

**Westport Commission on People with Disabilities
Minutes of Meeting
Thursday June 15, 2017 - Town Hall - Rm.201**

Attendance: Jim Ross - Chairman, LuAnn Giunta, Stacie Curran, Tom Holleman, and Diane Johnson, Absent: Evan Levinson, Marina Derman - Present from Human Services - Elaine Daignault

Tom H.: Called Meeting to order, 8:40am (Jim R. - running little late)

Tom: Made **motion to approve Minutes** for May - LuAnn- 1st, Diane - 2nd, All in favor.

Guest Speaker: Jen Fava - Westport Parks & Recreation (P&R)

Things to come from P&R:

Possible revival of "Connecticut Connections" Westport division which began with the Human Services Dept and was taken over by Parks and Rec to provide inclusive social/recreational network of activities for the 21-55yo population.

P&R offers a variety of programs which are inclusive or specifically tailored to children with special needs including: Day camps (Rec-ing Crew & Camp Compo), Skateboarding, bike riding (works with SLOBS), ice skating, and pickle ball. Some programs work more easily depending on child's needs, P & Rec is always evaluating programs and is willing to try new options based on need and consumer feedback.

Summer Track Program on Thursdays in the Summer; all abilities would be welcome.

On the horizon:

Barons South Conceptual Landscaping for Public Use –

- P&R working with architect to reclaim pathways for passive exercise and enjoyment of natural beauty.
- How to surface the trails so they are easily accessible, walkers, strollers, wheelchairs, - not gravel nor wood chips;
- Also, working on benches, new plantings, access from varying parking lots.
- Hope to gain Community involvement:
- Earthplace partnership was suggested and /discussed
- Boy Scout involvement,

Baron's Property has several structures/houses

- currently being considered for public use including interest from the Westport Arts Center but this is not Parks and Rec decision. Regardless they will work with the existing park to enhance use.

Compo pedestrian access is also a priority

- The new path from pavilion to cannons was well received despite initial opposition by some residents
- P & Rec is now considering south beach path and connection to marina stone path

- Plans to change the existing surface by marina from stone to something else for better access & wear and tear.

Jim R: Our board supports this Fully!

South Beach Rest Room plans - (near present pickle ball court) - 3 Unisex, ADA Handicap size restrooms to accommodate all.

- Plans to renovate the existing rest rooms (near lifeguard station) more accessible stalls, clean them up, remodel, and new roof added to the pavilion.

Jim R: Summer camp conflicts and ESY for young children. P& R is very important and could really help solve many of the Summer struggles for families.

Jim R Q: _ how does P&R engage opportunities for kids with physical and/or ID?

- Jen said, this is a Cyndi Palaia question. P&R is expanding into the arts and nature, but they have no space, no facility to house activities. They bump into space conflicts with Continuing education and programs offered for FREE through the Library (they are getting into yoga, etc) - create come conflict to broaden, when similar offering are free.
- Elaine D.: Suggests, maybe our commission can work on a needs assessment for providers to work more collaboratively to coordinate between Library, Earthplace, teachers, etc.
- Elaine D: there is a parent in town that initiated a program dubbed “a day in the Life” of a child with special needs.

Patty Haberstroth: Parks and Rec is very generous to income qualifying families to provide scholarships and Dept of Human Services (DHS) also provides additional funding as needed.

DHS once coordinated a Special Needs Connections networking group which met regularly and coordinated programming for this population. SO much of the challenge came from the logistics, making this practical, budgetary, etc. Discussion.

Jim R: How does P&R get the word out?

A: direct email to registrants, or direct folks to their webpage.

Could the CPD help with promotion/awareness?

Stacie: Q: often see request for swimming - instruction for younger children with needs, free swim time for older, with additional supervision.

They operate about 6-month lead time - planning is now for the fall/winter. Jim asked if they could bring their plan to us prior to launch, so we can give feedback.

Patty H. suggests we get their P&R meeting agendas - they are available to the public.

Agenda - Updates from prior meeting: comments to our CPD letter

- Elaine shared “Confident Connecticut” report - (from Senator Wang) - See attached email -
- SpedNet picked up on our letter, Sternberg wrote, “I hear ya!”, and few comments came in. Elaine feels we were heard.
- From Audience: Kathleen Fong: still zero \$ for the 300 kids coming out of school this month - all age 21. July first they have no programing, nothing to do. She is at a loss - there is no Plan B. Suggestions and discussion: Thrive to 25, out of

NCC, some affordable Summer programming, Diane – a challenging time for families when kids age out of WPS and their structure is removed.

Jim R: to Kathleen - what can we do to help you now: Get letters to your legislator - tell them your story, write YOUR story, let them experience it, feel it, hear it. - It makes a difference.

- She would love to see the press engage more in the program perhaps CPD could form a rally, or something to promote change. - these are our most vulnerable citizens - it would be something if we could come together and give a voice.
- All that is coming is good, but it is the NOW - that she struggles with - there is no \$ for Adult programming. He is in Aplyis, but that all stops next week.
- Diane: suggests "Our Vision" Special Olympics, bowling, track, etc. all run and organized by parents. - Kathleen and Diane to coordinate meeting together via email or with a larger group to share information and exchange ideas.

Further Transition discussion

- Elaine D. - Sharon Halstead will be the new Transition coordinator for Westport Public Schools

Meeting Adjourned - 10:25am

*ATTACH - email from Tony Wang, and By Laws from Westport Youth Commission

Respectfully Submitted,
Stacie Curran, secretary for CPD