW Community Center

September 15, 2014

Minutes

Present: Brian Lynch, Victor Palma, Steve Torino, Karen Ablondi, Michelle Provencher

Also Attending: Recreation Supervisor Lauren Munro; Rosanne Krajewski, Festival Coordinator; Rose Angeloni, Town Council Liaison; Joe Mascari, North Branford Little League; Michael Rice, Athletic Director for North Branford Youth Football and Cheer; Jim Krupp, North Branford Youth Football and Cheer

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Brian Lynch at 7:35 p.m.

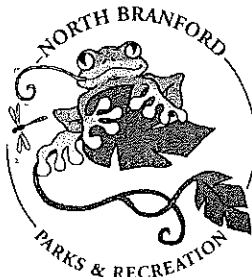
Minutes:

Victor Palma moved, seconded by Karen Ablondi, to approve the minutes of the meeting of July 21, 2014. The motion carried 4 in favor with 1 abstention (Michelle Provencher).

Town Sports Organizations:

Parks and Fields:

Joe Mascari, President of North Branford Little League, was present to discuss with the Commission the future needs of the organization. He indicated that they currently have 450 participants in the program and that there are new field dimensions being implemented by Little League for a 50/70 field. Joe stated that there were no Babe Ruth leagues this year due to the lack of fields and the need for the 50/70 field. He felt that this type of field could be multi-purpose and could be used for softball games and by other sports teams. Joe noted that the concession stand built at the new Wall Field was outfitted to service two fields and felt that one of the fields could be an all purpose field which would accommodate the 50/70 field being required by Little League.



Rose Angeloni pointed out that there has been nothing on the Town Council Agenda regarding this.

Chairman Brian Lynch noted that the procedure would be for the Recreation Commission to review the league's request and then make a recommendation to the Town Council. He suggested that Little League coordinate with Fran Merola, Public Works Director, for a "guess"timate on what the Swajchuk property can support and the potential cost to build another field there.

There was also discussion on the code for the lights at Wall Field. Currently only the Public Works Director and the Recreation Director have the code to turn the lights on. Brian Lynch indicated that the Recreation Director has confirmed that the President of Little League will be given the code to turn the lights on but Brian cautioned that this code could **not** be given out to anyone else.

Rose Angeloni questioned the status of the clay at Wall Field and having that fixed. Joe Mascari noted that the clay has not been right from the beginning as it gets hard and cracks, and there is a concern with players getting hurt. Brian noted that they would need to come up with a figure to replace this clay. As there is currently no money in the budget, it might be something that the Little League Board could cover the cost of.

Michael Rice, Athletic Director, and Jim Krupp, from North Branford Youth Football and Cheer, presented a Memorandum to the Park and Recreation Commission (Attachment 1).

Jim Krupp reviewed the Memo which spoke on issues with the lights and circuit breakers as well as the field conditions at Memorial Field. He went on to speak about the issues they are experiencing at Totoket Valley Park which is not handicapped accessible. He confirmed that the new bleachers have been installed but due to the increase in the number of kids on a team, the number of cheerleaders and the increase in spectators, safety concerns have become an issue. He pointed that this field is a shared use field with Little League. Games are played on Sundays at 11, 1 and 3. Jim indicated that there currently are not enough portable toilets for the number of people in attendance at these games. He stated that there are currently five youth football teams, down from six teams last year. The Youth Football Organization has combined with the cheerleaders, and he reviewed the cheerleader numbers including 40 cheerleaders in just the 6th grade. Jim pointed out that there are no dedicated fields for youth football's use and the current fields are inadequate and unsafe. He spoke on the potential liability to the Town due to the inaccessibility for wheelchairs, the lack of space for the cheerleaders, and the limited access for the ambulance.

Brian Lynch spoke on the use of Totoket Valley Park and the previous use by Youth Football of the high school field. He stated that the field at Totoket Valley Park was never designed to accommodate a football field. He noted, however, that funding remains an issue.

There was some discussion on the use of the Mill Road field by the football team as well as the lacrosse team. It was noted that there is very limited parking there and no lights.

Victor Palma suggested looking into grants, such a LoCIP or STEAP, which would allow the Town to move forward with some of these projects.

There was considerable discussion on the issue of ambulance access, handicap access and portable toilets at Totoket Valley Park.

Rose Angeloni suggested that the Potato Festival parking area be utilized on Sundays for football games.

Brian Lynch stated that requests are sent each year prior to the budget season to all sports leagues requesting information on their upcoming needs. Rose Angeloni also addressed the budget process and pointed out that, to her knowledge, there have been no capital requests from Parks and Recreation over the last five years. She spoke on the need to bring these items to the Town Council. Brian responded that items are put in the capital budget but are cut before the Town Council even sees them as the Town Manager has been instructed to bring in zero increase budgets with no capital requests. Rose suggested that Recreation Commission members attend the budget workshops with the Recreation Director.

There was discussion on the need for the Recreation Commission to come up with a five year strategic plan for the town's fields and community center.

There was considerable discussion with all present regarding the fields. Brian Lynch suggested that Youth Football relook at the use of the high school football field. It was confirmed that Ben Powell, the President of Youth Football, has been in contact with the high school athletic director to potentially use the high school field, even if it is just for a few games.

The Commission discussed the possibility of Youth Football using the Mill Road field for football practice. Karen Ablondi also suggested looking at turf for the high school field and then everyone who needed to could use that field.

Brian Lynch reviewed the process that youth organizations should be following when they have an issue or needs. They should first go to Pamela Gery, the Recreation Director, who will then bring the information to the Recreation Commission. Brian indicated that sometimes input from the Public Works Director Fran Merola is required as well. He indicated that he will contact Pam tomorrow to review the discussions from this evening's meeting.

There was also discussion on the field at TVES, which still comes under the Board of Education and not the Parks and Recreation Department.

Upon questioning, Brian reviewed the three phases for the Swajchuk property. The first phase was Wall Field and there are two more phases planned for which there is currently no financing. These phases would include a multi-use field, a practice field and potentially a dog park.

Program Review:

Rosanne Krajewski, Festival Coordinator, reported on the Potato Festival. She discussed the need for the Recreation Commission to come back on task as the group who addresses the issues and concerns involving this event as the Commission had done in the past. She felt that she would report any issues, concerns or needs to the Recreation Director who would then bring this to the Recreation Commission. If further action was needed, then the Commission would bring this to the Town Council.

Rosanne is also requesting a liaison from the Recreation Commission to the Festival Committee. The Festival Committee normally meets on the same night as the Recreation Commission at 6 p.m. She was also looking for additional members for the Festival Committee and indicated that the next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for Monday, September 22 at 6 p.m. at the STW Community Center.

Rosanne reported on the success of the 2014 Potato Festival and indicated that figures change daily as invoices and credits continue to come in. She confirmed that they will again come out in the black but at this time she had no firm figures.

Outstanding issues for the 2015 Potato Festival remain the need to purchase a cooker. Rosanne reviewed how each year the Festival rents the cooker from Good To Go. This year the out of pocket cost of the cooker was \$1,053.

Another issue is the number of days that the festival will be held. In 2013 the festival went to a four day format. A survey has been sent to the food vendors and those responses are still forthcoming. Rosanne is also working on a comparison of the expenses and revenues for the fourth day. She confirmed that the Festival Committee would like to return to a three-day event. The festival is advertised as the first full weekend in August so for 2015 that would be August 7, 8, and 9.

Recreation Supervisor Lauren Munro reported that the Senior Center will resurrect the Holiday Fair, which will be held in December this year, not in November as it had been in the past. She indicated that this is a large fundraiser for the Senior Center.

Lauren stated that the Fall/Winter Brochure will be in the mail by the end of this week.

Lauren reported on another successful year for Kidz Kamp which was held at the STW Community Center and Jerome Harrison School. She addressed the challenges with Kidz Kamp at the STW Community Center being in with the Board of Education, the Recreation Department, and the Senior Center. She also spoke on the issues with the Fire Marshal's Office regarding the check in table which was set up in the entranceway.

With respect to the gymnastics program and the equipment, which is currently at 1599 Foxon Road, Lauren questioned the Commission as to whether this program could be moved back to the 1675 Foxon Road location. She noted that all of this equipment has been donated. The program services children from 3 years old to 12 years old. Brian indicated that this issue should be brought to the Town Council as the Town Council must agree to the building's use.

Rose Angeloni questioned how long the program runs, how many children are enrolled in the program and what the revenues and expenses are. There was a brief discussion between the Commission and Rose regarding the use of the building at 1675 Foxon Road.

New Property Projects:

No report.

Budget Review:

No report.

STW Community Center:

Lauren Munro reported that the parking lot at the STW Community Center has been repaved and the lining is now in. Lights have been ordered and will be installed in the next few weeks. They are still experiencing issues with the toilet in the handicap bathroom. Fran Merola, Public Works Director, has indicated that if the toilet continues to clog that they will have to replace the toilet.

Senior Center:

Lauren indicated that now that the Senior Center and Recreation Department are in the same building, the Senior Center activities will be reported on under Program Review.

Rose Angeloni advised Lauren that the Board of Education summer camp which is usually held at TVES will be held at Jerome Harrison School next summer due to roof work being done at TVES.

Joe Mascari questioned the dog park and how and when the decision on its location will be made. Brian indicated that this will be on the next Commission meeting in October. He stated that the Commission would recommend a location for the dog park and then it would be sent to the Town Council for approval.

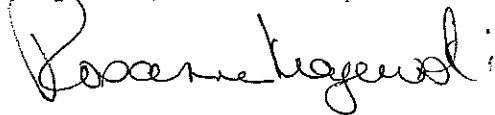
Steve Torino questioned the issue with the Fire Marshal being called to the STW Community Center for Kidz Kamp. Lauren Munro discussed the issue with the check in table being located in the entranceway. These issues were resolved.

There was also discussion regarding the issue of parking at the Community Center now that the parking lot has been paved and striped. It was noted that the Board of Education will be taking 10 to 11 parking spaces adjacent to the field area to the left of the building with an additional 6 to 7 spaces at the front of the building. These are to be painted with "BOE" in each space. On Election Days, the Board of Education staff would park at the Fire Department as had been done in the past. There was considerable discussion on the issue of the Board of Education taking parking spaces at the entrance to the Community Center. Brian advised that he had written a letter to the Board of Education regarding this issue but had not heard anything back. The Recreation Commission felt that the Board of Education employees should be parking at the end of the parking lot in order to give taxpayers and customers easy access to the building. Rose Angeloni stated that she will contact the Town Manager to discuss this prior to having them start labeling the parking spaces.

Adjournment:

On a motion by Victor Palma, seconded by Karen Ablondi, the meeting was adjourned at 9:25 p.m. Next meeting will be 7:30 p.m. October 20, 2014 at the STW Community Center.

Respectfully submitted,



Rosanne Krajewski
Acting Clerk

North Branford Youth Football & Cheer
Experience The Commitment

ATTACHMENT 1



POB 12, Northford, CT 06472
P (203) 492-9088 ♦ F (203) 208-1509
NBFB@comcast.net * www.NBYFC.org

To: Park and Recreation Commission

Re: North Branford Youth Football and Cheer Field Issues

Below are brief descriptions of concerns and/or issues the NBYFC program has with the current fields on which we play:

NBYFC conducts their practices at Memorial Park on the outfield grass of the softball fields from August 1st (or a little after due to the Potato and Corn Festival) to October with some teams using the field to mid-November for the playoffs.

1. The lights along the right field line blow out after approximately 1 hour. Currently we turn them on about 7:00 p.m. and they just turn off on their own around 7:50 to 8:00 p.m. There are still players on the field in that area and have to exit the field in darkness.
2. While turning on or off the lights we have experienced the breaker tripping. Last season it actually sparked on a few occasions.
3. The field is 80 yards long and we have up to 5 teams currently practicing on the field at the same time on some nights. This does not include our flag program. The number of teams is expected to increase by one next season as we anticipate enough enrollments to form a 6th grade team.
4. By September the grass has pretty much been beaten to death from baseball, softball and football to a point that it becomes either a dust bowl or a mud pit depending upon weather. Once October and November come around it actually gets cement hard.

NBYFC conducts their home games at Totoket Park on Sundays from late August into November.

1. The field is not handicap accessible. There are several grandparents and older relatives of our own players who try and attend games and this does not even account for those of other teams

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2. Due to the lack of space our cheerleaders are forced to cheer from an area in the crowd that is blocked off by cones. People still enter this area causing an unsafe environment for themselves and especially our girls who may not see them as they are doing their cheers. There have also been instances of verbal abuse by visiting fans and teams due to this set up.
3. The number of spectators has increased and there is not enough area to accommodate them. They have begun to sit in the land between the football field and Wall Field. This area is not flat and many have fallen. We currently have no way of blocking that area. Also, as teams for the following game arrive the spectator area becomes un-moveable.
4. Due to the Babe Ruth field we cannot position our bleachers where we would like to try and alleviate some of the congestion. To do this they would need to be moved back and forth and in doing so may rip up the fields.
5. We currently have two outhouses at the field which do not accommodate the number of people attending the games. Just in home team numbers alone you are looking at parents, relatives and siblings for 30 players per team and 20 cheerleaders. When teams arrive one hour before game time we are double those numbers as the two times overlap.
6. We have done our best to keep the area clear but there is only one way for an ambulance to get safely on the field. On weeks with great numbers of fans it becomes harder to monitor this area and keep it clear.

Our current numbers for our program are:

24 Flag Football Players

137 Tackle Football Players

81 Cheerleaders