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February 11, 2021

The Westport Parks and Recreation Commission held a meeting on Wednesday, February 10, 2021 @7:40pm. 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:

Charles Haberstroh, Chairman, Alec Stevens, Kate Kirby, Edward Iannone

Absent:

Stephen Axthelm

Also Present:

Jennifer Fava, Director of Parks and Recreation; Rick Giunta, Deputy Director; Carmen Roda, Operations Manager; Michael Giunta, Working Foreman; Maxwell Robbins, Program Specialist; along with members of the public.

1. Approval of Minutes

Upon a motion by Edward Iannone, seconded by Kate Kirby, the minutes of the Parks & Recreation Commission meeting of January 20, 2021 were approved 3-0-1 (one abstains, one absent).

2. Public Comment: None**Reports of:**

Boating Advisory Committee – No Report

Golf Advisory Committee – Reported by Jane Dally

- The Golf Advisory Committee met on February 1, 2021.
- All Associations are preparing for their spring meetings.
- The practice green by the #17 tee should be repaired in time for the season.
- All current tree work on the course is completed.
- New golf carts should arrive by April 1.
- Proposals for the Longshore Park 5-year site plan are still being reviewed.
- The new restaurant at the Inn should be operational by the summer.
- Todd Salamone presented the GAC with a full report on how BrightView will be maintaining the course this year, along with the announcement that a new golf assistant was hired.
- Todd Salamone will also be updating the "Superintendent's Page" located on the Longshore Golf's webpage more regularly moving forward.
- All golf league schedule dates were submitted to Jon Janik this week.
- The Chelsea tee time system is not efficient or sufficient and should be replaced.
- The proposed 2021 Longshore golf fees were unanimously approved by the GAC during their last meeting.

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- Feb. 15 is the scheduled clean-up day on the golf course.
- The golf maintenance staff will be returning soon and a COVID orientation will take place for everyone.
- Geese droppings are still an issue on the course.

Parks Advisory Committee – Reported by Jennifer Fava

- The Parks Advisory Committee met on January 11, 2021 and finalized this year's meeting dates.
- Jennifer Fava reported last week she received the proposals back from the qualified architectural firms. They are being reviewed, which should be completed in the next week, at which point it will be possible to hire and begin work on the plans and move forward with additional improvements at Riverside Park and at the Lillian Wadsworth Arboretum.

Racquets Advisory Committee – Reported by David Ascelrod

- The Racquets Advisory Committee met on February 8, 2021.
- There is substantial demand for play at all the facilities, particularly in platform tennis and pickleball. Due to this high demand, there is difficulty in securing reservations.
- The RAC followed up on their request for 2 more paddle tennis courts and a warming hut.
- The RAC would also like to see more pickleball courts. Patty Brill is researching for recommended locations.
- With tennis courts being in high demand, the RAC would like to request the construction of the ice rink to begin a month or so later, leaving more courts available for play during that time.
- Tennis pros are using the Town courts without reservations. This has become an ongoing problem.
- Platform tennis is going well but need additional courts.

Levitt Pavilion Sub-Committee – Reported by Charles Haberstroh

- The committee is scheduled to meet on February 25 and has two additional meeting dates secured for this year.

At this time, Jennifer Fava asked the Commission to add an addendum item to the agenda.

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

The following agenda item was added.

- 4. To take such action as the meeting may determine to approve a new entitling fee for the 2021 season.** Jennifer Fava recapped that at the last Parks and Recreation Commission meeting (held on January 20, 2021) changing the entitling fee from \$475 to \$775 was reviewed and approved. (*Note, that by purchasing an Entitling Fee, it enables that person/family to purchase other Town of Westport amenities/programs at the resident rate.*) It went before the Board of Selectmen during today's meeting. There were concerns about the fee and it was asked to bring it back to the Commission for review. They are suggesting the fee be lowered by \$25 to \$725, which would better align with the non-resident beach emblem fee of \$775. It was felt that if a renter purchased the entitling fee of \$725, along with a beach emblem costing \$50, it would equal the nonresident fee.

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Commissioner Comments:

Edward Iannone asked what the financial impact of lowering the cost by \$25 would be? Rick Giunta, Deputy Director, stated the difference would be \$1,050.

Edward Iannone also asked about the timing of this change and could it wait until the next meeting? Jennifer Fava said, it is time sensitive as it will need to go back to the Board of Selectmen for approval and then to the local paper for the public's review, leaving only a short amount of time before this year's season starts.

Kate Kirby said she didn't have any issue with this change.

Public Comments:

Matt Murray, 27 Old Mill Road stated he is a realtor, and reminded the Commissioners that this proposed fee would equally impact all economic levels of renters but understood the reasoning.

Upon a motion by Iannone, seconded by Kate Kirby, 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 of \$725.00.

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

5. To take such action as the meeting may determine to approve proposed Longshore Golf Fees.

Jennifer Fava stated that the Golf Advisory Committee were presented the proposed golf fees increases during their last meeting. They approved these fees with a vote of 7-0. Jennifer Fava reviewed the current Longshore golf fees with the Commissioners, along with a comparison of local competitors. Most greens fees would be increased by \$2 dollars and the carts by \$1 dollar. There would not be an increase in the 9-hole rates. She also stated that over the past two fiscal years, the golf course has not covered its expenses. In 2019, the deficit was \$26,520 and in 2020 the deficit was \$263,570, which was directly COVID related. The last golf fee increase was in 2019.

Commissioner Comment:

Edward Iannone asked how much money would this bring in to close the gap? Jennifer Fava said approximately \$64,000.

Public Comment:

Jane Dally, Chair of the Golf Advisory Committee stated that the GAC would like to be assured that all money raised from this increase will remain within the golf circle.

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

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

6. To take such action as the meeting may determine to approve proposed winter storage fees.

Jennifer Fava said that this is an effort to provide winter boat storage services for residents which is an additional service, as well as additional revenue. It would allow residents to use the gravel lot (Lot F) at the Longshore Club Park to park their vessel and trailer. There would be two prices: \$720 for 24' vessel & trailer and \$960 for a 32' vessel and trailer. 29 spaces would be available. She asked the Commissioners to review the layout provided in their packet.

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Jennifer Fava introduce Michael Giunta, Working Foreman to elaborate on this proposed service. He stated that there is an interest in this service, and it would be utilizing “dead” space. The 24’ space would store an 18’ boat & trailer and a 32’ space would store a 24’ boat & trailer. However, a boat longer than 32’ would not be allowed to park in that lot, as it is not large enough to accommodate that size. When reviewing the cost comparison of the area, these fees were ranked in the middle. The storage season would be from November 1 through April 15.

Commissioner Comment:

Alec Stevens asked about the liability for parked boats. Who would be responsible for damages? Jennifer Fava said documentation would need to be completed, along with proof of insurance from the applicant. Michael Giunta said the Town Attorney would need to generate verbiage for documents regarding insurance coverage by the Town.

Edward Iannone asked if there would be any prohibitions for working on the boats? Michael Giunta replied that working on boats would not be allowed, as this area is gravel and the soil could possibly get contaminated. This area is to be used for winter storage only.

Kate Kirby asked if this would block views or would be unsightly? Jennifer Fava said that this parking lot is used regularly to park trucks and that due to the size of the boats, the height would not block views and additional plantings could take place if needed.

Charles Haberstroh asked if we should be storing boats in this area, as it isn’t paved, and the ground may get too muddy in the spring. Jennifer Fava said this is an opportunity we would be missing out on. Also, the ground is very hard packed and should not be a problem.

Public Comment:

Matt Murray, 27 Old Mill Road inquired about insurance costs to the Town to cover the boats and would they be parked too close together? Jennifer Fava said the Town’s insurance cost would be nominal, as the boat owner would be responsible for the bulk of the insurance. Michael Giunta replied that the parking spaces are the legal width of a road and this isn’t a concern.

Chris Tait, RTM District #1 said this is a great idea from a revenue perspective and good for boat owners as well.

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

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

7. To take such action as the meeting may determine to approve proposal for a fitness court at Compo Beach.

Jennifer Fava reviewed with the Commissioners the National Fitness Campaign presentation regarding the proposed fitness court which would be located at Compo Beach. She said the request to have fitness equipment at Compo Beach is not a new one, and when she was approached with this opportunity to partner with the National Fitness Campaign, it was a great way to provide users with a facility that would support a healthy lifestyle. Jennifer Fava also said this would be the first NFC fitness court in the state of Connecticut. The court itself is 38’ x 38’ and would contain 30 pieces of body-weight fitness elements. There can be up to 28 users at a time. The cost of installation ranges between \$100,00 - \$160,000

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depending on options. This is an opportunity for a \$30,000 grant from the NFC, with the grant deadline submission of February 19, 2021. There may be other grant options as well to offset the remaining funds needed. The Parks and Recreation Department could possibly use this court for additional programming opportunities as well.

Jennifer Fava introduced Maxwell Robbins, Program Specialist. Maxwell Robbins spoke of how people could use the fitness court, as well as accessing the free mobile app to create a fitness routine, follow video workouts, etc. He mentioned that NFC would train one employee at Parks and Recreation on all aspects of the fitness court.

Commissioner Comment:

The Commissioners had numerous questions regarding the fitness court. Some of the questions were related to the life expectancy of the equipment, how will the material/moving parts handle the weather and sand, were any other vendors considered, will the wall around the court block views and upset the neighbors? Questions were also asked about the grant and its deadline. Could we apply for the grant without committing to the purchase of the fitness court? Other questions were related to P&Z and Conservation approvals and Charles Haberstroh said that he would like to hear from the neighborhood associations regarding the proposed fitness court.

Jennifer Fava responded to all questions and confirmed that the grant could be applied for without the commitment to purchase.

Public Comment:

Matt Murray, 27 Old Mill Road inquired if this fitness court would impact summer camp? Jennifer Fava said it would not impact the camp. He also asked how high the wall would be and Jennifer Fava said it would be 6 feet high and would not impact viewpoints. Matt Murray asked if there was a time expiration on using of the grant money? Jennifer Fava said she would need to ask but would like to submit the application for the grant and that would allow time to investigate.

Chris Tait, RTM District #1 asked how this would impact parking at Compo Beach? Would having this fitness court bring in more people to exercise vs. going to the beach. He also inquired about using Luciano Park or Winslow Park. Jennifer Fava said that Luciano Park is not appropriate for this purpose as there is little foot traffic, it is mostly related to the railroad parking lots. Winslow Park is zoned as a DOSRD3 and cannot be used.

Commissioner Comments:

The Commissioners discussed submitting only the application for the grant and would decide to move forward only after reviewing additional information, along with input from the neighborhood associations, P&Z and Conservation.

After hearing from the Commissioners and the public, the following revised Resolution was proposed.

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Upon a motion by Charles Haberstroh, seconded by Edward Iannone, the revised Resolution passed unanimously 4-0-1 (1 absent)

RESOLVED: that the Parks and Recreation Commission approves of the application of a grant as part of due diligence for a fitness court at Compo Beach.

8. To take such action as the meeting may determine to approve proposal of parking management system signage at Compo Beach.

Jennifer Fava reviewed the presentation that was given to the Commissioners in their packet. She also stated that Compo Beach is one of the most used facilities and yet there is very little collected data on its usage. The Parking Management System (PMS) will be used to count cars entering the beach, determine traffic patterns, parking usage, etc. It is a Cloud based system based on “real” time. Parking information will be downloaded to the Town’s webpage as well, where visitors can check for parking availability before arriving at the beach. It will also alert visitors when the parking lots are full by installing an electric sign at the main entrance to Compo Beach.

Carmen Roda, Operations Manager spoke about the parking issues and concerns relating to Compo Beach and how this PMS would insure a more accurate tracking of the cars entering and leaving the lots, as well as keeping staff safe by not having them posted by the road directing traffic when the lots get full. It will also help with traffic flow as people won’t stop to talk to staff.

The Commissioners held a brief discussion. The consensus was that it is a good idea and it would help in keeping staff safe. However, Edward Iannone would like to make sure that the sign itself is tasteful and kept as small as possible.

Public Comment:

Matt Murray, 27 Old Mill Road said that people will go to the Old Mill Beach, if Compo Beach parking is full.

Upon a motion by Kate Kerby, seconded by Alec Stephens, and passed unanimously 4-0-1 (1 absent)

RESOLVED: that the Parks and Recreation Commission approves the installation of the proposed parking management system signage at Compo Beach.

8. Commissioners Report – None

9. Administrative Report: Jennifer Fava

- Preparing for the spring/summer season programming, as well as getting the facilities ready.
- On-Call landscape architect proposals for Riverside Park and the Lillian Wadsworth Arboretum were received last week and in the process of being reviewed and awarded.
- Boat fee payments are coming in, and first reminders were also sent out. They are due 2/15.
- The Board of Finance held their P&R budget workshop last night. It went well, with key points being the increase in minimum wage again for this year and the reinstatement of the Parks Superintendent position.
- Today, the Board of Selectmen reviewed and approved the changes to the P&R Rules and Regulations, along with the 2022 boating fees.
- Would like to request an agenda item for the next PRC meeting regarding memorial benches at Compo Beach. Many requests are coming in and we may want to reinstate the moratorium.

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Charles Haberstroh would like to see other alternatives for memorial donations. He also asked about the Board of Finance budget approval process and inquired about dates/timing. Jennifer Fava said she will send the dates to the Commissioners.

Charles Haberstroh also spoke about the Boating Advisory Committee. Due to the insufficient number of members resulting in less than a quorum, should the committee be dissolved or reconstituted?

Upon a motion by Edward Iannone, seconded by Kate Kirby, the meeting adjourned at 10:06pm.

Respectfully,
Debbie Detmer, Recording Secretary