

**PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
APPROVED MINUTES - WEDNESDAY, APRIL 19, 2023
REGULAR MEETING
VIA INTERNET & CONFERENCE CALL
6:30 P.M.**

JOIN ZOOM MEETING
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82784769347>

*Meeting ID: 827 8476 9347
Passcode: 095165*

Web & Phone Meeting Instructions:

- *If your computer/smartphone has mic and speaker then:
Type in, paste or click the following link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82784769347>
If not, then **Call-in** using the **phone number, Meeting ID & Passcode** provided above.*
- *Sign-up for Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting updates by emailing lcapp@stamfordct.gov.*

Web Meeting Ground Rules:

- *The meeting shall be recorded and the video shall be posted on the City of Stamford website http://cityofstamford.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view_id=9*
- *The Parks & Recreation Commission shall moderate the audio for attendees.*
- *Attendees shall be on mute and will be unmuted when called to speak by the Commission members.*
- *Attendees will have 20 minutes to make their presentation or address the Commission.*
- *Any Attendee wishing to submit materials or a written statement can send it prior to the meeting to lcapp@stamfordct.gov or submit through a Chat message to the Commission Chair during the meeting.*

A Regular Meeting of the Parks & Recreation Commission was held on Wednesday, April 19, 2023 via the Internet on Zoom.

In attendance were:

Commissioners: Paul Newman, Chair
Melanie Hollas, Vice Chair
Angela Adetola
Jessica Katz

Staff: Matthew Quiñones, Director of Operations
Kevin Murray, Director of Parks & Recreation
Lesley Capp, Assistant - Parks & Recreation Commission

Absent: Michael Tedder, Commissioner

CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. Newman called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. and introduced the Commission Members and staff present.

Mr. Newman introduced the first item on the agenda.

➤ **Public Participation Session:** Each individual requesting to speak shall send a Chat Message to the Chair stating their name and address for the record. Public participation comments shall be limited to 3 minutes.¹

Mr. Newman asked if there were any speakers. Ms. Capp stated Doug Edwards, Board of Directors - Stamford Pickleball Club, Inc. had requested to address the Commission.

Mr. Edwards made comments regarding pickleball and the need for courts for open play.

Mr. Murray responded providing details of the plans for pickleball courts in the near future.

➤ Review of the March 15, 2023 Regular Meeting Draft Minutes.²

Ms. Hollas made a motion to approve the March 15, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes with the change of the date to the Parks & Recreation Commission Strategic Goals from 2023/2024 to 2022/2023.

Seconded by Ms. Adetola

Unanimously Approved

NEW BUSINESS:

➤ **Erin McKenna, Associate Planner, Land Use Bureau & Aris Stalis, Aris Land Studio - Scofieldtown Park:** Design review for dog park.³

Ms. McKenna made some brief comments and introduced Aris Stalis.

Mr. Stalis made a presentation and answered questions from the Commission.

➤ **Griffin Handley, Vice President, Operations - Stamford Little League (National Division) - Springdale School (Drotar Park):** Potential signage for the Little League field.⁴

Mr. Handley made a presentation explaining the signage requested and answered questions from the Commission.

Ms. Adetola made a motion to approve the signage for the Springdale School Little League Field with the removal of the signage honoring Junie DeLeo. Also for this item to go before the Board of Representatives for approval.

Seconded by Ms. Katz

Approved by a vote of 3-1-0

(In Favor - Newman, Adetola, & Katz / Opposed - Hollas)

➤ **Griffin Handley, Vice President, Operations - Stamford Little League (National Division) - Springdale School & Chestnut Hill Park:** Addition of drink vending machines to be provided by Pepsi.⁵

Due to concerns of possible vandalism to the machines as they would not be able to be placed in a secure inside location, the Commission suggested Mr. Handley investigate alternative options. It was also discussed that Mr. Murray would work with Mr. Handley to present this item to the Board of Representatives Parks & Recreation Committee.

¹ Video Time Stamp - 00:00:37

² Video Time Stamp - 00:05:30

³ Video Time Stamp - 00:07:30

⁴ Video Time Stamp - 00:38:35

⁵ Video Time Stamp - 00:47:00

- **Willy Giraldo, Former Board of Representatives Member:** Memorial plaque for Yuliana Arias Lozano, who was hit by a car on Washington Boulevard in December 2022.⁶

Mr. Murray stated Mr. Giraldo was unable to attend the meeting.

Mr. Newman stated he had been trying to reach Mr. Giraldo to offer some other alternatives to the plaque as there is a policy that memorial dedications are not allowed until the person honored has been passed for 5 years or more.

After some discussion, it was decided to speak with Mr. Giraldo at the May 17, 2023 meeting to discuss options for honoring Ms. Lozano.

SPECIAL EVENTS:

- Guy Fortt & Russell Davis - *Synergy1holdings, LLC - Cruising Classic Car Show - Sunday, August 20, 2023 from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at Columbus Park* - Set-up Begins at 6:00 a.m. and Clean-up Ends at 5:00 p.m. - 1,500 Total Participants.⁷

Mr. Fortt and Mr. Davis presented their Special Events application and answered questions from the Commission.

Ms. Hollas made a motion to accept Synergy1holdings, LLC's Cruising Classic Car Show to be held on Sunday, August 20, 2023 from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at Columbus Park.

Seconded by Ms. Adetola

Unanimously Approved

- Ashley Baines - *Birthday Party (with Bus Rental for Video Games) - Saturday, May 20, 2023 from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. at Scalzi Park* - Set-up Begins at 3:00 p.m. and Clean-up Ends at 8:00 p.m. - 20 Total Participants.

Ms. Baines was not currently in attendance. Mr. Newman moved on to *Old Business*.⁸

OLD BUSINESS:

- **Sustainable Playing Fields & Playgrounds:**⁹

- Follow up discussion from previous meetings.
- Discussion with Michael Toma, Assistant Corporation Counsel.
- Review and possible revision of the Parks & Recreation Commission Policies & Procedures.

Mr. Toma made a presentation providing further explanation to the opinion written by Douglas Dalena, Former Corporation Counsel; the role of the Parks & Recreation Commission in making decisions about the City parks and answered questions from the Commission.

There was also considerable discussion about the Parks & Recreation Commission Policy and Procedures. As per Mr. Toma, the Policy and Procedures would need approval by the Mayor and the Board of Representatives in order for the Policy and Procedures to be "operational." It was decided the Commission should review the Policies and Procedures over the next month to discuss at the May 17, 2023 meeting to eventually present to the Mayor for approval.

⁶ Video Time Stamp - 00:01:07

⁷ Video Time Stamp - 01:08:20

⁸ Video Time Stamp - 01:11:30

⁹ Video Time Stamp - 01:13:33

Mr. Newman opened the discussion for revisions to the Policy and Procedures under the Environmental Health section (Pg. 41) for artificial turf. Mr. Newman asked Ms. Hollas to read into the record the proposed revision for artificial turf written by Ms. Hollas and Ms. Katz as follows:

In 2023, the Parks & Recreation Commission added a policy against the use of poured-in-place rubber surfacing for parks and recreational spaces in Stamford based upon research studies showing chemicals of concern, environmental concerns, and heat concerns. While the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) released findings from their field observation studies, they have not completed the exposure modeling or risk assessment studies to determine if the product is safe for children.

The Parks & Recreation Commission feels there needs to be much more supportive information to counter the personal health, environmental, and economic questions that presently exist before it can permit the installation of any additional artificial turf or poured-in-place rubber surfacing in Stamford's parks and recreational spaces. The discussion of artificial turf and poured-in-place rubber installation should occur in as neutral an environment as possible. Products, public opinion, aesthetics, economics, and more importantly, scientific research and product safety, are subject to change as new products are introduced to the market. A well informed public and their input at a Public Hearing will most certainly be part of the discussion with regard to any future applications for the use of artificial turf or poured-in-place rubber surfacing.

Mr. Newman entered into the record proposed revisions he would like to be considered as follows:

6.3 Health Department

Environmental Health [P&R C Policy, Rules, Guidelines & Vision - July 1, 2019 - pg.41]

Parks and green space in ~~the~~ cities are key links to ecological balance. They can also help alleviate some of the environmental damage to human health. Parks and green space, including streams and floodplains, act as buffers to pollution, protect hazardous areas from inappropriate development, and mitigate urban heat islands.

Tree canopies in parks and throughout the city absorb carbon dioxide and pollutants and cool the atmosphere.

- The Parks and Recreation Commission is in favor of **establishing being part of** a task force with the Health Department and other relevant City agencies and departments such as the Environmental Protection Board, and the Harbor Management Commission, to develop policies for sustainability of our environment and public health.

A direct implication of the discussion above is the *formation of ~~Parks and Recreation Commission~~ policy on artificial turf for recreational fields and/or artificial surfaces for any purpose within a city park under the jurisdiction of the Parks and Recreation Commission. ~~Environmental concerns and implications for public health were the overriding arguments for the Parks and Recreation Commission to vote unanimously in 2014 against the use of artificial turf fields in the City of Stamford. See Section on Conservation 7.3 for details~~*

~~The Parks and Recreation Commission feels there needs to be much more supportive information to counter the personal health, environmental and economic questions that presently exist before it can permit the installation of any additional artificial turf in Stamford's Parks. It is recognized that the statutory authorization to adopt a restriction or prohibition on the use of surfaces such as artificial turf, or on the use of natural grass, lies with the Board of Representatives.~~ The discussion of artificial turf *and other artificial surface* installation should occur in as neutral an environment as possible. Products, public opinion, aesthetics, economics all change, and more importantly scientific research as to product safety continues to evolve with new products. A well-informed public and their input at a public hearing ~~will most certainly~~ *may* be part of the discussion with regard to any future applications for the use of artificial turf *or other artificial surfaces*.

The Commission discussed edits to the above language submitted by Mr. Newman.

Ms. Katz offered to setup an online document whereby each Commissioner could add their comments and/or edits which would be seen by and shared with everyone.

Mr. Newman agreed and stated he would start with all the suggested changes from this meeting and would discuss further at the May 17, 2023 meeting.

Mr. Newman mentioned the Board of Representatives Parks & Recreation Committee is having a meeting tomorrow night and they will have a discussion on artificial turf.

It was asked if there would be speakers and Director Quiñones stated that a consultant would speak who represents a company that has installed artificial turf and natural grass.

Ms. Katz noted that Mr. Newman was listed on the agenda representing the Commission and asked what he would be speaking about.

Mr. Newman stated he would speak to the Special Meeting held in October 2022 and the discussions that followed and if asked about Policies and Procedures, he would reiterate what has been discussed tonight.

TOURNAMENTS:

➤ No Tournaments.

CORRESPONDENCE:

➤ No Correspondence or as may properly be introduced before the Commission.

STAFF REPORTS:

➤ Kevin Murray, Director of Parks & Recreation: Parks & Recreation Update.

The following Staff Report was submitted and discussed by Mr. Murray: ¹⁰

[Begin Report]

- 2023 Seasonal Employees: Currently staffed with twenty (20) seasonal employees thus far and we are in the process to obtain up to thirty-five (35) seasonal employees.
- Lione Park playground reopened. Playset and surface completed.
- June 30, 2023 fireworks planning has begun with Grucci and Sound Company. Contracts in place and operational. Staff meeting will be coordinated.
- Finalizing Bocci League Agreement with City Legal Department. Startup for May 1, 2023.
- Recreation Supervisor position filled. Jack Lyons will be starting on May 1, 2023.
- Tree Climber position filled/hired - Michael Pinto.
- City marinas are now open as of April 7, 2023.
- West Beach boat ramp will be under construction for dredging and new boat ramp docks starting May 10, 2023 and the closure will last until mid-November to completion. Therefore, Cove Island Park boat ramp will be used as the sole boat ramp for the 2023 season.
- Opening Day field permits have begun as of March 27, 2023 for practice and April 10, 2023 for games at all park sites.
- Pickleball conversion at Scazli Park hockey game court to be scheduled. Awaiting Purchase Order to convert six (6) lined courts within the game court space. Space will also be designed for hockey use per schedule.
- Scalzi Park Little League fence repair from February 3, 2023 windstorm is completed.
- Musco Control Link for sports light fields are activated for the season.

¹⁰ Video Time Stamp - 02:23:40

- Spring volleyball started March 20, 2023 and we have 24 teams registered hosted at Northeast School.
- Beach volleyball registration is in process with a startup date of the first week of June.
- Aquatics spring classes are in session.
- Recreation currently interviewing and hiring summer staff for all summer camps.
- Recruiting actively for lifeguards for our beaches/pools for the summer.
- Recreation revenue collected thus far is close to \$1.6 million, which we collected last fiscal year, therefore, we are \$200,000.00 above at this point with a few months left.
- Fee increases for summer camps, Terry Conner Rink, and maintenance ballfield fees are on the Board of Representatives Parks & Recreation Committee agenda for Thursday, April 20, 2023.
- March 31, 2023 held our Annual Parks Kickoff meeting with operational and supporting staff for our beach and park season. Will continue to hold biweekly meetings throughout the season for transparent information/planning.
- Working on our new Parks & Recreation website with Marketing Coordinator and Administration.
- Friday, April 21, 2023, will celebrate Earth Day with the City of Stamford. Commissioners should have received an invitation of the agenda from Lesley via email. (NOTE: Director Quiñones provided details on all the events, times and locations taking place.)

[End Report]

Mr. Newman asked Mr. Murray to explain the permitting process and discuss why the Commission no longer receives meeting minutes from the Internal Committee.¹¹

Mr. Murray explained that everything is now reviewed and approved online through the new software system so the Internal Committee no longer meets. Details of the application can be reviewed and each department has the ability to comment directly to the applicant with questions or make internal comments to each department.

Director Quiñones further stated he would look into generating a report for the Commission showing the Special Events applications by the Internal Committee.

Ms. Katz asked about groups fund raising for benches in parks.

Mr. Murray explained the procedure with the City Memorial Bench Program.

DISCUSSION:

➤ **Paul Newman - Project Updates:** Barrett Park.¹²

Director Quiñones provided details on some of the events taking place with regard to the Strategic Plan for Barrett Park and also provided information on budget cuts that would impact parks from the recent Board of Finance meeting.

The Commission has considerable further discussion regarding the budget cuts from the Board of Finance meeting, specifically the cost and design of playgrounds; the upcoming survey on the City's parks and Barrett Park.

➤ **Paul Newman - Parks Strategic Plan.**

➤ **Melanie Hollas - NIPS Fund Update.** Ms. Hollas stated no update.

¹¹ Video Time Stamp - 02:35:02

¹² Video Time Stamp - 02:43:13

Ms. Capp announced that Ms. Baines was now in attendance.¹³

Mr. Newman asked Ms. Baines to speak about her application.

Ms. Baines made a brief presentation and answered questions from the Commission.

- Ashley Baines - ***Birthday Party (with Bus Rental for Video Games) - Saturday, May 20, 2023 from 4:00 to 5:30 p.m. at Scalzi Park*** - Set-up Begins at 3:00 p.m. and Clean-up Ends at 6:00 p.m. - 20 Total Participants.

Ms. Hollas made a motion to approve Ashley Baines' Birthday Party with the Bus Rental for Video Games on Saturday, May 20, 2023 from 4:00 to 5:30 p.m. at Scalzi Park.

Seconded by Ms. Katz

Unanimously Approved

➤ **Update of Parks & Recreation Commission Strategic Goals for 2022/2023 as follows:**¹⁴

- Mr. Newman and Ms. Hollas: Friends Groups.
- Ms. Hollas: Invasive Species initiative & RFP Update.
- Mr. Newman: Baseball and field usage.
- Mr. Tedder and Ms. Katz: Foundation and the City website.
- Ms. Adetola and Mr. Murray: Setup of pickleball courts and working with pickleball and tennis players.
Mr. Newman mentioned correspondence received regarding the Dorothy Heroy tennis courts and potential installation of pickleball lines from Phillip Miller, whose property is on Black Rock Road which is directly adjacent to the park and just behind the tennis courts.

➤ **Application and Waiver Agreement for volunteer groups to work in the City parks.**

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Adetola made a motion to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Ms. Katz and the vote was carried unanimously.

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Mr. Newman adjourned the meeting at 9:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Lesley Capp
Assistant to the Parks & Recreation Commission
April 25, 2023

These proceedings were recorded on video and are available for review on the City of Stamford website at:
http://cityofstamford.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view_is=9

¹³ Video Time Stamp - 03:09:15

¹⁴ Video Time Stamp - 03:12:25