

# FINAL MINUTES



October 7, 2021

The Westport Parks and Recreation Commission held a Special Meeting on Wednesday, October 6, 2021 @7:30pm. 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; Edward Iannone; Alec Stevens

**Members Absent:**

Kate Kirby

**Also Present:**

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

Charles Haberstroh stated that tonight's meeting is a special meeting and will only be speaking to the four (4) agenda items. There is a regular scheduled meeting for October 20, 2021.

1. To take such action as the meeting may determine to approve fees for the Longshore Sailing School for the 2022 season.

Charles Haberstroh read the first agenda item and turned the discussion over to Jennifer Fava. Jennifer Fava stated that per the contract with the Longshore Sailing School, their fees must be approved by the Parks and Recreation Commission. Included in the packet is a letter and 2022 fee schedule from Jane Pimentel, President of the Longshore Sailing School. At this point, Jennifer Fava introduced Jane Pimentel.

Jane Pimentel, President of the Longshore Sailing School reviewed the fees. She reviewed the proposed 2022 fee schedule and why and where increases would be needed. Some fees remain constant. She emphasized how freight charges and the increase in minimum wage impact the decision to increase the fees. She said there would be one increase built into the season, which runs from January 1 through December 31. Ms. Pimentel believes that the hourly rental rate is reasonable and maintains affordable access to the sound, which is her goal. Ms. Pimentel offered to answer any questions but is still waiting to wrap up the 2021 season.

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## Commissioner Comments:

A brief discussion was held between Edward Iannone and Ms. Pimentel regarding the yearly selling and restocking of crafts, along with maintaining fees to allow everyone access to participate in this activity. Alec Stevens stated that he felt the fees were reasonable.

**Public Comment:** None

**Upon a motion by Charles Haberstroh, seconded by Edward Iannone, and passed unanimously 3-0**

**RESOLVED:** that the Parks and Recreation Commission approves the 2022 fee schedule for the Longshore Sailing School as submitted.

## 2. To take such action as the meeting may determine to approve an appropriation request relative to greens drainage for Longshore Golf Course.

Charles Haberstroh read the second agenda item and turned the discussion over to Jennifer Fava.

Jennifer Fava stated that this has been talked about for a while. It is on our Capital Forecast for fiscal year 2021/2022. Several years ago, greens #2 and #6 had this drainage system installed as a test and it has done well and has improved the drainage on those greens. We are looking to install this same type of system on the remaining 16 greens. The estimated cost is approximately \$195,000.00 with a lifespan of 20 to 25 years. The annual debt repayment would be \$11,320.00 per year. The increase in golf fees this past season includes the revenue to cover the debt repayment. We are anticipating this to be done in the fall of 2022. This project may require materials that require a long lead time to receive, that is why we are starting the process at this time.

## Commissioner Comments:

Edward Iannone asked how this need was discovered? Jennifer Fava said it was before she started, but drainage had also been a problem on those greens. Charles Haberstroh spoke about the past history of the greens and how this drainage system helped greatly. Rick Giunta spoke about the past condition of the #2 green and how there was always a problem with drainage prior to the installation of the drainage system.

Alec Stevens wanted to confirm that the costs were covered by the increased fees. Jennifer Fava said that payback for this project was anticipated when golf fees were raised prior to the current season and will cover the annual debt service.

**Public Comments:** None

**Upon a motion by Charles Haberstroh, seconded by Alec Stevens, and passed unanimously 3-0**

**RESOLVED:** that the Parks and Recreation Commission approves the appropriation request in the amount of \$195,000.00 for improvements to greens drainage at the Longshore Golf Course.

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### **3. To take such action as the meeting may determine to approve an appropriation request relative to the leveling of tees at Longshore Golf Course.**

Charles Haberstroh read the third agenda item and turned the discussion over to Jennifer Fava.

Jennifer Fava stated that a total of seven (7) tee boxes need to be leveled. They are 1, 2, 4, 13, two on 15, and 17. This would be a spring 2022 project. The anticipated cost would be \$80,000.00 with a lifespan of 20 years and the annual payback over 20 years is estimated to be \$5,225.00. Fee increases from last year incorporated this expense. This project is also on the 5-year Capital plan for 2021/2022.

Charles Haberstroh said that this is largely a maintenance item and stressed the importance of maintaining the tee boxes.

#### **Commissioner Comments:**

Alec Stevens was glad this worked into the budget and Edward Iannone asked Jennifer Fava to explain the differences between the costs of the drainage project and this project.

**Public Comments:** None

**Upon a motion by Charles Haberstroh, seconded by Edward Iannone, and passed unanimously 3-0**

**RESOLVED:** that the Parks and Recreation Commission approves the appropriation request in the amount of \$80,000.00 for the leveling of tee boxes at the Longshore Golf Course.

### **4. Review potential pickleball court locations (discussion only).**

Charles Haberstroh read the third agenda item and stated that they could not discuss non-Parks and Recreation locations, and this was a discussion only. He also said that Longshore will be reviewed within the Longshore Site Plan. Mr. Haberstroh also stated that he gave copies of the Longshore Pickleball Proposal sent in from Mr. Lowrie and Mr. Walshon to the Commissioners for their review, but to let everyone know that this proposal had not been reviewed by the Racquets Advisory Committee.

Jennifer Fava said she received communication that Parks and Recreation would be installing lights at the pickleball courts at Compo Beach. She would like to clarify that Parks and Recreation has no plans on installing lights on the pickleball courts at Compo Beach.

Jennifer Fava said she was asked to review locations under the jurisdiction of the Parks and Recreation Department as to potential locations for 2 to 6 pickleball courts. Barons South was not included as that is a discussion which is happening separately. Ms. Fava went over the definition of the zoning codes and then proceeded to discuss the 25 potential locations, as well as the school facilities and athletic fields. It was determined that the majority of them were too small, had competing uses, restricted hours of use, limited parking, beach emblem requirements and/or zoning issues.

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Charles Haberstroh said that regardless of zoning, any property selected will need approval by P&Z, as well as the possibility of approval by other bodies, such as Conservation, Board of Finance, RTM and Board of Selectmen. It's at least a 4-stage process. The purpose of this discussion is to review the locations and should a site deem possible by the end of the discussion, it would merit a special review.

Edward Iannone would like to see more pickleball courts in Town but doesn't want to diminish other facilities to accomplish this goal.

Alec Stevens agrees with Mr. Iannone and is interested to learn about what the public has to say.

## **Commissioner Comments:**

Edward Iannone requested that we don't discredit areas that would require a parking permit as he believes most residents have one.

Alec Stevens had no comments.

## **Public Comments:**

Charles Haberstroh opened the discussion to the public. Everyone had a chance to speak, and everyone had a second chance to speak as well. Below is a recap of their thoughts:

- Consultants hired for the Longshore Site Plan would be made aware of the request to include pickleball courts.
- "Lot F" at Longshore should be considered.
- Convert some tennis courts into dual purpose with pickleball at Town Farms.
- Concerns about:
  - Blowing sand migrating onto the pickleball courts is a problem and possible safety concern at Compo beach and should be considered, if additional courts are added there.
  - Noise and light leaking into the Owenoke Park neighborhood should courts be created at Longshore.
  - Environmental impact to Grey's Creek and the animals living along the shore and/or in the creek should pickleball courts be created at Longshore.
  - Traffic concerns at either the Baron's South location or at Longshore.

Charles Haberstroh said he received two emails from residents at Owenoke Park. One had concerns about noise and light leaking into the neighborhood and the other was in favor of creating pickleball courts at Longshore.

## **Commissioner Comments:**

Alec Stevens said that no conclusions have been made on any location, including Baron's South. That is placed with Planning & Zoning Commission. A further discussion needs to be had about open space, and the consultants need to review locations within Longshore Club Park. Mr. Stevens said he needed to better understand why Pickleball courts weren't considered at Town Farms but acknowledges there is a pressing need for more courts.

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Edward Iannone stated that his goal being on this Commission is too maximum the utilization of the Town's resources and they are limited resources. More people are playing pickleball and more courts are needed, however the solution shouldn't be taking away tennis, basketball, or skate-boarding resources. We should be utilizing resources that are under-utilized, mainly Baron's South. It was purchased for town uses, not to be solely kept as open space. Creating pickleball courts would enhance the use of Baron's South and perhaps bring more people to the area. Mr. Iannone did say that he was disappointed that other ideas didn't surface tonight, but we have an option which is Baron's South, and it should be explored. Another option would be Long Lots, even though it's at a school, peak hours of use are during the weekends and summer. He asked that people who are looking for these courts, to continue to search out locations and find a solution.

Charles Haberstroh said there are no easy choices here and there is a lot of controversy. It's all a matter of compromise and trying to use goodwill to work together to find the best solution. The Parks and Recreation Commission has always been interested in increasing the number of pickleball courts. It is not served by groups making false accusations about different aspects. Charles Haberstroh said he remembered having discussions about three or four years ago with Mr. Lowrie and Mr. Walshon asking them to work with the Commission to find alternative locations for pickleball courts but not at Compo Beach. Mr. Haberstroh said they spent their time trying for two years to secure two additional pickleball courts at Compo Beach, rather than spending that time finding alternate locations. Now at this juncture, the Commission is being accused of telling the Racquets Advisory Committee to not consider any other location but Baron's South. Mr. Haberstroh thinks this is disingenuous, false and resents it. The Parks and Recreation Commission has always wanted to increase the recreational capabilities of this town and is asking everyone to work together to find alternate locations to add additional pickleball courts. Mr. Haberstroh apologized for being emotional, but it's been a very frustrating road.

**Upon a motion by Edward Iannone, seconded by Alec Stevens, the meeting adjourned at 9:43pm.**

Respectfully,  
Debbie Detmer, Recording Secretary