

FINAL



January 21, 2021

The Westport Parks and Recreation Commission held a meeting on Wednesday, January 20, 2021 @7:32pm. Pursuant to the Governor's Executive Order No. 7B, there was no physical location for this meeting. It was held electronically and recorded via Zoom.

Members Present:

Alec Stevens (7:33pm), Kate Kirby, Stephen Axthelm, Edward Iannone

Absent:

Charles Haberstroh, Chairman

Also Present:

Jennifer Fava, Director of Parks and Recreation; Rick Giunta, Deputy Director; Carmen Roda, Operations Manager; along with members of the public.

(N.B.: Numbering in the minutes below reflects the order in which items were discussed.)

1. Public Comment: None**2. Reports of:****Boating Advisory Committee – No Report****Golf Advisory Committee – Reported by Jane Dally**

- The Golf Advisory Committee did not meet in January 2021.
- Highlights from the December 2020 meeting:
 - Play continued until mid-December with 800+ rounds for the month. This exceeds previous records.
 - Approximately 35,000 rounds were played for the calendar year.
 - Todd Salamone and BrightView continue to work on course renovations, bunker repair as well as the greens.
 - The LWGA 2021 season opening day and meeting will be on April 6.
 - The LWGA 60th year celebration was not held last year due to COVID-19; however, they will try to hold a celebration this year.
 - The GAC will hold its first meeting of 2021 next month, in February.

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Parks Advisory Committee – Reported by David Floyd

- The PAC held a meeting on January 11, 2021.
- Jennifer Fava reported some of the improvements that have taken place at Riverside Park:
 - Clearing of debris – removal of scrubs and stumps
 - Repaving of the aprons
 - Steve Edwards is also working on extending the sidewalk
- Jennifer Fava also reported the areas along the pathways around the Levitt Pavilion were also cleared.
- Proposals for the “on call” architect was sent out and will be finalizing next month.
- The PAC committee members suggested creating a “Guide to the Parks”, which would highlight some of the larger parks within the Town of Westport.

Racquets Advisory Committee – Reported by Ward Doonan

- The RAC did not have a meeting in January 2021.
- Tennis and Pickleball are dormant at this time of year.
- Platform Tennis has seen unprecedented usage.
- The Men’s League will be adding a 3rd team on weekends next Fall.
- The RAC continues requesting the additional courts and warming hut.
 - Jennifer Fava responded that this is part of the Longshore Site Plan and will be worked on as soon as possible. COVID19 has delayed the timeline considerably.

Levitt Pavilion Sub-Committee – Reported by Stephen Axthelm

- Held its inaugural meeting on November 9, 2020.
- This Committee is still in the preliminary stages and subsequent meetings are to be scheduled.

3. Approval of Minutes

Upon a motion by Stephen Axthelm, seconded by Kate Kirby, the minutes of the Parks & Recreation Commission meeting of November 18, 2020 were approved 3-0-1. (1-absent, 1-abstained)

4. To take such action as the meeting may determine to approve the 2021 Charity Golf Tournaments at Longshore.

Jennifer Fava reported that eight organizations were scheduled to host their charity golf tournaments last year. However, only four were held due to COVID-19. These were: Staples H.S. Gridiron Club, Westport Police Athletic League, Staples Lacrosse Association, and the Children’s Community Development Center. All eight organizations are requesting approval to host their 2021 charity golf tournaments. Fees for these tournaments will remain the same as last year.

Commissioner Comment:

Stephen Axthelm questioned the Gridiron Club regarding the net profits raised by their tournament and how they disburse it. Andy Thompson, President of the Staples H.S. Gridiron, who hosted this tournament, along with Joel Beck (financial representative), 17 Summerville Road, explained that the Gridiron Club raises monies through other activities, and golf is their biggest fundraiser. All monies raised is pooled and given to various charities.

Kate Kirby said she supports this charity tournament and is happy with the efforts.

Alec Stevens also supports the Gridiron Club.

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Public Comment: None

Upon a motion by Edward Iannone, seconded by Kate Kirby, and passed unanimously 4-0 (1 absent)

RESOLVED: that the Parks and Recreation Commission approves the following charity golf outings at Longshore Club Park for the 2021 season subject to dates approved by the Parks and Recreation Director:

Westport Professional Firefighter's Association
 Staples High School Gridiron Club
 VFW Post 399
 Westport Police Athletic League
 Longshore Men's Golf Association
 Staples Lacrosse Association
 Children's Community Development Center
 Learning Community Day School

The Parks and Recreation Commission approves waiving the golf cart fees and greens fees for the Longshore Men's Golf Association's charity golf tournament (Club House Cup) for 2021.

5. To take such action as the meeting may determine relative to a request from Westport P.A.L. to use Compo Beach for the 2021 town fireworks.

Jennifer Fava prefaced this discussion by saying that there is the possibility that this event may need to be cancelled due to COVID-19 and will be looking into alternatives. However, we are still moving forward with approvals. Jennifer Fava introduced Ned Batlin, President of the P.A.L.

Ned Batlin, President of the P.A.L. stated that last year the town's fireworks were cancelled due to COVID-19. In 2020, the fees were increased from \$35 dollars to \$40 per car and the number of tickets available were to be reduced from 2,000 to 1,800. He has requested the date of July 1, 2021 for the town's fireworks, with a rain date of July 2. He explained that P.A.L. and Parks and Recreation has an agreement that the fireworks cannot be held on the holiday itself or on the weekends. If the fireworks need to be cancelled, the decision needs to be made by April 30 to not incur any penalties.

Commissioner Comment:

Alec Stevens asked about the penalty charges to cancel. Ned Batlin stated that 60 days out, there would not be a penalty, however it is based on timing. The closer to the date you cancel, the more costly it is.

Public Comment: None

Upon a motion by Steven Axthelm, seconded by Kate Kirby, and passed unanimously 4-0 (1 absent)

RESOLVED: that the Parks and Recreation Commission grants approval to the Westport Police Athletic League to host the 2021 Fireworks at Compo Beach on Thursday, July 1st, rain date Friday, July 2nd. Compo Beach parking lots to close at 4PM and reopen to only fireworks ticket holders. Additionally, entry fee per car is approved at \$40.

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- 6. To take such action as the meeting may determine to approve proposed changes to the “Rules and Regulations Governing Use of Municipal Beaches, Yacht Basins, Longshore Club Park, Park Areas and Recreation Facilities.” (Rule changes include but are not limited to: the prohibition of animals on Town playgrounds, athletic fields and Luciano Park.)**

Jennifer Fava stated that these proposed changes were reviewed at length during the last Parks and Recreation Commission meeting, however it was asked that more time be given for additional feedback. Most of these proposed changes are for clarity and formatting reasons. However, it includes the prohibition of animals at Luciano Park, athletic fields and Town playgrounds. It also clarifies the language regarding parking requirements/rules at Old Mill Beach, specifically regarding residents. In speaking about Luciano Park, Jennifer Fava referred to a letter sent in by a resident who reported an incident that happened at Luciano Park between her small children and dogs.

Commissioner Comment:

Edward Iannone asked for clarity regarding the increase of age within the “Westport Residency Requirements”, changing from 23 to 26 living at home. Jennifer Fava stated that this age correction aligns with Federal guidelines for young adults being on insurance plans.

Kate Kirby said that she has seen dogs and people playing at Luciano Park.

Alec Stevens asked about enforcement. Jennifer Fava said that the public would need to be educated, and signage would be used. She also mentioned the use of email blasts to inform and remind residents of this rule.

Public Comment: None

Upon a motion by Stephen Axthelm, seconded by Alec Stevens, and passed unanimously 4-0 (1 absent)

RESOLVED: that the Parks and Recreation Commission approves the proposed changes to the “Rules and Regulations Governing Use of Municipal Beaches, Yacht Basins, Longshore Club Park, Park Areas and Recreation Facilities,” as submitted.

- 7. To take such action as the meeting may determine to approve boating fees for the 2022 season.**
Jennifer Fava stated that the boating fee increases were proposed during the October 21, 2020 meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission for the 2021 season, but were declined for two reasons. 1) it would represent an increase two years in a row and 2) it was put into the budget and pre-approved by the Board of Finance before it was proposed to the Commission. It was felt that the fee increase should go before the Commission first before it gets entered into the 2022 budget.

This fee increase is being proposed again and would take effect for the 2022 season. This would be the first increase in two years and if approved, would bring the larger boat categories more in line with the surrounding areas, and would not impact the smaller boat categories.

The Commissioners reviewed the proposed fees, along with the comparison of fees from the area municipal marinas. A brief discussion was held.

Public Comment: None

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Upon a motion by Alec Stevens, seconded by Stephen Axthelm, and passed unanimously 4-0 (1 absent)

RESOLVED: that the Parks and Recreation Commission recommends to the Board of Selectmen approval of boating fees as proposed.

8. To take such action as the meeting may determine to approve entitling fees for the 2021 season.

Jennifer Fava reviewed and clarified the use of existing entitling fees. Two categories of people are eligible to pay the “Entitling Fee”, summer tenants or any association, corporation, business, or individual owning commercial real estate. Payment of the entitling fee gives them the same privileges as a resident. It is mostly used in purchasing beach emblems and allows utilization of the pool and participate in programs at the resident rates. The entitling fee has not increased since 2015 and remains at \$475. It is believed that the purchasing of an “entitling fee” has been abused.

Commissioner Comment:

Edward Iannone wanted clarity as to the timing of a seasonal rental. Jennifer Fava stated, a seasonal renter is more than 30 days, but less than a year.

Alec Stevens inquired how much revenue this raises? Rick Giunta stated approximately \$20,000 additional income.

Public Comment: None

Upon a motion by Edward Iannone, seconded by Stephen Axthelm, and passed unanimously 4-0 (1 absent)

RESOLVED: that the Parks and Recreation Commission recommends to the Board of Selectmen approval of the entitling fee as proposed.

9. Review of proposed 5-year Capital Plan (Discussion only)

Jennifer Fava presented and reviewed with the Commissioners the 5-year Capital Plan. An open discussion followed.

10. To take such action as the meeting may determine to approve the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting dates for February 2021 through January 2022.

The Commissioners reviewed the dates. Jennifer Fava recommended selecting the February 10 date instead of the February 24 date, based on timing.

Upon a motion by Stephen Axthelm, seconded by Alec Stevens, and passed unanimously 4-0 (1 absent)

RESOLVED: that the Parks and Recreation Commission approves the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting dates for February 2021 through January 2022.

11. Commissioners Report – Edward Iannone stated that the turf fields look fantastic.

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12. Administrative Report: Jennifer Fava

- The Team Sports on Pause ban was lifted on January 19 and we are waiting for the updated Sector Rules and guidance from the DPH.
- The P.A.L. Ice Rink was unable to open this year, due to COVID restrictions, as it was not economically feasible.
- Currently working on spring/summer programming.
- Moving forward with applications/approvals for the Memorial Day Parade, along with the Road Runners Races. We are also looking into possible alternatives, should these be cancelled due to COVID-19.
- The lights are complete at Greens Farms Fields. New benches, fencing, fabric on backstop will also be replaced. The field restoration will begin as soon as weather permits.
- Replacement of fingers on the F-dock at the Compo Marina is complete.
- Boating invoices have been mailed out and payments are coming in. Drystall invoices will be mailed out mid-February.
- Proposals for the Riverside Park and the Lillian Wadsworth Arboretum were sent to three firms selected through an RFQ. They are due back early February.
- A department wide resource allocation and cost recovery project will be launched. This will provide data and philosophy that will guide Parks and Recreation in establishing fees and charges. This will require an in-depth investigation as to what is currently being charged for programs and fees and to ensure that costs are equitable. Anticipate this to possibly impact fees beginning this fall.

Upon a motion by Stephen Axthelm, seconded by Kate Kirby, the meeting adjourned at 9:28pm.

Respectfully,
Debbie Detmer, Recording Secretary