

FINAL



Town of Westport
Parks & Recreation
WESTPORT PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
Longshore Club Park, 260 South Compo Road
Westport, CT 06880

April 29, 2022

The Westport Parks and Recreation Commission held a Meeting on Wednesday, April 27, 2022 @7:33pm. It was held electronically and recorded via Zoom.

Members Present:

David Floyd, Chairman; Elaine Whitney, Alec Stevens

Members Absent:

Kate Kirby, Matthew Haynes

Also Present:

Jennifer Fava, Director of Parks and Recreation; Rick Giunta, Deputy Director; Andrea Moore, Second Selectwoman; Nicholas Bamonte, Esq. Berchem Moses; Louis Weinberg, Chairman of the Westport Community Garden, along with members of the public.

1. **Approval of Minutes**

Upon a motion by Alec Stevens, seconded by Elaine Whitney, the minutes of the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting held on February 16, 2022, were approved 3-0

2. **Public Comment**

No public comment.

3. **Reports of:**

Golf Advisory Committee: Jennifer Fava reported:

- The Longshore Golf Course opened for the season at the end of March.
- Aeration has been completed.
- Continuing to work on the agronomic plans.
- The cooler temps are slowing the germination process.

Parks Advisory Committee: David Floyd, former Chair of the PAC reported:

- The PAC did not meet in April.
- The PAC held their Cleanup Day on April 9. A few PAC members volunteered at Riverside Park. Jennifer Fava, Director of Parks & Recreation, along with Jennifer Tooker, First Selectwoman and Andrea Moore, Second Selectwoman met at Grace Salmon to volunteer in the cleanup.

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Recordings of this meeting can be found at:
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Racquets Advisory Committee: Ward Doonan reported:

- Anticipate the tennis courts to open on May 1.
- There are 21 standing court reservations currently.
- The RAC met in March and their next meeting is scheduled for May.
- Short term focus is to get LED lighting for the tennis courts and skating rink at Longshore.

Paddle Tennis Update:

- The winter season was a great success.
- There were three men's teams, for the first time this winter.
- This year a women's league was created, and they will be adding a second league.
- Ward Doonan and Mike West will be working together to find ways to improve the heaters over the summer. They will be touring some of the local facilities who have different equipment to research information.

Pickleball Update:

- Crack repair will be taking place (weather dependent) on the courts at Doubleday and Compo Beach. This will include painting new lines.
- Courts 3 and 4 will be lined for Pickleball at the Town Farm courts, also weather dependent.
- Parks and Recreation Pickleball lessons have been moved from Compo Beach to Town Farm to further open play.
- Lessons at Town Farm for Pickleball will be in the morning Monday through Thursday and 9am to 11:30am on Saturday.
- Carmen Roda is working on an Open Play schedule for Pickleball at Compo Beach. That should be posted shortly.

Levitt Pavilion Sub-Committee: no report

4. **To take such action as the meeting may determine to disband the Levitt Pavilion Sub-Committee of the Parks and Recreation Commission.**

Jennifer Fava gave a brief history of the Levitt Pavilion Sub-Committee. She said that Jennifer Tooker, First Selectwoman has reviewed the various committees and she determined that she would like the Levitt Pavilion Sub-Committee to report directly to her office. To change the reporting structure of this committee, it first needs to be disbanded from the Parks and Recreation Committee and then, the First Selectwoman will appoint members to a separate committee that will report to the First Selectwoman.

Commission Comment:

Elaine Whitney asked if the maintenance and operational oversight of the Levitt Pavilion would remain the same. Jennifer Fava answered that the maintenance of the facility remains with the Town, and operations are managed by the Levitt Pavilion Foundation. Everything remains the same. This sub-committee functions as an oversight committee only, giving the public a forum to speak & meet.

Public Comment:

No public comment.

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Upon a motion by Elaine Whitney, seconded by Alec Stevens, and passed 3-0

RESOLVED: upon the request of the First Selectwoman so that she can create a new Levitt Pavilion Committee that reports to her office, the Levitt Pavilion Sub-Committee of the Parks and Recreation Commission is hereby disbanded, effective immediately.

5. To take such action relative to a Memorandum of Understanding related to the Long Lots Preserve.

Jennifer Fava spoke to the background of the Westport Community Gardens and the surrounding property which is being referred to as the Long Lots Preserve. Louis Weinberg, Chairman of the Westport Community Gardens approached the Town with the idea of creating a steering committee and has created a master plan on how they would clean up the property, which would include the removal of invasives, re-introduce plant natives and pollinators. The Town Attorney's office has reviewed this property and Nicholas Bamonte, Esq. from Berchem Moses, representing the Town Attorney's office drafted a Memorandum of Understanding so all parties involved understand their responsibilities. This property abuts the Long Lots Elementary School property, however this property falls under the Town's jurisdiction, not under the Board of Education and does not require their approval. There will be no cost to the Town in proceeding with this MOU. Jennifer Fava emphasized that the Parks and Recreation Commission does not approve the language or the actual MOU itself, it says that the Parks and Recreation Commission is in favor or not in favor of moving forward. The Commission makes its recommendation and passes this to the Board of Selectwomen for their approval. The Town does not relinquish any rights to the property or its use. It was noted that Long Lots Elementary school is being looked at for either renovation or possibly rebuilding, which may include use of the property.

Jennifer Fava asked Nicholas Bamonte, Esq. from Berchem Moses to expound on the MOU and what it means. Nicholas Bamonte, Esq. stated he reviewed the draft plan of what is being referred to as Long Lots Preserve, which was presented by Mr. Weinberg and his group to the Town. Mr. Bamonte, Esq. feels the draft MOU is appropriate to protect and cover the Town. Mr. Bamonte, Esq. then proceeded to explain the legal aspects of the MOU and how it will impact both parties. He further explained that this is not a legally binding document, it is a recommendation, which if approved, would go before the Board of Selectwomen for their approval.

Jennifer Fava asked Louis Weinberg, Chairman of the Westport Community Gardens to elaborate on the background and what the Long Lots Steering Committee is looking to achieve.

Louis Weinberg, Chairman of the Westport Community Gardens said that the community garden has been adjacent to the Long Lots Elementary School for about 17 years. The area is surrounded on three sides by woodland and the fourth side is bordered by the parking lot for the Long Lots Elementary School. Mr. Weinberg said that last year some illegal dumping took place on that property and that prompted him to think that with some maintenance, this property could be enhanced. Mr. Weinberg said this project has been broken up into four phases which is described in the Master Plan, and he said that structures would not be created on the property and no foot paths would be created. He thanked Jennifer Fava for the signs about no cutting of trees and no dumping. He would also like additional signage

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alerting dog owners to pick up after their dogs and to please keep them on a leash. Mr. Weinberg spoke about the Steering Committee and the financial resources to be used on this project. He would like the approval of the Parks and Recreation Commission so he can move forward.

Commissioner Comments:

The Commissioners discussed their thoughts and concerns over how the property would be managed/handled. Their questions were answered by Nicholas Bamonte, Esq. from Berchem Moses.

Public Comment:

Frank Rosen, 62 Sylvan Road North said he supports this MOU.

The Commissioners discussed the final wording of the resolution and agreed upon the following:

Upon a motion by Elaine Whitney, seconded by Alec Stevens, and passed unanimously 3-0

RESOLVED: that the Parks and Recreation Commission recommends the approval of the Memorandum of Understanding for the Long Lots Preserve to the Board of Selectwomen, and further recommends consideration by the Board of Selectwomen of the following potential adjustments: 1) extending to the Long Lots Preserve the Parks and Recreation Commission Rules and Regulations that apply to the Community Garden; and 2) clarifying that the Town retains full authority and flexibility to use the property in any manner as it deems fit going forward.

6. To take such action as the meeting may determine regarding the placing of a moratorium on Bench Donations.

Jennifer Fava reviewed with the Commissioners that many of our beach and park facilities are over-saturated with memorial benches. While the current policy is being reviewed and standards for new installations are created, it is requested that a moratorium be placed on all new bench requests until further notice. Requests that have already been accepted and processed will be honored.

Commissioner Comment:

There was a brief discussion around costs, policy, existing benches, creating a waitlist, etc.

Public Comment:

None

Upon a motion by David Floyd, seconded by Alec Stevens, and passed unanimously 3-0

RESOLVED: that the Parks and Recreation Commission approves placing a moratorium on any new requests for dedicated benches until further notice.

7. Commissioner's Comments

David Floyd asked the Commissioners to think about how the Parks and Recreation Commission could make an impact in the Town. He mentioned that there are some federal funds available for use and he would like some suggestions on possible improvement ideas where these funds could be used.

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Elaine Whitney asked that since there are three new Commission members, would it be possible to have a refresh of our policies regarding collaboration, coordination, and communication and how it relates to school properties.

8. Administrative Report.

Jennifer Fava reported:

- Longshore Capital Improvement Plan
 - Elaine Whitney is serving as Commission Liaison with staff working on this project.
 - Multiple stakeholder meetings have already taken place.
 - Stantec is currently developing a community wide survey that will go out early May. A press release will also go out.
 - A website will be created and accessible via the Town's website.
 - Timing is on track and looking to wrap up in the fall.
- Beach Emblems
 - Beach emblems will be required starting May 1
 - All 350 non-resident beach emblems have sold out.
 - We are approximately two-thirds of the way through selling emblems for a typical season. Excluding non-residents, 10,153 emblems have been sold equaling approximately \$600,000 in revenue.
- Programs
 - Most programs have sold out very quickly.
 - A new Cornhole league was created based on interest. When registration opened, only a small number of folks signed up. We are sending out an email blast seeking players.
- Budget
 - Last night the RTM Finance Committee met and approved the budget.
 - Tomorrow night is the RTM P&R Committee meeting.
 - The full RTM votes on Monday night, May 2.
- Riverside Park
 - Bids are due back tomorrow.
- Storm Damage
 - Last week's storm displaced a large amount of sand, including moving it into the playground at Compo. We have received special approval from DEEP to regrade the sand by the end of this month. This week, sand will be removed from the Compo Beach Playground so the playground will be closed Wednesday through Friday. Regrading at our beaches will take place through the weekend.
- Miscellaneous
 - A new sign will be placed at the entrance to Compo Beach alerting visitors if parking lots are full. This will ultimately be connected to our website for "real time" parking information.

Upon a motion by Elaine Whitney, seconded by David Floyd, the meeting adjourned at 9:30pm.

Respectfully,
Debbie Detmer, Recording Secretary

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