



Town of Westport Parks & Recreation

WESTPORT PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION Longshore Club Park, 260 South Compo Road Westport, CT 06880

April 25, 2011

The Westport Parks and Recreation Commission held a meeting in Town Hall, room #201/201A at 7:30 p.m. Those in attendance were Janis Collins, Chairman; Jennifer Johnson, George Franciscovich and Andy Moss; Commission Members; Stuart McCarthy, Director of Parks, Dan DeVito, Operations Supervisor and twenty five (25) member(s) of the general public.

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m.

1. Approval of Minutes

Upon motion by Mr. Franciscovich, seconded by Ms. Johnson, the minutes of the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting of March 14, 2011 were unanimously approved.

2. To take such action as the meeting may determine relative to a proposal by Friends of Parks and Recreation to replace the Golf Halfway House at Longshore.

Ms. Collins - This next item is the first proposed project of the Westport Friends of Parks and Recreation a newly formed group and it's for replacement of the Halfway House. The Halfway House burned down about eight years ago. There is a permit approved by the town and now the Westport Friends of Parks & Recreation is proposing to raise funds privately to build this new building.

Mr. McCarthy - This proposal is to replace the Halfway House which had been burned down in 2003. The proposal comes from a group called the 9th & ½ Hole Committee and they have made a request from the Westport Friends of Parks and Recreation to come under their umbrella as a fundraising organization. The roll of the Commission is to accept this project as an appropriate project of the Westport Friends of Parks & Recreation and to recommend acceptance of the project for the town. Once that is done staff will sit down with the 9th & ½ Hole Committee and outline exactly what issues we have relative to accepting the project, conditions of the approval of the gift and then forward that request on to the Board of Selectmen. With a gift of this size it will also go to the RTM for approval. We will be outlining issues related to the construction how the bidding and how the money is going to move in relation to the project and supervision of the final approval, and supervision of the construction. Staff recommends that you approve the project.

Mr. Jeff Mayer (Chairman, Westport Friends of Parks and Recreation) - This is a new organization, a not for profit corporation that we organized back in November 2010. Janis Collins, Jennifer Johnson and Stuart McCarthy serve as ex officio's on the committee.

Westport Friends of Parks & Recreation serves one purpose, and that is to help with new projects like the Halfway House at Longshore. Our purpose is to help fund projects by creating a vehicle with a tax exempt 501(c)(3) status. We will provide a platform for groups like the 9th & ½ Hole Committee to raise funds as they are contributed to the Westport Friends of Parks & Recreation. They will be tax deductible under federal law and those funds will then be offered for the project. Part of our process is to come formally to you when a proposal comes to us.

We can't get the project built without raising funds. For people who are interested in helping a website has been created - www.westportfriendsofParksrec.com. Before we go forward we are going to be entering into an agreement with the 9th & ½ Hole Committee and that agreement will provide for a number of things in conjunction with our fundraising. For example, we are going to make sure we have all funds in before we deploy them and everything will be subject to appropriate permits. We need to move quickly because the permit expires in February 2012. Ideally what we will do is raise the funds through the summer and fall and do ground breaking as soon as possible after the golfing season is over and get this framed up by next season.

Mr. Mark Holod (Chairman of the 9th & ½ Hole Committee) – The project is long overdue, and it's more than a Halfway House for the golfers. This is a centerpiece of one of the jewels of the town. We have golf outings and it is embarrassing for guests to come and play these golf outings and have to go to a trailer that is falling apart. Besides it provides a safe haven for players in the middle of the golf course during storms, it will be grounded against lightning. It will be moved up the hill slightly from its current location. The goal is to have the building open for the first group that tees off in the spring of 2012. We commence no construction until 100% of the funds are raised.

Mr. Franciscovich - I would like to hear updates periodically as things progress where you are and how you stand with the fundraising.

Mr. Jeff Mayer - We will have on the Westport Friends of Westport's website a barometer so that you will be able to track where the contributions are on a real time basis. We have also asked donors to allow us to use their names.

Mr. Mark Holod - We do believe that a good portion of the funds should come from people who utilize Longshore. So we are focusing a good part of our efforts on handpass holders, members of the various golf associations to raise a nice portion of the money.

Mr. Moss - Westport Friends of Parks & Recreation should now be a permanent part of our agenda to give updates.

Mr. Fred Hunter (Chairman, Golf Advisory Committee) - In addition to cash contributions there is a second side of this, and that is an in-kind contributions of materials. We are developing a list of plumbers, electricians, those types of folks that will in effect hopefully reduce that \$300,000.

Mr. Franciscovich - By doing this project will we be adding expenses to the town?

Mr. McCarthy - As it applies to this project, I don't think that is an issue because the town does maintain the buildings and facilities at Longshore. We have regular custodial staff. The interior of the building will likely be incorporated into the lease for the concessionaire for

maintenance. Part of the review of the building plans, etc. is to make sure it's efficient to maintain, and the building materials are suitable.

Upon motion by Mr. Franciscovich, seconded by Ms. Johnson and passed unanimously, it was

RESOLVED: The Parks and Recreation Commission endorses the Golf Halfway House proposal submitted by Westport Friends of Parks and Recreation. The project is subject to acceptance by the Board of Selectmen and RTM under the Town of Westport Policy on Acceptance of Gifts.

Ms. Collins changed the order of item #'s 3 & 4 of the agenda.

3. To take such action as the meeting may determine relative to Parks and Recreation Department policy for use of Town athletic fields.

Ms. Collins - Since prior discussion of the policy at our Commission meeting the working group got together and reached out for more input from the public as well as our sanctioned organizations to see if we wanted to recommend changes to the current operating policy.

Mr. McCarthy - Following comments from previous Commission meeting as well as meetings with the working group, the policy was further reviewed and some of the revisions of the draft include the following:

- Removal of reference to affiliated organizations. Any organization must be sanctioned directly through the Parks and Recreation Department. Organizations with block field assignments may then be required to accommodate other sanctioned organizations.
- Removal of Addendum related to Use of Westport Soccer Fields by Premier Soccer Clubs. Under this revision Premier Soccer Clubs not qualifying as a Sanctioned Organization would not be eligible to use Westport fields.
- Removal of addendum "Policy for Use of Athletic Facilities for Youth Sport Activities." These provisions have been incorporated into the base document.

Ms. Collins - While the policy doesn't allow rental of the fields by non-residents it does allow if we need to raise money for our fields, charge usage fees. As our budget continues to get cut each year our athletic fields are taking a beating and we have to continue to find ways to maintain them.

Mr. Carl McNair (Westport Baseball) - All teams are 100% Westport residents and we do maintain on an ongoing basis the four fields at the Mary Ellen White complex as well as the three fields at Coleytown School. In 2010 we spent in excess of \$145,000.

Mr. Carmen Roda (P.A.L.) - All sports groups in this town are growing. P.A.L. alone has 966 kids in all of their sports groups. For Lacrosse this year it was 270; girls 170. Sooner or later we are all going to have to figure out a way to utilize the fields a little differently. Sooner or later we are going to not have enough space. And as much as the youth sports groups grow the high school sports grow. We have to figure out a way to utilize the fields for Westport residents in the best way we can.

Mr. Moss asked for the affiliation with the High School with regards to fields.

Mr. McCarthy - Staples High School athletics takes priority to community athletics from a scheduling standpoint. With that said everyone has to plan their program so the fields are available to Staples High School until 5 p.m. on weeknights. They are generally not assigned to the High School on weekends but we do make accommodations for the High School when they have makeup games. Staples High School games that run beyond 5 p.m. take priority.

Mr. Carmen Roda - Would like to see better coordination between the High School schedules and the youth sports schedules when there are cancellations or postponements.

Mr. Jenkins (Field Hockey) - You can't look to bring in outside organizations when you can't meet the needs of the existing organizations for field availability.

Marshall Root - (children in the Beachside program) - This discontinuation of WSA exception will be a significant loss to the Town if those kids are going somewhere else.

Mr. Wes Malowitz (Westport Soccer Assoc.) I have a son that plays for Beachside. I understand and I appreciate all the work that you have done. It has been a benefit to the Westport soccer community to have Beachside play in Westport. Beachside is a very unique organization to deal with. They regularly contribute to the soccer program in our Town. A lot of the equipment that we have, the balls are purchased through Mickey Kydes we get a 40% discount. The Westport Soccer Association and Westport has benefited from that relationship over the years. There are a number of Westport players who do play for Beachside. Beachside is predominantly a Fairfield County premier soccer club where a lot of the other clubs are more New Haven based or upstate. They regularly work with us to basically use a field that is available. This year they are scheduled to play five additional home games on Wakeman B. I realize that no other youth sports organization has enjoyed this privilege it really has been a benefit for the Westport Soccer Association to the extent that I could change your mind or you may give a little bit of pause or reconsideration to allowing this relationship to continue, if not for the foreseeable future, at least for another year to allow the club to make other plans to access additional field space I would appreciate it.

Mr. McCarthy - For the record I have a son who plays for Beachside.

Mr. Moss - This was a difficult decision. Our job was to draw up a policy that was as fair as possible; this is not a reflection of Beachside at all.

Upon motion by Mr. Moss, seconded by Mr. Franciscovich and passed unanimously, it was

RESOLVED: The Parks and Recreation Commission hereby adopts Policy on Use of Town Athletic Fields as presented.

4. To take such action as the meeting may determine to recommend increase in the weekend daily fee for admission to Compo Beach.

The Commission tabled to vote on the proposed increase of the daily parking fee for weekends and holidays at Compo Beach pending the RTM's vote on the budget next week.

Upon motion by Ms. Johnson, seconded by Mr. Franciscovich and passed unanimously, it was decided to table a vote on the proposed increase to the daily parking fee for weekends and holidays at Compo Beach pending the RTM's vote on the budget next week.

5. Old Business

6. New Business
None

7. Commissioner's Reports
None

8. Administrative Update

Mr. McCarthy – The Board of Finance removed \$80,000 from the Parks & Recreation Department's Budget. \$70,000 in Administrative Salaries line and \$10,000 on a Capital Equipment line. The Capital Equipment line they want us to buy a used truck. Relative to the \$70,000 cut in the Administration line, I sent a memo to the First Selectman relative to our recommendation on not returning to the Board of Finance for restoration.

There were two reasons: 1) I don't think there was any question about the case we made for our budget, it seemed to be fairly clear forward and they voted to eliminate the funding. 2) I did ask them if we were to go through another sales cycle and come back to them with a request in June for an additional appropriation when we had that additional information.

In the meantime we had our budget hearing before the RTM Parks and Recreation Committee, Mr. Meyer encouraged us to seek restoration. I provided at his request a summary report to the committee and Janis and I spoke to the RTM Committee and they voted to restore the \$70,000 in the budget. They made that recommendation to the RTM Finance Committee as well as to the First Selectman and so the First Selectman in addition to the restoration he is seeking it will include the \$70,000 in his restoration request.

The RTM Finance Committee met last Thursday evening and they will be voting this Wednesday evening on all of the restoration requests, as well as their entire recommendation on the Town's budget.

The budget hearing is on Monday, May 2nd @ 7:30 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully,
Sheila Kavey
Recording Secretary